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Signature:

Andrea Scionti

Date

Not Our Kind of Anti-Communists: Americans and the Congress for Cultural Freedom in France

and Italy, 1950-1969

By

Andrea Scionti

Doctor of Philosophy

History

Patrick N. Allitt, Ph.D.
Advisor

Carol Anderson, Ph.D.
Committee Member

Joseph Crespino, Ph.D.
Committee Member

Accepted:

Lisa A. Tedesco, Ph.D.
Dean of the James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies

Date

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M.A., Emory University, 2013

M.Sc., University of Edinburgh, 2009

Laurea specialistica, Università di Pisa, 2008

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Abstract

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By Andrea Scionti

My dissertation examines the activities of the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF) in France and Italy, and their significance for American cultural diplomacy during the Cold War. The CCF was created in 1950 with covert funding from the CIA to support and connect anti-Communist intellectuals. While it represented one of the main instruments of America's attempts to win the hearts and minds of postwar Europe, it also forced U.S. cold warriors to mediate with different societies, cultures, and intellectual traditions.

My work looks at the contexts of France and Italy to highlight the interplay of competing notions of anti-Communism and cultural freedom, and how local actors helped redefine the character and limits of American cultural diplomacy. The two countries were central to the work of the organization as the Western European nations with the largest Communist presence. National concerns and traditions forced local intellectuals to stress their autonomy from the Congress and its American patrons. I use the cultural Cold War and the competing interpretations within the CCF to explore the limits of U.S. influence and persuasion among the intellectual classes of Europe. I argue that CCF intellectuals were more than unwitting assets for CIA operations, adapting its activities to their own notions and beliefs. I also emphasize how influence was mutual within the CCF: Americans did not simply impose their views on Europeans, but they were in turn influenced in their debates by these transatlantic networks of intellectual dialogue.

By placing the CCF in a transnational framework, my dissertation contributes to a debate on the effectiveness and reach of American cultural diplomacy. The attempts by U.S. policymakers to intervene abroad were challenged or transformed by local actors on the ground. Rather than a background for U.S. operations, the political and cultural contexts of France and Italy set the limits of a successful anti-Communist message and influenced its tone and content. The Congress for Cultural Freedom served American interests in promoting anti-Communist intellectuals, but its activity was fraught with instances of resistance and contestation. European intellectuals were as active as Americans in setting the terms of U.S. cultural diplomacy.

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INTRODUCTION

Culture was a crucial yet elusive battlefield of the Cold War. More than just a traditional rivalry between great powers, the competition between the United States and the Soviet Union after World War II appeared as a fundamental conflict between economic systems, social models, and ideas. America and the USSR were especially equipped to draw other countries around the world into their respective camps due to the distinctively transnational elements of their models, in contrast to the European one of nation-states. Individualism and liberal capitalism for the U.S., and egalitarian Communism for the Soviet Union, each held an appeal that transcended national borders. The cultural dimension – or “psychological,” as it was frequently referred to at the time – played a central role in the Cold War. Success or defeat could hinge on either power’s ability to impose more or less forcibly its hegemony within its bloc, while at the same time undermining the appeal of the other’s model. Both superpowers thus tried to promote their way of life and values to the world, but had to do so carefully. “Ideology” and “propaganda” carried ambiguous implications in the late 1940s, as many Europeans were still acutely reminiscent of the horrors of World War II. In fact, they were unmistakably associated with the other side – whatever it was – in contrast to the dispassionate and objective celebration of one’s own society.

As U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower once declared, psychological warfare could potentially include anything “from the singing of a beautiful hymn up to the most

extraordinary kind of physical sabotage.”¹ The means adopted by the U.S. included not only anti-Soviet propaganda and the use of mass media such as cinema and television, but also the competition for the world of highbrow culture and the arts. The Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF), an organization covertly sponsored by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), offered American policymakers and intellectuals the opportunity to indirectly support and connect anti-Communist intellectuals without associating them openly with the agency’s activities. While the CCF constituted one of the main instruments of America’s attempt to win the hearts and minds of post-World War II Europe, it also opened up new challenges for U.S. cold warriors. By tying themselves to the European intelligentsia, they were forced to navigate these different societies, cultures, and intellectual traditions. This dissertation studies the CCF in France and Italy, using its experience in the two countries to examine the broader dynamics of U.S. cultural diplomacy. It highlights the interplay of competing notions of anti-Communism and cultural freedom, and shows how the local actors involved helped redefine the character and limits of America’s global role in the twentieth century. Hitherto scholars have looked at the CCF and its significance mainly in the Anglo-Saxon context. A focus on French and Italian intellectuals can offer fresh insights on this subject.

The Congress for Cultural Freedom, founded in 1950, was the product of a convergence of interests between the CIA’s Office of Policy Coordination (OPC) and a small number of U.S. and European intellectuals. Many of them were former Communists, concerned about the perceived success of the Soviet cultural offensive in Western Europe. The origins of the CCF, however, lay in the previous two decades as

¹ Quoted in John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy During the Cold War*, revised and expanded edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 152.

much as in the climate of the early Cold War: it built on a transatlantic network of anti-totalitarian thinkers who had fought the fascist regimes of Italy, Germany, and Spain in the 1930s and 1940s, and after their defeat identified in Joseph Stalin's Soviet Union the greatest threat to freedom.

The decision by American intelligence to sponsor covertly this heterogeneous group of unruly intellectuals reflected concern about the rise of Communist sympathies among the educated elites of Western Europe. A formally independent organization seemed to offer greater possibilities to draw intellectuals away from the fellow-traveling and neutralist positions that, in the long run, could undermine their democratic regimes. The responsibility for the setup of the CCF – as well as similar front organizations targeting students and other groups – fell on the Central Intelligence Agency, which Harry Truman had established only a few years earlier. Two factors explain the decision to rely on groups and individuals that opposed Communism from the left of the political spectrum. While the agency moved steadily to the right during the following decades, in the early 1950s it was among the most liberal branches of the American government – its political philosophy was in fact “militantly liberal,” in the words of CIA historian Michael Warner.² A significant number of its members at the time had been educated in Ivy League universities, and espoused a distinctively internationalist and liberal worldview. When they looked for allies abroad, therefore, intelligence officers naturally tended to privilege liberals and social democrats over conservative and reactionary forces. The situation in Europe after World War II only compounded this inclination, by making the non-Communist Left the only viable partner in many countries. In the 1940s

² Michael Warner, “Sophisticated Spies: CIA's Links to Liberal Anti-Communism, 1949-1967,” *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence* 9 n. 4 (1996): 430.

and 1950s, in fact, Europeans were still struggling to address the legacy of the fascist regimes that had dominated the continent in the previous decades. Right-wing anti-Communists in Europe often carried the taint of fascism, or of collaboration with the Nazi occupation during the conflict, which placed them outside the pale of mainstream politics. By contrast, anti-Communism was relatively easier in the United States after World War II, as most of the people who spoke up against the Soviet Union also had a credible record of anti-fascist militancy. The CIA's strategy, therefore, aimed at securing the cooperation of the non-Communist Left, even more than that of right-wing anti-Communists, viewing the former as a more effective instrument to turn the European intelligentsia away from the attraction of Communism.

Following the founding Congress for Cultural Freedom, held in Berlin in June 1950, a permanent organization was created to carry out this task. The CCF operated until 1967, when the revelations about its secret CIA funding forced a profound change in its character and membership. It established its headquarters in Paris and supported the setup of national branches in most European countries, to promote the democratic values it identified with a common Western tradition through seminars and conferences, demonstrations, and the publication of pamphlets and magazines. Among its most enduring legacies were the Science and Freedom conference in Hamburg, in 1953, and the Future of Freedom meeting in Milan in 1955. The former gathered Western scientists to affirm the principle of the freedom of scientific research, and condemn governmental attempts to limit or direct free scientific enquiry. The latter popularized the notion of the "end of ideology," which posited the exhaustion of ideologically-driven recipes for social progress in the West, to be replaced by pragmatic improvement through technological

and scientific expertise. The CCF became closely identified with the theme, which contributed to its success in the following years. At the peak of its growth, in the 1960s, it had expanded to all continents, and organized cultural and artistic events, both alone and in collaboration with governments and universities worldwide.

Although the Congress was from the outset a transnational organization operating on all five continents, two countries emerged from the beginning as especially delicate. France and Italy assumed a particular significance as crucial battlegrounds in the confrontation between Western and Eastern cultural diplomacy. The two countries had emerged from World War II economically devastated and politically transformed. In France, the German invasion of May 1940 had caused the rapid collapse of the Third Republic, replaced by the Vichy Republic. The forces gathered around the government-in-exile of General Charles de Gaulle and the *Résistance* movements in occupied France, however, continued to fight alongside the Allied powers until the Liberation of Paris in summer 1944. In the wake of the conflict, however, the country could rely on little more than de Gaulle's prestige to substantiate its claims of great power status. The military collapse and the difficulties in holding on to its overseas possessions, in fact, seemed to demote France from colonial empire to a "small hexagonal country" almost overnight. At the political level, the Fourth Republic was established in 1946, with the reintroduction of a parliamentary system characterized by weak and short-lived executives. Following de Gaulle's withdrawal from public life, the dominant governmental parties were the Socialist SFIO, the Christian Democratic MRP and the Radical Party; the Parti Communiste Français also enjoyed widespread following, although it remained in opposition throughout this period. Despite its successful record on economic

reconstruction and social reforms, the Fourth Republic ultimately collapsed for its inability to manage the decolonization process, especially in Algeria, and for its chronic instability. In 1958, de Gaulle returned to power to face the Algerian crisis, and pushed a constitutional reform introducing a semi-presidential system.

If France could at least find consolation in the fact that it had emerged victorious from World War II, despite its costs, Italy could not even claim the victory – or, rather, the Allied powers would not allow it to do so. Although the fighting lasted until the spring of 1945, the fall of the Fascist regime of Benito Mussolini in July 1943 was a watershed moment for the Italian system. King Victor Emmanuel III appointed the army chief of staff, Marshal Pietro Badoglio, as prime minister, and Italy abruptly signed an armistice with the Allies two months later. The ensuing Nazi occupation of northern Italy radicalized the conflict between the Fascist loyalists who had joined the Salò Republic and the underground Resistance movement, leading to what historians have recently described as a civil war. After the German surrender, the constitutional system itself was in question, given the close alliance between the monarchy and Mussolini for more than twenty years. A closely-fought referendum in June 1946 abolished the monarchy and introduced a republican parliamentary system. The main political parties, all of which drew their legitimacy more or less directly from their opposition to Fascism and the participation in the Resistance, were the centrist Christian Democracy and the Communist and Socialist Parties. In the following decades, the Italian political system rested on what analysts have defined a “blocked democracy,” which reflected the domestic and international developments. The Christian Democracy remained the centerpiece of any government coalition, with the support of the United States, while the

Communist Party was the strongest opposition. As Italy joined the Atlantic bloc and its political and military structures, a Communist victory would have threatened to break up the status quo in Cold War Europe. The result was that no real governmental alternative could emerge to the Christian Democracy, as highly unstable coalitions and weak governments ruled Italy for half a century.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, however, American policymakers and intellectuals feared that Communists could come to power in either France or Italy through democratic elections. Such an outcome would have undermined the premises of U.S. foreign policy in Western Europe, centered on economic reconstruction through the Marshall Plan and closer military cooperation through NATO. Even when Communism failed to prevail through the ballot box, however, it remained popular and influential among the intellectual elites of the two countries. Americans feared that the spread of Communist or neutralist positions – which opposed the membership of the two countries in the Atlantic alliance – could eventually undermine the support for democratic parties and institutions. Cultural warfare, thus, was directly related to U.S. geopolitical and military concerns.

The CCF provided anti-Communist intellectuals with the organizational structure and – most importantly, in an economically devastated Europe – the money to support and connect like-minded individuals and groups. In order to succeed, however, it needed the prestige and credibility of intellectuals who could dispel the suspicions that the organization was a mouthpiece for official U.S. government policies. The Congress directly promoted or sponsored activities to counter Communist propaganda in France and Italy through three different – albeit connected – channels. First, it attempted to

establish a relationship with prestigious intellectuals, especially those undecided between the sympathy for certain aspects of the Communist message and the rejection of Soviet policies. It did so through a personal, high-profile engagement with artists and thinkers, relying on the prestige of people like Italian writer Ignazio Silone, or French sociologist and philosopher Raymond Aron. Second, an important part of the Congress initiatives in the two countries was also conducted through the national committees, the Amis de la Liberté and the Associazione italiana per la libertà della cultura. Finally, a third significant part of the work of the CCF revolved around its magazines, *Preuves* and *Tempo Presente*. In these three areas, the Congress and its sponsors could be effective only to the extent that local figures were actively involved, and acted as the face of the organization. In fact, the centrality of local intellectuals to the chances of success made the CCF dependent on French and Italian intellectuals, rather than the other way around. Their voices could hardly be ignored, especially when they clashed with U.S. positions and sensibilities. In several instances, Americans were reminded that their economic assistance did not necessarily give them control over the activities of their affiliates.

As the European countries with the largest Communist parties and the strongest influence of pro-Communist intellectuals on their national life, France's and Italy's cultural Cold War was different from the one waged in Great Britain. The visible Communist presence in these two countries contributed to a more negative view of America that made the work of the CCF more difficult. The intellectuals who worked with the Congress, while sharing its opposition to Communism, also reflected the national discourses and "cultural boundaries" in which they formed their positions. Despite their strategic alliance with American intellectuals, Europeans did not always

agree on the methods and tactics to wage their battles. For some, for instance Silone, diffidence toward the U.S. was almost as strong as hostility to the Soviet Union. Others were similarly concerned about the possibility of becoming mouthpieces for American positions, and fiercely guarded their independence against perceived intrusions. The result was a mosaic of positions in which disagreements could be as significant as shared values.

Finally, placing the CCF in a transnational framework contributes to a debate on the effectiveness and reach of American cultural diplomacy. To concentrate only on the attempts by U.S. policymakers to intervene abroad obscures the extent to which local actors on the ground challenged or transformed their intentions. Rather than a background for U.S. operations, the political and cultural contexts of France and Italy set the limits, tone, and content of a successful anti-Communist message, coloring and influencing the nature of the American cultural Cold War. The Congress for Cultural Freedom served U.S. interests in supporting and organizing anti-Communist intellectuals, but at the same time its activity was fraught with instances of resistance and contestation. Within the constraints provided by the bipolar division of the world and the dependence on U.S. financial support, European intellectuals were as active as Americans in setting the terms of U.S. cultural diplomacy.

Several authors have discussed the character and significance of the cultural Cold War and the Congress for Cultural Freedom, both in itself and in the broader context of American cultural diplomacy. A first wave of works was in fact contemporary with the organization itself, and emerged in response to the scandal that broke out in the late

1960s when the involvement of the CIA became public. At a time when the Johnson administration, and U.S. foreign policy in general, were increasingly unpopular at home and abroad, the CCF's connections with the agency were seen as damning and compromising. An essay by Christopher Lasch, in particular, portrayed the Congress and the intellectuals who had associated with it as so completely assimilated to the "official point of view" that they did not even realize the extent to which they had served to sanction and rationalize American world power. The CIA had used CCF members as instruments for its own purposes, but they were slow to admit that their sense of freedom and power was an illusion. "The whole wretched business," Lasch concluded, "seemed inescapably to point to the conclusion that cultural freedom had been consistently confused with American propaganda, and that 'cultural freedom,' as defined by its leading defenders, was – to put it bluntly – a hoax."³

Despite the attempts by former CCF members or CIA operatives to justify their involvement,⁴ for a long time the general perception of the organization continued to be negative. As researchers began to examine the archives of the Congress and of its members, however, the debate has grown more complex.⁵ Peter Coleman has provided a sympathetic portrayal of the work of the CCF, stressing the real threat to cultural freedom coming from the Soviet Union, and the lack of viable alternatives to CIA funding in the

³ Christopher Lasch, *The Agony of the American Left* (New York: Knopf, 1969), 63-114. The article first appeared as "The Cultural Cold War: A Short History of the Congress for Cultural Freedom," *The Nation*, 11 September 1967, 198-212. See also Jason Epstein, "The CIA and the Intellectuals," *The New York Review of Books* 8 n. 7 (20 April 1967), 16-21.

⁴ See for example Irving Kristol, "Memoirs of a Cold Warrior," *The New York Times Magazine*, 11 February 1968; William Colby, *Honorable Men: My Life in the CIA* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1978). On the CIA's strategy to rely on the non-Communist Left, the best source continues to be Michael Warner, "Origins of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, 1949-50," *Studies in Intelligence* 38 n. 5 (1995): 89-98.

⁵ For the most up-to-date discussion of the historiography on the CCF see Eric D. Pullin, "The Culture of Funding Culture: The CIA and the Congress for Cultural Freedom," in *Intelligence Studies in Britain and the US: Historiography since 1945*, eds. Christopher R. Moran and Christopher J. Murphy (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 47-64.

early 1950s. In his telling, the Congress performed the valuable task of supporting intellectuals who opposed Communist totalitarianism – a notion that it was alone in formulating at the time – and never tried to force its members to modify their opinions or silence them.⁶ Frances Stonor Saunders has instead offered an opposing assessment, which she described as a “corrective” to Coleman’s “official history.” Presenting an impressive amount of evidence, she claimed that the Congress had become a “cartel” in the intellectual life of the West, and used culture as a “Trojan horse” to convey a pro-American political message. With the financial assistance of powerful institutions, its members had suspended the tradition of radical dissent, “where intellectuals took it upon themselves to probe myths, interrogate institutional prerogative, and disturb the complacency of power.” She condemned the CIA’s involvement, judging that it had altered the intellectual landscape of the Cold War by promoting to a first-class role people who served American interests. The U.S. government had acted as an “unacknowledged facilitator” in a broad range of creative fields, “positioning intellectuals and their work like chess pieces to be played in the Great Game.”⁷

More recent works have offered a necessary challenge to both the more apologetic accounts of the CCF’s record and to the simplistic interpretations of the cultural Cold War as merely a cover for CIA control over European intellectual life. Volker Berghahn has written about the U.S. cultural diplomatic efforts in Europe, and its involvement in the reconstruction of a devastated continent. He has also stressed the cultural resistance that these initiatives, either overt or covert, generated, and the need for Americans to

⁶ Peter Coleman, *The Liberal Conspiracy: The Congress for Cultural Freedom and the Struggle for the Mind of Postwar Europe* (New York: Free Press, 1989).

⁷ Frances Stonor Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters* (New York: The New Press, 1999).

navigate the double challenge of Communism and anti-Americanism.⁸ Giles Scott-Smith has taken a more theoretical approach, stating an interest in “how ideas become transformed, or better, institutionalised and presented as norms of social thought and behaviour (and which ideas become norms in this way).” He has described the “hegemonic” function that the Congress performed, contributing to a general realignment of Western elites into an Atlanticist discourse. He argued that the U.S. government institutionalized the CCF’s ostensibly apolitical culture and presented it as representative of Western society, in contrast to the cultural barrenness of totalitarian regimes. In order to achieve this hegemonic dimension, it relied on the characterization of high culture as the defining element of Western civilization, and on the emergent consensus around the “end of ideology” in socio-political thought. The notion that America and Europe belonged to the same intellectual-cultural heritage, according to Scott-Smith, tied with the interests of the elites who advocated for greater U.S. involvement in Europe during the Cold War. As to the issue of CIA funding, Scott-Smith concluded that it was not enough to keep CCF intellectuals together, but it had consequences that should not be overlooked.⁹

Hugh Wilford has similarly challenged the tendency to portray the CIA as the “dominant partner in the patronage relationship,” highlighting the contested nature of the CCF’s activities. He has stressed the ability of the agency’s “assets” to appropriate its activities for their own purposes, hampering the American cultural Cold War effort in a

⁸ Volker R. Berghahn, *America and the Intellectual Cold Wars in Europe: Shepard Stone between Philanthropy, Academy, and Diplomacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

⁹ Giles Scott-Smith, *The Politics of Apolitical Culture: The Congress for Cultural Freedom, the CIA, and Post-war American Hegemony* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002). See also Giles Scott-Smith, “The Congress for Cultural Freedom: Constructing an Intellectual Atlantic Community,” in *Defining the Atlantic Community: Culture, Intellectuals, and Policies in the Mid-Twentieth Century*, ed. Marco Mariano (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 132-45.

number of ways. The secret nature of the funding meant that Washington could not exercise effective pressure on the intellectuals involved, at the risk of compromising the operations, and had to watch them use those subsidies for their own unrelated purposes. The CIA was also unable to prevent the internal conflicts and rivalries that repeatedly undermined the efforts of the CCF, or to impose its own definition of culture over theirs. Finally, its reliance on ex-Communists meant that it would interact with people who believed they had a much better understanding of how to fight the Soviet Union than the U.S. government itself, and were not afraid to disagree with it.¹⁰ These works have enriched and complicated a debate that had long concentrated on the morality of accepting CIA funding, or on the question of assessing the degree of control that the CIA exercised through its covert support. They have continued, however, to focus overwhelmingly on the Anglo-American dimension of the cultural Cold War, treating the British context and the English-language sources as normative for the experience of the Congress elsewhere.

A growing literature has recently integrated this picture with an assessment of the CCF's activities in several other countries, including India and the Netherlands. The resulting picture has been that of a much more nuanced interplay between the CIA and its international partners, with the former generally unable to dictate its terms.¹¹ The

¹⁰ Hugh Wilford, *The CIA, the British Left and the Cold War: Calling the Tune?* (London: Frank Cass, 2003); Hugh Wilford, *The Mighty Wurlitzer: How the CIA Played America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).

¹¹ Michael Hochgeschwender, *Freiheit in der Offensive? Der Kongress für Kulturelle Freiheit und die Deutschen* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1998); Eric D. Pullin, "'Money Does Not Make Any Difference to the Opinions That We Hold': India, the CIA, and the Congress for Cultural Freedom, 1951-58," *Intelligence and National Security* 26 n. 2/3 (April-June 2011): 377-398; Margery Sabin, "The Politics of Cultural Freedom: India in the Nineteen Fifties," *Raritan* 14 n. 4 (Spring 1995): 45-65; Tity de Vries, "The Absent Dutch: Dutch Intellectuals and the Congress for Cultural Freedom," in *The Cultural Cold War in Western Europe, 1945-1960*, eds. Giles Scott-Smith and Hans Krabbendam (London and Portland, OR: Frank Cass,

countries that so far have received closer scholarly scrutiny, however, were not believed to be as crucial to the cultural offensive against Communism as France and Italy. These two countries posed peculiar challenges to the mission of the Congress that were absent in Great Britain – or West Germany, which provided yet another set of problems.

Fighting Communism in France and Italy was not only a matter of internal security and foreign policy, but an intellectual problem as well. Through widely circulating newspapers and magazines, and the public support of writers, academics, and artists, Communists in both countries enjoyed a prestige and influence that went even beyond their strong electoral results. Not only did many see the Soviet Union as a champion of peace rather than a threat to it, but the national elites widely discussed and accepted the philosophical foundations of Marxism and the political tenets of socialism. The different political, cultural, and intellectual conditions required different approaches to the task of countering Communist propaganda.

Pierre Grémion has provided the most comprehensive account of the operations of the CCF in France, linking them to the political and intellectual context of postwar Paris. He has challenged the notion that the people associated with the Congress were “puppets maneuvered behind the scenes,” arguing that they enjoyed a considerable autonomy that made the organization a center of intellectual work. He also complained that the existing references to the CCF in American historiography were “incredibly stereotypical.”¹²

Daniela Muraca, Paola Carlucci, and Massimo Teodori, among others, have dealt with the Italian committee and magazine, similarly pointing out the peculiarities of the Italian

2003), 254-266; Ingeborg Philipsen, “Out of Tune: The Congress for Cultural Freedom in Denmark 1953-1960,” in Scott-Smith and Krabbendam, *The Cultural Cold War in Western Europe*, 237-253.

¹² Pierre Grémion, *Intelligence de l'anticommunisme: le Congrès pour la Liberté de la Culture à Paris, 1950-1975* (Paris: Fayard, 1995); Pierre Grémion, “Preuves dans le Paris de guerre froide,” *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire* 13 (January-March 1987): 63-81.

context and stressing the autonomy from the parent organization that local actors enjoyed.¹³ Largely, however, the most important works on the Italian and French affiliates of the Congress, dealing with either the national committees or the magazines, have not been translated in English. These different perspectives, therefore, have remained outside the historiographical debates about the CCF, which has reinforced an imbalance in the way scholars have talked about the organization. This dissertation aims to help put these bodies of work into conversation, in a way that reflects the transnational nature of the Congress for Cultural Freedom and of the issues that it dealt with.

Valuable works on U.S. psychological warfare in Western Europe have also improved our understanding of American policies in the early Cold War, and of the resistance and obstacles they faced. Frank Ninkovich and Walter Hixson have discussed the cultural dimension of U.S. foreign policy in the early Cold War, and, more recently, Nicholas Cull has provided a comprehensive assessment of the activities of the United States Information Agency (USIA).¹⁴ Penny von Eschen, Lisa Davenport, and Andrew Falk have explored the contested nature of American cultural diplomacy, “a messy and mutable process of collaboration and adaptation involving a variety of media.” The U.S. State Department employed a variety of unconventional cultural tools, such as jazz music, films and television, and other public exhibitions to win the hearts and minds of

¹³ Daniela Muraca, “L’Associazione italiana per la libertà della cultura: il “caso italiano” e il Congress for Cultural Freedom,” *Storiografia* 11 (2007): 139-160; Paola Carlucci, “Tempo Presente (1956-1968) e il Congress for Cultural Freedom: alcuni appunti per la storia di una rivista,” in *Culture e Libertà: studi di storia in onore di Roberto Vivarelli*, eds. Daniele Menozzi, Mauro Moretti, and Roberto Pertici (Pisa: Edizioni della Normale, 2006), 453-78, Massimo Teodori, *Storia dei laici nell’Italia clericale e comunista* (Venice: Marsilio, 2008).

¹⁴ Frank A. Ninkovich, *The Diplomacy of Ideas: U.S. Foreign Policy and Cultural Relations, 1938-1950* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Walter L. Hixson, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War, 1945-1961* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997); Nicholas J. Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945-1989* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

the world. Washington, however, often failed to control effectively the individuals who participated in these attempts, who could use such means to promote their own messages in competition with the “official” one, even furthering dissent from the dominant culture of Cold War America.¹⁵ Scholars like Richard Kuisel, Simona Tobia, and Kaeten Mistry have also looked at American diplomacy and cultural policy in the specific context of French and Italy, and how in the early Cold War the problem of cultural diplomacy toward Western Europe was closely tied to the question of Americanization, and the resistance to it.¹⁶ Scott Lucas has pointed out the fact that, much like the Soviet Union, the United States also had an ideology that justified and organized political, economic and cultural activities. The American government promoted this ideology by cooperating with private organizations and individuals who acted out of their own convictions and interests.¹⁷ Recent scholarship on this state-private network has thus helped place the Congress for Cultural Freedom in the context of similar efforts to rely on non-governmental agents to further the goals of American diplomacy.¹⁸ Finally, another significant debate associated with the Congress has concerned the extent to which the U.S. government employed artistic movements, and in particular Abstract Expressionism, as Cold War tools. The “revisionist” argument has maintained that sponsorship of artists

¹⁵ Penny M. Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004); Lisa E. Davenport, *Jazz Diplomacy: Promoting America in the Cold War Era* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2009); Andrew J. Falk, *Upstaging the Cold War: American Dissent and Cultural Diplomacy, 1940-1960* (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010).

¹⁶ Richard F. Kuisel, *Seducing the French: The Dilemma of Americanization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 50; Simona Tobia, *Advertising America: The United States Information Service in Italy (1945-1956)* (Milan: LED, 2008); and Kaeten Mistry, *The United States, Italy and the Origins of Cold War: Waging Political Warfare, 1945-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

¹⁷ Scott Lucas, *Freedom's War: The American Crusade Against the Soviet Union* (New York: New York University Press, 1999).

¹⁸ Helen Lavinia and Hugh Wilford, eds., *The US Government, Citizen Groups, and the Cold War: The State-Private Network* (New York: Routledge, 2006); and Luc van Dongen, Stéphanie Roulin, and Giles Scott-Smith, eds., *Transnational Anti-Communism and the Cold War* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

like Jackson Pollock, directly or through organizations such as the CCF and the Museum of Modern Art, contributed to their success in America and abroad and to the image of the U.S. as a free and culturally vibrant society.¹⁹

This dissertation, thus, expands on previous works by providing a different perspective on what continues to be a relatively understudied topic: an analysis of how French and Italian intellectuals helped shape the activities of the CCF, how they responded to pressure from the officers of the Congress, and their role in its transatlantic network of intellectuals. Their national realities influenced the nature of the cultural Cold War the organization waged. At stake were fundamental questions about the nature and legitimacy of anti-Communism, which appeared very different across the Atlantic, but also within Western Europe. One of the fundamental characteristics of the CCF, in fact, was that at any given time it could mean different things to each of its members, who brought distinctive and at times conflicting agendas to the table. This reality reflected the independence of its affiliates, but also the Congress' lack of a centralized structure.

The International Secretariat in Paris had a complicated relationship both with the Americans who looked at the CCF from the United States, and with the local actors they financed. The role of the latter as public faces of the CCF at home and worldwide, far from making them puppets to be maneuvered, increased the agency and independence of its members. To be sure, the founders of the Congress, including its sponsors in the CIA, deliberately encouraged a certain degree of debate and disagreement within its ranks, and

¹⁹ See Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1983); Francis Frascina, ed., *Pollock and After: The Critical Debate* (London: Harper & Row, 1985); Nancy Jachec, *The Philosophy and Politics of Abstract Expressionism, 1940-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*, 252-278.

in fact considered it an asset. The coexistence of different political and personal positions would demonstrate, in their eyes, the superiority of a free and liberal society over totalitarian systems. Michael Warner, quoting a declassified internal history of the CIA, has explained this rationale of allowing U.S.-sponsored organizations to express views that their sponsors did not share. Opposition to Communist-controlled organizations, by its very nature, would have to accept diversity and “be infused by the concept of free inquiry.” According to the document, “it took a fairly sophisticated point of view to understand that the public exhibition of unorthodox views was a potent weapon against monolithic Communist uniformity of action.”²⁰ A certain “culture of dissent” was, therefore, intrinsic in the nature of the CCF, nor would many of its members have joined if they had been required to silence their opinions. Nonetheless, the practical boundaries of acceptable disagreements were not always evident, and Italian and French members repeatedly tried to redefine and negotiate them.

The relationship between the Congress and its affiliates was mutually beneficial. Prestigious figures helped the organization increase its reach and gain respectability, both nationally and worldwide. Conversely, these intellectuals used the CCF as a platform and as an instrument to reach their goals when it suited them, rather than receive instructions. They advocated for their own priorities and beliefs inside the CCF – or outside, ignoring it altogether and claiming their independence. While they agreed on the need to counter Communist propaganda, they demanded a say on the positive content of the message of the CCF. Although cooperation was mostly satisfactory for both sides, it left them enough autonomy to define the meaning of their cultural Cold War.

²⁰ Warner, “Sophisticated Spies,” 428.

Some difficulties must be taken into account when discussing the history of the CCF. The first is that its archives do not contain, and never have, any records of its dealing with the CIA. The contacts with the agency took place through the conduit of cultural foundations, and the “witting assets” handled the arrangements in private conversations. While I have been able to locate some correspondence to and from CIA operatives, a full assessment of the relationship between the CCF and American intelligence will have to wait for the frustratingly slow declassification of the agency’s archive in Washington. Nonetheless, it is possible to use the existing sources in combination with memoirs, interviews, and private correspondence of the main figures involved, to read between the lines in order to overcome the lack of documentation. It is today beyond doubt that at least a number of American intellectuals and CCF officers – Arthur Schlesinger, Sidney Hook, James Burnham – were indeed “witting assets” for the CIA from at least the early 1950s. The disagreements with their European counterparts, or their views on the situation in Italy and France, can therefore at least point to a common understanding of the nature of U.S. cultural diplomacy, and the role that the CCF should play in it. While it is important not to flatten the range of opinions among the American members of the organization, they can still help sketch a tentative outline of the interplay between U.S. interests and the Europeans’ agendas.

The second challenge in studying the CCF is to resist the temptation to assign to the organization more internal consistency, or even conscious policy-making ability, than it was actually the case. Formally, the International Secretariat and the Executive Committee in Paris were the highest authority, and enjoyed a strong position over their national affiliates and individual members. The reality, however, was that of a central

office constantly struggling to keep a heterogeneous group of intellectuals in check, and responding to crises and circumstances that lay beyond its control. Walter Laqueur, editor of one of the CCF's magazines, recalled a "state of semi-anarchy": "Instructions were seldom issued, and on the few occasions when an attempt was made in that direction, it was almost always ignored."²¹ The sheer number of people involved, and the volatility of personal relations and cultural trends, also suggest the difficulty in imposing a common line that would satisfy all its members. Readers of this dissertation, in fact, might find themselves confused over and over again by the back and forth of letters and memoranda, the references to intellectuals and publications scattered across the world, or the sudden appearance of previously unheard names. So was, frequently, the author. More than anything else, it should serve as a reminder that, despite the efforts of its officers, the Congress for Cultural Freedom always remained a more or less loose partnership of highly independent intellectuals, and that to project on its activities a deliberate consistency would be to distort the organization's very nature.

CCF members repeatedly infuriated their officers with, as Wilford put it, "the annoying habit of arguing amongst themselves" rather than with Communists.²² Moreover, the centrality of the personal networks of friendship and mutual help forged over the previous decades, which lay at the core of the Congress' success in speaking to the intelligentsia of different countries, ultimately placed much of its activity beyond the Secretariat's control. Finally, it should not be forgotten that the CCF was "a perfect example of the utter inability of intellectuals to organize," leading one historian to

²¹ Walter Laqueur, "You Had to Be There," *The National Interest* 58 (1999/2000): 134.

²² Wilford, *The CIA, the British Left and the Cold War*, 217.

conclude that the internal chaos suggested that it survived “*in spite of* its organization,” rather than thanks to it.²³

Despite these caveats, there is still significant work to be done on the Congress for Cultural Freedom in France and Italy. A better understanding of these national realities can also integrate that of the U.S. intellectual history of the 1950s and 1960s. This story, in fact, is very much a story of American intellectuals, as the main turns and developments that characterized their postwar trajectory also had international repercussions. Hugh Wilford has argued that the U.S. cultural Cold War can also be interpreted as “an internal struggle on the American Left suddenly projected onto an international backdrop.”²⁴ The liberal anti-Communism of the CIA, with links to the European non-Communist Left, was dominant in the historical short term also due to its control of the “purse strings,” but it coexisted with an “embryonic neoconservative consciousness” displayed by some ex-Communists of the American Committee for Cultural Freedom. This uneasy alliance between two distinct ideological formations underlay American Cold War liberalism until the collapse of the postwar consensus, when the ex-Communists that were spearheading the neoconservative movement found their own sources of patronage independent from the CIA’s state-private network.²⁵

American liberals, however, also had to confront the different meaning that “liberalism” had in continental Europe. As Tony Judt argued, the different development

²³ Michael Hochgeschwender, “A Battle of Ideas: The Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF) in Britain, Italy, France, and West Germany,” in *The Postwar Challenge: Cultural, Social, and Political Change in Western Europe, 1945-58*, ed. Dominik Geppert (London: Oxford University Press, 2003), 327.

²⁴ Hugh Wilford, “Playing the CIA’s Tune? The *New Leader* and the Cultural Cold War,” *Diplomatic History* 27 n. 1 (January 2003): 34.

²⁵ Hugh Wilford, “‘The Permanent Revolution’? The New York Intellectuals, the CIA and the Cultural Cold War,” in *The US Government, Citizen Groups and the Cold War: The State-Private Network*, eds. Helen Laville and Hugh Wilford (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 195, 206.

of the notion in France ensured that new groups and interests that were not previously represented would come to reject liberal society and its rights as “inadequate and hypocritical”; as a result, “the term *liberalism* disappeared from the political canon of the left.”²⁶ In the immediate postwar period, all sectors of the European non-Communist Left had shared, according to Wilford, a sense optimism that had translated into attempts to form a “third camp” autonomous from both the U.S. and the Soviet Union.²⁷ The CCF, therefore, cannot be separated from a larger discussion of the transnational experimentations in search of a viable leftist position during the Cold War. Postwar American liberalism, as Nancy Jachec has argued, had a contested meaning and should be seen as “part of the tangle of third-way political brainstorming to which both American independent leftists and, importantly, European Western Marxist thinkers contributed.”²⁸

The Congress for Cultural Freedom was “liberal” in the American sense of the term, i.e. an expression of the Cold War consensus that dominated American liberalism in the 1950s. Its history, however, cannot be reduced to that of the Americanization of the Western European intelligentsia. As Michael Hochgeschwender has argued, “the elements of the American liberal-progressive movement (consensus liberalism, liberal individualism, common heritage of the Enlightenment, rule of law, Wilsonian internationalism, pragmatism, and urban cosmopolitanism) were combined with an etatist view of economic issues legitimized by Keynesian theory, which made it attractive to European reformist socialists and liberals.” The CCF was part of a “common transatlantic

²⁶ Tony Judt, *Past Imperfect: French Intellectuals 1944-1956* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 232.

²⁷ Wilford, *The CIA, the British Left and the Cold War*, 17-18.

²⁸ Jachec, *The Philosophy and Politics of Abstract Expressionism*, 4.

Westernization” that built on some ideological common grounds between the two sides of the Atlantic. The “dogmatic liberals” in the organization, however, at times failed to appreciate that, and thought that their values and doctrines “were simply the result of a universal rationality shared by any given intellectual.”²⁹

The French and Italian branches of the CCF challenged the notion of this universality, highlighting the differences of opinion within the Atlantic community, and constituted the “left wing” of the organization throughout their existence. They served as a reference not only for the Europeans more critical of U.S. policies, but also for those Americans uncomfortable with the militant anti-Communism that the Cold War seemed to demand of them. The dynamics of dissent and confrontation that defined the American experience of the CCF were not isolated from the rest of the world, but rather overlapped with the debates and positions within the Congress. Moreover, the issues that American intellectuals discussed during these years – the renewed appreciation of America and its full-throated defense after World War II, the notion of totalitarianism, the popularity of the “end of ideology” and the social sciences – tied with their efforts to engage Europeans, and played out across the Atlantic as well as in the United States. European intellectuals, for their part, followed American debates closely, commenting on them and on the country’s domestic and foreign policy. They saw themselves as part of a transatlantic community, and recognized the importance of American intellectual life for their own societies. A closer look at the Italian and French positions, thus, sheds further light on the connections across the Atlantic, and on the international dimension of the U.S. intellectual scene of this period.

²⁹ Hochgeschwender, “A Battle of Ideas,” 326.

A focus on how local actors in Italy and France interpreted cultural warfare and anti-Communism, finally, can change our understanding of the cultural Cold War by illuminating the limits of American power *vis-à-vis* their partners in environments they sometimes could hardly understand, let alone control. Several scholars have discussed the nature of the American empire during the second half of the twentieth century, highlighting its peculiarities. Geir Lundestad has defined it an “empire by invitation,” at least as far as Western Europe was concerned, due to the extent to which the local populations actually welcomed American presence and influence.³⁰ Andrew Bacevich has also pointed out that, unlike traditional closed-off empires, the American one involved a “commitment to global openness” that set it apart. Charles Maier has introduced the notion of the role that transnational elites, recognizing their common interests, play in holding together and extending an empire. Building on Maier’s work, Giles Scott-Smith has emphasized the role of the CCF not as part of an “empire by invitation,” but rather “a means to merge the totalitarian impulses of the Europeans with the social scientific paradigms of the Americans in a reconfiguration of the role and responsibility of the intellectual in postwar society.”³¹

My dissertation challenges a purely U.S.-centric view of cultural diplomacy, highlighting the role of CCF affiliates in France and Italy in resisting and disrupting this empire. Ultimately, it contributes to a larger conversation about the limits of U.S. power

³⁰ Geir Lundestad, “Empire by Invitation? The United States and Western Europe, 1945-1952,” *Journal of Peace Research* 23 n. 3 (September 1986): 263-77; Geir Lundestad, ““Empire by Invitation” in the American Century,” *Diplomatic History* 23 n. 2 (Spring 1999): 189-217.

³¹ Giles Scott-Smith, “The Congress for Cultural Freedom: Constructing an Intellectual Atlantic Community,” in *Defining the Atlantic Community: Culture, Intellectuals, and Policies in the Mid-Twentieth Century*, ed. Marco Mariano (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 132-34; Andrew Bacevich, *American Empire: The Realities and Consequences of U.S. Diplomacy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002); Tony Smith, *A Pact with the Devil: Washington’s Bid for World Supremacy and the Betrayal of the American Promise* (New York: Routledge, 2007); Charles Maier, *Among Empires: American Ascendancy and Its Predecessors* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

– whether “soft” or “hard” – in the world, and helps place American history more firmly within a transnational framework of analysis. Rather than simply a geographic extension of scholarly works on the subject, the project aims to reconsider the whole framework of the cultural Cold War. U.S. policymakers and intellectuals trying to further American interests and a “hegemonic discourse” through the CCF had to confront the European intellectuals’ own views of anti-Communism, democracy and cultural freedom. In turn, the interaction with their uneasy allies influenced and transformed their own perception of American society and foreign policy. Such an analysis shows how competing interpretations of cultural freedom and anti-Communism influenced the way Americans thought and acted about it.

The dissertation is divided into two sections, the first (chapters 1-3) dealing with the international dimension of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, and the second (chapters 4-7) focusing on the activities carried out specifically in France and Italy. Chapter 1 provides an overview of the political and intellectual evolution of the individuals and groups who took part in the founding Berlin Congress, in June 1950, highlighting the continuity of the Cold War-era cultural diplomatic efforts with the intellectual history of the previous two decades. It describes the transatlantic networks that intellectuals formed in the 1930s and 1940s, which fundamentally shaped how they would view cultural freedom in the Cold War. It also traces the involvement of the American government, and specifically the CIA, and its choice to rely on the European non-Communist Left (NCL) to speak more effectively to undecided and fellow-traveling intellectuals.

In Chapter 2, I explore how French and Italian members of the CCF asserted their independence and agency within the international organization, and how they contributed to shaping its policies in ways that reflected their political and personal background. In doing so, they repeatedly fell short of, or ran counter to, the expectations that American policymakers had about the working and goals of the CCF. Analyzing the uneven reception in the two countries of the “end of ideology” theme, or of Abstract Expressionism, I provide a more nuanced assessment of the intellectual legacy of the CCF and its contested nature. Europeans brought their own notions and traditions to American cultural initiatives, and were not merely passive recipients of U.S. propaganda.

In Chapter 3, I concentrate on the crucial relationship between American and European intellectuals within the CCF, and its significance for the organization. I emphasize the truly transnational network of communications and dialogue that extended across the Atlantic, and how the two sides influenced each other and their notions of cultural freedom. I trace the attempts made by U.S. intellectuals to present American society and foreign policy in a more favorable light, and their frequent frustration at the dissenting views coming from Paris and Rome. Influence did not only travel in one direction, however. I also highlight an aspect of the transnational nature of the CCF that many scholars have overlooked: U.S. intellectuals paid attention and responded to the concerns coming from Western Europeans about the nature of American democracy.

Having described the history of the CCF and its international outfit, the second section of the dissertation turns to examining in detail the specific context in which it had to operate in France and Italy. In chapter 4, I introduce the political and intellectual landscape of the two countries in the late 1940s and early 1950s, which explained both

their importance and the especially delicate mission of the Congress. The presence of mass Communist parties, and even more the popularity of Communism and Marxism among the intelligentsia, created radically different conditions from those in America or Great Britain. Americans looking from across the Atlantic were puzzled and frustrated by the local intellectuals, who repeatedly challenged their notions of anti-Communism.

Chapter 5 analyzes the activities of the two national committees operating in France and Italy, and their relationship with the central organization. It describes the day-to-day operations and how they were reported to the International Secretariat in Paris. I discuss the activities of the officers responsible for the national organizations, and their double role as international members and national organizers. I also trace the instances of disagreement or conflict, both over the general policies of the CCF and the local operations of the committees. The way in which these tensions were addressed and resolved suggests the negotiated character of the CCF activities, and the danger of oversimplifying the cultural Cold War at the local level.

The last two chapters focus on the two magazines sponsored by the Congress for Cultural Freedom, *Preuves* in France (1951-1969) and *Tempo Presente* in Italy (1956-1968). I examine their output, the dominant themes, and regular contributors to highlight the role of the magazines in a broader international network of intellectuals. The chapters also pay special attention to the portrayal of America and its society for European readers by examining the recurring themes and the choice of articles. Finally, I discuss the reaction to the controversies that followed the revelations of CIA funding in the late 1960s, and the collapse of the Congress for Cultural Freedom. French and Italian intellectuals responded to the scandal by defending their record and independence, but

were troubled by the discovery of their collaboration with a symbol of the U.S. establishment. The debates that the revelations spurred went beyond issues of independence and responsibility, to touch on the nature of Cold War anti-Communism and the personal and political experiences of those that had lent their name to the Congress, both in Europe and in the United States.

CHAPTER 1

“A NEW LEAGUE OF RESISTANCE”: THE UNLIKELY FOUNDING FATHERS OF COLD WAR LIBERALISM

In the tense days of late June 1950, 118 intellectuals gathered at the Titania Palast in West Berlin to participate in an event dubbed the Congress for Cultural Freedom. Its breadth and participants were no less impressive than its goal: men from very different political and intellectual paths had come to express their support for the defense of cultural freedom and the intellectual traditions of the Western world. The promoters of the event portrayed it as “a kind of intellectual airlift” for the “grave and battered outpost of Berlin,” the “tiny island of liberty imbedded like a thorn in the flesh of the Communist state of East Germany.”¹ Behind its organizers was the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), which covertly subsidized the event as a way to bolster anti-Communist intellectuals at a time when Communism seemed to threaten Western Europe itself. The fear that Communist expansion constituted both a physical and intellectual threat seemed to find confirmation, just as the Congress gathered, in the invasion of South Korea by the Communist North. Many of the participants expressed fears that the move could be followed by a similar attack on West Berlin that would make them “prisoners of the Soviet security forces within a few hours.”²

Two men in particular, Hungarian-born writer Arthur Koestler and Italian novelist Ignazio Silone, stood out during the proceedings of the Congress. The two intellectuals, in fact, became the rallying figures for two competing viewpoints on how to address the

¹ Quoted in Job L. Dittberner, *The End of Ideology and American Social Thought: 1930-1960* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1976), 112.

² Sidney Hook, *Out of Step: An Unquiet Life in the 20th Century* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), 433.

Soviet menace. Koestler pushed for a relentless confrontation with the Communist forces, both inside and outside the Soviet bloc, and denounced their Western sympathizers and neutralist intellectuals as, at best, “imbeciles” willing to be duped by Communists. Silone suggested instead a more moderate approach, emphasizing dialogue and the need to address social ills in the Western world as well as the totalitarian threat from the East. At one point, while Silone was addressing the Berlin Congress, Koestler expressed his frustration at the Italian writer in a note scribbled to a colleague: “I always wondered whether basically Silone is honest or not. Now I know he is not.”³

Both men had been high-profile Communists in the 1920s and early 1930s, but had eventually come to see in Stalinism a mortal threat to Western society. A few months earlier they had contributed to the collection of essays *The God That Failed*, which denounced the betrayal of the initial hopes that many intellectuals had held in the previous years. Koestler would have probably found little to disagree with in Silone’s gloomy prediction that “the final struggle will be between the Communists and the ex-Communists.”⁴ Despite their common experiences, however, their mutual suspicions pointed to the profound differences in the ways to conceive anti-Communism and the role of an organization like the Congress for Cultural Freedom. Such differences went beyond the personalities involved: Koestler was soon pushed to the margins of the CCF, as he increasingly dissented with the direction the organization was taking. More significantly, they pointed to a fundamental disagreement between the supporters of a hard line, including many Americans, and those Europeans whose anti-Communism was informed

³ Coleman, *The Liberal Conspiracy*, 24.

⁴ Quoted in Scott-Smith, *The Politics of Apolitical Culture*, 89.

by their personal and national backgrounds. The contrast between Koestler and Silone anticipated the peculiar ways in which CCF activities developed throughout its existence.

This chapter traces the origins of the Congress for Cultural Freedom in the intellectual developments of the 1930s and 1940s. It highlights the transnational relations that formed spontaneously between intellectuals fighting the Fascist and Communist regimes, and the continuity between their earlier efforts and those that culminated in the formation of the CCF. It also accounts for the role the Central Intelligence Agency played in bringing together these different groups and providing them with financial support impossible to obtain in Europe. When the delegates met in West Berlin in June 1950, they brought with them the lessons and experiences of the previous decades. Those elements – radical militancy and disillusion, anti-Fascist resistance, and the experience of World War II – informed their respective worldviews. The onset of the Cold War contributed to bringing them together in opposition to the expansion of Communism; at the same time, in light of each individual's unique preceding experiences, they would not always agree on the specific strategies to employ.

The Berlin Congress and the organization that developed owed their success to the personal and political ties that these intellectuals had formed over the years as much as to the covert sponsorship of the CIA. The event was the culmination of the personal and political evolution of many of those involved, and its origins lay in the previous two decades as much as in the Cold War climate of the late 1940s. The periodization and the geographic scope of the accounts of the foundation of the CCF are therefore central to the image of the organization that one wants to convey. To concentrate mainly on the CIA sponsorship implies an emphasis on the extent to which American money and strategic

interests helped shape a Cold War consensus in which foreign partners were willing accomplices or at best unwitting assets.⁵ Conversely, to stress only the continuity between the anti-Fascist and anti-Communist militancy of intellectuals on both sides of the Atlantic between the 1930s and the 1950s obscures the element of novelty that the involvement of the CIA brought to Western intellectual life. Both elements are important to understand the competing notions of cultural freedom and anti-Communism that met at the Titania Palast in the summer of 1950.

The “Raw Material of History”: European Intellectuals in the 1930s and 1940s

The experiences of dictatorship and war of the 1930s and 1940s indelibly marked the generation of European intellectuals who would form one of the main elements of the CCF, in a way that even their American contemporaries did not experience. For those who opposed Mussolini’s regime in Italy or Hitler’s in Germany, exile or underground resistance proved to be a grim necessity by the mid-1930s. Scattered and often divided about the most effective opposition to the fascist regimes, and by the end of the decade increasingly dismayed by the continuing support that the dictatorships apparently enjoyed among the population, these groups had limited impact on their countries’ politics. Nonetheless, their common condition allowed them to form a network of anti-totalitarian thinkers in Europe and across the Atlantic, and to develop relations that lasted into the Cold War era. While hardly sympathetic to the Soviet Union, for most of these intellectuals Communism was rarely the most pressing concern at this time. One of the most influential of these circles was the Italian *Giustizia e libertà* (Justice and Liberty) a

⁵ The most significant example of this interpretation is Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*.

gathering of liberal socialist exiles in Paris devoted to overthrowing Fascism and establishing a democratic regime sensitive to issues of social justice. Within its ranks was Nicola Chiaromonte, a young journalist and critic who fled Italy in 1935 to avoid arrest.⁶

A distinctive strand of European intellectual life in the interwar period was that of Communist intellectuals and – by the end of the 1930s – ex-Communists who had come to reject either Marxism or the socialism practiced in the Soviet Union. In many ways, the experience of more or less brief membership in a Communist movement or of radical political militancy was characteristic of the “pink decade,” as some scholars have described the 1930s. In those years, economic depression and the rise of fascist movements in Europe seemed to indicate the exhaustion of liberal democracy as a viable system. The Soviet Union, with its promise of a radical regeneration of society, appeared to many as the last bulwark against fascism. For those who declared their allegiance to the USSR, the political line reflected the sometimes-conflicting instructions that Moscow sent to the Communist Parties in the West. Thus, Communist intellectuals joined in the Popular Front tactics that encouraged a broad alliance between all opposition to the Fascist and Nazi regime in August 1935, or at other times pursued a strategy of clearly separating themselves from socialist and other progressive forces. The use of Communist intellectuals and sympathizers for the interests of the Soviet Union was especially effective under the leadership of Willi Münzenberg, a German-born Soviet agent. His groups and committees, formally devoted to apolitical or universal causes, attracted

⁶ On the organization and its leading figure, Carlo Rosselli, see Stanislaw G. Pugliese, *Carlo Rosselli: Socialist Heretic and Anti-Fascist Exile* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

independent and progressive intellectuals for the real purpose of defending the interests of the Soviet Union and the Communist movement.⁷

Regardless of political affiliations, the Spanish Civil War marked a fundamental event for all European intellectuals. The conflict between the democratically elected Republicans and General Franco's Nationalists represented for many a symbolic and clear-cut confrontation between democracy and fascism. Artists and writers mobilized to an unprecedented extent – at least for a conflict in which a cause, rather than their country, was at stake. Many supported the Spanish Republic in their works, but a sizeable number went on to volunteer and fight in the war itself. To explain the emotional significance of the Civil War, an English participant suggested that anti-Fascist volunteers were attracted to and united by “the chance to make one grand and uncomplicated gesture of personal sacrifice and faith, which might never occur again,” almost a new morality.⁸

By the end of the conflict, however, the conduct of the Communist forces had left many European and American intellectuals bitterly disillusioned. They accused Communists of being more concerned to eliminate their opponents within the Republican camp (mostly Trotskyites) than to fight against the Nationalists. Many intellectuals were also becoming deeply concerned with the Soviet Union and its political and intellectual effect on European life. News of the Moscow Trials, which reached the West with difficulty, were very troublesome even for some militants: rather than a progressive force,

⁷ On Münzenberg see Sean McMeekin, *The Red Millionaire: A Political Biography of Willi Münzenberg: Moscow's Secret Propaganda Tsar in the West* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003); Wilford, *The Mighty Wurlitzer*, 11-15.

⁸ Quoted in Eric Hobsbawm, “War of Ideas,” *The Guardian*, 16 February 2007. See also Stanley Weintraub, *The Last Great Cause: The Intellectuals and the Spanish Civil War* (New York: Weybright and Talley, 1968).

Stalin's regime appeared now as a brutal dictatorship interested more in consolidating its power than in promoting revolution.⁹ The Nazi-Soviet pact of August 1939, and the tacit accord to share the spoils of Poland after the German invasion, dealt a serious blow to the image of Communism among all but its core supporters for years. By the end of the 1930s, then, a growing contingent of European and American intellectuals – what French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty had disparagingly dubbed the “league of lost hopes”¹⁰ – had completed its break with Communism. These men were increasingly persuaded that the Soviet Union would be a totalitarian threat to liberal democracies as dangerous as Hitler's Germany. The links and personal contacts established in the war years provided them with an international network of like-minded individuals who would later emerge as a precious resource for American policymakers interested in combating Communist influence at the peak of the Cold War.

Several key figures of the CCF were in fact ex-Communists who had broken with the Soviet Union while retaining some socialist affiliation. As former CIA operative Thomas Braden would later put it, they were at the time “the only people who gave a damn about fighting Communism” in Europe.¹¹ Koestler and Silone were the two most prestigious members of this club, although by no means the only ones. Arthur Koestler was born into a middle-class family in Hungary in 1905, but had converted to the Communist cause in his youth and moved first to Germany and later to Paris. He had worked with Münzenberg to mobilize Communist and fellow-traveling intellectuals in the

⁹ The trials, which were part of Stalin's purge of internal opponents and rivals, took place between 1936 and 1938. They were largely staged and included forced confessions from the defendants, who admitted to have conspired to overthrow the Soviet regime and restore capitalism. Although the Western Communist parties defended them, many observers found the accusations to be utterly absurd.

¹⁰ Quoted in Grémion, *Intelligence de l'anticommunisme*, 162.

¹¹ Thomas W. Braden, “I'm Glad the CIA is 'Immoral,’” *Saturday Evening Post*, 20 May 1967, 10.

1930s – he later mourned the decade as an “abortive revolution of the spirit, a misfired Renaissance, a false dawn of history”¹² – and barely survived imprisonment during the Spanish Civil War. His disillusionment with Stalin and the Soviet Union was a result of the Moscow trials and the Nazi-Soviet pact, and produced the powerful denunciation of his novel *Darkness at Noon*. The book, which was a huge commercial success in France partly because the Parti Communiste Français (PCF) employed the harebrained strategy of buying copies to remove them from circulation,¹³ portrayed the abuses of totalitarian ideology and the physical and psychological violence of such regimes. In a trip to the United States in 1948, Koestler not only met with American and exiled European intellectuals, but also established contacts with U.S. officials in the State Department and the CIA interested in supporting the non-Communist left in Europe.¹⁴ The discussions did not immediately lead to Koestler’s involvement with American covert operations, but his passionate anti-Communism and his knowledge of Communist-style techniques to mobilize and recruit intellectuals made him a logical choice for the Congress for Cultural Freedom a few years later.

Ignazio Silone was in many ways the mirror image of Koestler, which contributed to the almost natural opposition between the two at the Berlin Congress and in part overshadowed their similarities. Koestler was a cosmopolitan Jew (a “homeless mind,” in the words of his biographer), bellicose and divisive in his crusading tones. Silone, a taciturn and mild-mannered Socialist, was profoundly shaped in his formation and work by the medieval Christianity and peasant culture of his origins. He later admitted that “everything that I may have written up to now, and probably everything I will write in the

¹² Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*, 2.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 60.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 62-63; David Cesarani, *Arthur Koestler: The Homeless Mind* (London: William Heinemann, 1998).

future, even though I have traveled and lived abroad for many years, refers only to that part of the country which can be seen from the house where I was born.”¹⁵ The place was Pescina, in the Italian region of the Abruzzi, where Silone was born on May 1, 1900. The experience of the extreme poverty of the Abruzzese peasants and of the structural system of oppression and exploitation by the upper classes contributed to his youthful involvement in the socialist movement, which he and others left in 1921 to found the Italian Communist Party. Silone’s rise in the ranks of the international movement – as a former member of the Executive of the Communist International he would be the CCF member to have held the highest position in the Communist hierarchy¹⁶ – led him to travel to Moscow and to meet Lenin, Stalin, Trotsky and other leaders. It also allowed him to see first-hand some of the disturbing elements of the working of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (PCUS), which he later recalled in the autobiographical account published in *The God That Failed*.¹⁷

His break with the Soviet Union came earlier than for many, in the late 1920s, as a result of his dissent from the increasingly dogmatic and dictatorial line of the Party both in Moscow and in Rome. The experience marked Silone for the rest of his life, as he observed decades later: “The truth is that you don’t free yourself from the Communist Party the way you resign from the Liberal Party, chiefly because your ties with the party are in proportion to the sacrifices they exact.” After devoting one’s life to a totalitarian institution that is “school, church, barracks and family,” Silone wrote, “one is cured of Communism the way one is cured of a neurosis.”¹⁸ Around the same time, Silone

¹⁵ Ignazio Silone, *Emergency Exit* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 64.

¹⁶ Coleman, *The Liberal Conspiracy*, 25.

¹⁷ R. H. S. Crossman, ed., *The God That Failed* (New York: Harper, 1950).

¹⁸ Silone, *Emergency Exit*, 89-90.

collaborated with a member of the Fascist police, who used Silone as an informant on the underground network of Communist cells for at least two years. The writer's "multilevel value system," in the words of Volker R. Berghahn,¹⁹ was at least in part dictated by the attempt to save his brother Romolo, who had been arrested by the Fascist police and would later die in prison. Historians continue to debate, however, the extent and the duration of Silone's collaboration, and whether it began as early as the beginning of the 1920s.²⁰ In ending his collaboration with the police Silone wrote, with words that some have interpreted as an admission of guilt, that he wished to eliminate from his life "all that is falsehood, duplicity, misunderstanding, mystery. [...] What I want is to live morally."²¹ In the following years, Silone largely withdrew from active political life and moved to Switzerland, writing two of his most influential novels that gained him international fame and the reputation of anti-totalitarian writer.

Fontamara, published in 1933, was set in Silone's Abruzzi – the eponymous fictional town was a barely disguised portrayal of Silone's hometown as he remembered it from his exile – but its themes were universal. The *cafoni*, the peasants trying to resist the prevarications of wealthy landowners assisted by the authorities, remain a powerful symbol for oppressed classes and groups seeking social justice. As Terry Cooney has highlighted, Silone's work drew the attention of a wide international audience, including the circle around the *Partisan Review* magazine in the United States. The novel offered the promise of a radical literature, anti-Stalinist but still within the parameters of Marxism. *Bread and Wine*, published in 1937, was troubling however to some New York

¹⁹ Berghahn, *America and the Intellectual Cold Wars in Europe*, 124.

²⁰ Opposite positions on the "caso Silone" are in Dario Biocca and Mauro Canali, *L'informatore: Silone, i comunisti e la polizia* (Milan: Luni, 2000) and in Giuseppe Tamburrano, Gianna Granati, and Alfonso Isinelli, *Processo a Silone: la disavventura di un povero cristiano* (Manduria: Lacaita, 2001).

²¹ Quoted in Dario Biocca, *Silone: la doppia vita di un italiano* (Milan: Rizzoli, 2005), 153. My translation.

intellectuals. Silone's growing concern with the moral struggles of radical intellectuals abandoning Stalinism resulted in a re-evaluation of religion and a partial repudiation of politics, both hard to embrace for them. *Partisan Review's* ambivalent praise of Silone illustrated at the same time the prestige that the Italian author enjoyed within the transnational network of anti-Stalinist intellectuals, but also the differences in their outlook and interests.²² In a biographical profile written almost a decade later, Nicola Chiaromonte, a friend and colleague of Silone, drew an explicit distinction between the Italian novelists and other famous ex-Communists like Koestler or George Orwell. "Of all the well-known defectors from Communism," he wrote, "Silone is the only one who has remained faithful to the transformation of the world through justice and, more concretely, to the salvation of the wretched (*salut des misérables*)."²³

Manès Sperber, although less known than Koestler or Silone, was another important figure of the CCF with a Communist past. A Galician Jew, he moved from Vienna to Berlin in his youth, where he joined the Communist Party and had first-hand experience of its mistakes in opposing Nazism. He eventually settled in Paris and left the Party in 1937, when the Moscow Trials marked the final stage of his detachment from the Soviet Union. After World War II, he worked for the French publishing house Calmann-Lévy, and joined the community of Eastern European exiles gathered in Paris at the time. His role at the Berlin Congress was mostly behind the scenes, but his most important contribution was in drafting the Manifesto with Koestler and having it approved by the participants. As Tony Judt noted, his influence on the CCF during and after its founding

²² Terry A. Cooney, *The Rise of the New York Intellectuals: Partisan Review and Its Circle* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986), 146-52, 210-11.

²³ Quoted in Grémion, *Intelligence de l'anticommunisme*, 478. My translation.

act made him an unlikely “founding father of cold war liberalism,” given his lifelong allegiance to the non-Communist left.²⁴

American intellectuals in the 1930s and 1940s: Partisans and Politics

The convulsions of the 1930s deeply influenced American as well as European intellectuals, although in different ways. The radicalization of the “pink decade” led many of them to more or less brief flirtations with Marxism in one form or another – Trotskyism in particular – and to a profound interest in the Soviet Union, first as a herald of progress and later as a totalitarian threat. The existence of a transatlantic network of writers and thinkers ensured a dialogue between Europe and the U.S., and encouraged American intellectuals to look with interest to the personal and political trajectories of militancy and deradicalization of the period.

In discussing U.S. intellectual history of the interwar period and the Cold War era, it is impossible to ignore the centrality of a distinctive group of writers and thinkers who are now commonly grouped under the label “New York Intellectuals.” Among them are figures that have gained distinction as sociologists and professors (Daniel Bell, Nathan Glazer), journalists and magazine editors (Irving Kristol, Irving Howe, Dwight Macdonald), writers and literary critics (Mary McCarthy, Saul Bellow). While their political trajectories were as varied as their professional careers – some of them formed the core of the neoconservative movement in the 1960s and 1970s, others remained socialists and radicals throughout their lives – some common elements united most of them. One was the Jewish origin of several intellectuals, which entailed a peculiar

²⁴ Tony Judt, *Reappraisals: Reflections on the Forgotten Twentieth Century* (London: William Heinemann, 2008), 64.

outlook on American society, issues of assimilation and alienation, and debates on modernity. Equally important was the coming of age of the first generation of New York intellectuals in the climate of the 1930s, when the fascination with radical politics and Marxist theory was at a peak in America. The sectarian clashes between orthodox Stalinists and dissenting Trotskyist groups made them at the same time acutely aware of the subtleties of Communist doctrine and relentlessly hostile to Stalin and the Soviet Union.²⁵

The group that gathered around the New York magazine *Partisan Review* was arguably the most influential circle of the American left-wing intelligentsia between the 1930s and the 1960s. As Terry Cooney has pointed out, “defining an intellectual circle is not an exercise in precision; any list of members or affiliates must draw on informal as well as formal contacts and on evidence of shared assumptions as well as on openly expressed ideas. Nevertheless, though the edges of the circle may be blurred, its existence is often plainly visible.”²⁶ The magazine was created initially as an organ for the Communist John Reed Clubs, but the disagreement between its editors, William Phillips and Philip Rahv, and the Communist Party of the United States led to *Partisan Review*’s break with Stalinism.

The members of the editorial board – which also included among the others Dwight Macdonald and Mary McCarthy – then set for themselves and the magazine a double goal. In the cultural realm, *Partisan Review* would defend and promote a

²⁵ This is necessarily an oversimplification that flattens some of the complexities of U.S. intellectual life in the 1930s. For an overview of the personal and collective experiences of these years see Cooney, *The Rise of the New York Intellectuals*; Alexander Bloom, *Prodigal Sons: The New York Intellectuals and Their World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Neil Jumonville, *Critical Crossings: The New York Intellectuals in Postwar America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Hugh Wilford, *The New York Intellectuals: From Vanguard to Institution* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995).

²⁶ Cooney, *The Rise of the New York Intellectuals*, 3.

highbrow notion of modernism in arts and literature, publishing the works of T.S. Eliot, Franz Kafka, and others. As Wilford noted, for these intellectuals this commitment constituted a last refuge for the revolutionary impulse, at a time when both capitalism and communism seemed to endanger the artist's independence from society. The defense of modernism from middlebrow culture and kitsch allowed the New York intellectuals to "adopt the program of a literary bohemia while retaining the identity of a radical political movement."²⁷ In politics, *Partisan Review* would chart the course for an alternative to Stalinism that would remain faithful to Marxist doctrine and the idea of radicalism. In doing so, its editors drew on and helped to build a transatlantic network of anti-Stalinist intellectuals, inviting them to write for the magazine or closely following their evolution and output. Internationalism was, in fact, something to which the literary anti-Stalinists associated with the magazine were naturally predisposed. Their "self-perception as beleaguered minorities, allegiance to universalist ideologies such as Marxism and Modernism, even the simple fact that so many of them were immigrants of émigrés" contributed to making *Partisan Review* a center of transatlantic intellectual contact since the 1930s.²⁸

Among those closely associated with *Partisan Review* were New York University philosophy professors Sidney Hook and James Burnham. Although both had been close to Communism in the 1930s – Burnham was a Trotskyite until the end of the decade – they were increasingly moving to the right, and shedding their criticism of American

²⁷ Wilford, *The New York Intellectuals*, 66-67. Wilford also argues that the key to understanding the role of *Partisan Review* for New York intellectuals is to view it as an "avant-garde institution." Having renounced to the range of institutional services that the Communist Party could provide, the magazine itself began to acquire some of its functions, regulating and representing the intellectual community that had developed around it. See *Ibid.*, 31-32.

²⁸ Wilford, *The CIA, the British Left and the Cold War*, 9; Wilford, *The New York Intellectuals*, 31-107.

society for a denunciation of the Soviet Union. Their evolution highlighted the disagreements with other members of the New York community, who drew different lessons from the disillusion with the Soviet Union and the experience of World War II. Dwight Macdonald was especially significant for his refusal to abandon radical positions and his continuing ambivalence toward certain aspects of U.S. domestic and foreign policy that others (above all Hook, Burnham, and the *Partisan Review* editors) were coming around to defend. Different from most other New York intellectuals for his middle-class gentile background and for having graduated from Yale, Macdonald was the expression of a strand of American leftist thought that was unusual by the 1940s. His positions, however, struck a similar note to those of many European intellectuals who would later be associated with the CCF than the Cold War liberal consensus of other Americans. Macdonald's views and contacts are therefore important to the story of the CCF in Europe from a different angle, highlighting the continuity between the pre- and post-World War II intellectual scenes, and the transatlantic connections that went beyond Cold War anti-Communism.

Although he wrote on a variety of subjects throughout his life, Macdonald's influence on American and European intellectual life was probably never as great as during the time he edited the low-budget, radical magazine *politics* between 1944 and 1949. In a prospectus that he circulated in 1943, Macdonald described the editorial line of the new publication as "anti-Stalinist, pacifist and anti-statist, committed to a Trotskyist-style 'Third Camp' position on the War, and critical of the Allied democracies' plans for post-War reconstruction of Europe," while at the same time rejecting dogmatic adherence

to particular political precepts.²⁹ According to Hugh Wilford, unlike the *Partisan Review* editors, Macdonald renounced Marxism and searched for new sources of radical thought and practice. Among the “ancestors” that *politics* discussed were Leo Tolstoy, Max Weber, Alexis de Tocqueville, and anarchic philosopher Pierre-Joseph Proudhon. Two broad themes emerged: the first was a critique of modern progressive thought, which for the magazine contributors masked a will to scientific mastery and led inevitably to the tyranny of centralized, bureaucratic state power. The second was “a broad set of proposals designed to reverse this process, by rebuilding a genuinely democratic public sphere on the basis of open, friendly relations between individuals.”³⁰

Many observers, even at the time, described *politics* as essentially a one-man – or rather a one-couple – enterprise, given the amount of time, energy and money that Macdonald and his wife Nancy spent on it. A fundamental influence on the magazine and its editor, however, came from Italian anti-fascist exile Nicola Chiaromonte. Born in 1905, Chiaromonte’s life in the first half of the century made him an exemplary case of what French novelist Albert Camus called the “raw material of history”: those European intellectuals whom the dramatic convulsions of dictatorship and war displaced and scattered across Western Europe and America.³¹ After fleeing from the Fascist police in 1935, Chiaromonte joined the circles of Italian exiles in Paris, where he denounced the Soviet Union as well as Germany and Italy. At the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War he enlisted in the air squadron organized by French writer André Malraux, an unlikely unit on the Republican side put together with volunteer fighters and obsolete planes. In

²⁹ Wilford, *The New York Intellectuals*, 138.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 150-52.

³¹ Quoted in Gregory Sumner, *Dwight Macdonald and the politics Circle: The Challenge of Cosmopolitan Democracy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), 24.

Malraux's fictional account of the experience, *Man's Hope*, Chiaromonte inspired the figure of Giovanni Scali, an art history professor who reads Plato in between missions and grows increasingly skeptical of violence and opposed to Communism. Following the Nazi invasion of France Chiaromonte fled the country in 1940, losing his first wife during the journey. After a brief stay in Casablanca and Algiers, where he met and befriended a then-unknown Albert Camus, he reached New York in 1941.

In the United States he joined the *Partisan Review* circle, but established an especially close relationship with Macdonald and Mary McCarthy. His libertarian views influenced the editor of *politics* in the attempt to define a credible alternative to both Marxism and the emerging Cold War liberalism. According to Gregory Sumner, this “radical humanism” (or “humanist radicalism”) moved from the rejection of the Enlightenment's faith in progress and rationality, its impulse toward absolute mastery, in favor of a “postmodern politics of limits,” a world of contingent truths, human dialogue and sociability.³² Chiaromonte's influence helped place *politics* in the larger context of a similar critique of modernity coming from a handful of intellectuals across the Atlantic (including Hanna Arendt and Albert Camus), which aimed at rescuing the individual from “collective abstractions and messianic ideologies.”³³ The attention to the transatlantic dimension of this radical humanism was in fact one of the distinctive characteristics of *politics*, and Macdonald himself acknowledged the Euro-American character of the magazine calling it “a kind of transplanted spore of European culture

³² Ibid., 110-46, 147-78.

³³ Ibid., 2-3.

growing in an environment that is physically and politically more favorable to free thought than that of modern Europe.”³⁴

From Transatlantic Dialogue to Anti-Communist Militancy: The Mobilization of the Late 1940s

In the spring of 1948 *politics* and its editor were struggling, both financially and ideologically. The burden of running and publishing the magazine was beginning to weigh on Macdonald’s personal assets, forcing him to turn the magazine into a bi-monthly and to skip some issues altogether. More significantly, his radical pacifism appeared increasingly untenable *vis-à-vis* the escalation of Cold War tensions with the Communist coup in Czechoslovakia and the Soviet blockade of Berlin.³⁵ Macdonald tried to overcome his frustration by reviving a notion that seemed to offer a first step toward a viable third-camp internationalism. The idea of the Europe-America Groups (EAG) had come from Albert Camus in 1945, when the end of World War II had struck the circle of *politics* – Macdonald, Mary McCarthy, Chiaromonte, Camus and others – as an opening for new radical possibilities.

The new group aimed at providing solidarity and support for “dissident” European intellectuals, those individuals outside the mass parties who felt isolated and demoralized. The hope of its creators was that the EAG would help break the isolation of intellectuals, material in Europe and moral in the U.S., by creating a network of small-

³⁴ Letters, *politics* 2 (September 1945): 285-86, in Sumner, *Dwight Macdonald and the politics Circle*, 21.

³⁵ Wilford, *The New York Intellectuals*, 168-69. In February 1948, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia took control of the government, marking the onset of one-party dictatorship and the fall of the last democratic government in Eastern Europe. The event was deeply shocking to Western observers, reinforcing the belief that Soviet expansionism should be opposed more forcefully. The Berlin Blockade lasted from June 1948 to May 1949, an unsuccessful attempt by the Soviet Union to block access to the sections of the city controlled by the Allies. The massive airlift represented a significant psychological success for the West, but seemed to confirm the fears about the aggressive nature of the Stalin regime.

scale communities, the advanced front of a “sociable culture” (*civilisation du dialogue*). It was an attempt to put in practice the theories of cosmopolitan “personal” politics and dialogue “beneath the dehumanizing bureaucratic structures of governments and parties.”³⁶ It remained strongly anti-Stalinist in its political views, describing Stalinism as the main threat to European freedom, but it also refused to identify too closely with the American cause in the Cold War. Chiaromonte in particular insisted on the need to maintain a certain degree of idealism, and to refuse the stark choice between capitalist democracy and totalitarianism that militant anti-Communists like Koestler were urging intellectuals to make.

Macdonald and Chiaromonte discussed extensively the character of the Europe-America Groups, but their views did not always match. According to the Italian, they should be small centers of information and contact based on two fundamental principles: “true internationalism” and “radical democracy.” He defined the first as “the establishment of connections between people who do not only reject nationalism, but intend to ignore national divisions between men.” The second was described as “a consistent stand in defense of the idea that respect for the “rights of man”, “civic liberties”, Freedom individual and collective, is the absolute condition of social life, and that every infringement of the “rights of man” means today either totalitarianism or the beginning of it.” Such a view did not mean, he clarified, that they should not acknowledge that things could not always be changed instantly, but merely that the EAG should refuse to compromise on their principles. The problem of the increasing polarization of the world logically followed: was the Cold War a clash between two

³⁶ Sumner, *Dwight Macdonald and the politics Circle*, 179, 192-214, Wilford, *The New York Intellectuals*, 137-62.

absolute opposites (“white” America and “black” Stalinism), or were there grey areas in both camps? Chiaromonte made it clear that he did not believe that the role of intellectuals should be to take the American side and ignore the shortcomings of its democracy: “The stupidity of the position that consists in saying that “on the whole, we support US policies, even though they are not perfect,” should be evident. The policies of a Government today are faulty by definition. The question is not of supporting them, but of changing them, if possible.” Referring to the increasingly vocal support for the U.S. government from some intellectuals (“The Boys and Hook,” specifically), he added: “This is not a position, it is a preordained act of conformism, and a very unconstructive one, from, precisely, the democratic point of view.” If a “pax Americana” was the only realistic possibility in the current situation, Chiaromonte conceded, it should be based on principles and not on “capitalistic imperialism”: “the idea that, wherever America’s influence reaches, governments should assume the risk of respecting fundamental human rights.” The record of U.S. foreign policy, on the contrary, appeared utterly disappointing and hypocritical in its exclusive concern with propping up authoritarian regimes to contain the Communist threat. “The grotesque thing,” Chiaromonte concluded ruefully, “is that, if one knows a little about America, one also knows that neither the good nor the bad, in her actions, are derived from a clear principle.”³⁷

Even Macdonald found this balancing act hard to justify at the height of the Cold War, judging it an aloofness impossible to sustain in practice.³⁸ In fact, he challenged

³⁷ Nicola Chiaromonte to Dwight Macdonald, 3 September 1948, box 10, folder 241, Dwight Macdonald Papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University (hereafter Macdonald Papers). Chiaromonte also stressed the belief in the need for political rather than military war against the Stalinist regime, and that Stalinism in Europe had already discredited itself politically and was kept alive largely by the failure of the American policies.

³⁸ Wilford, *The New York Intellectuals*, 175-76.

Chiaromonte's claim that "there is a grey side to Stalinism, too, if we start going in for nuances," and prompted his friend to declare whether or not the Stalinist regime – like the Nazi one – was "all black." Against the totalitarianism of the Soviet system, Macdonald praised – uncomfortably – the U.S. political-economic system, which at least left dissenters some degree of personal security and freedom, "a cranny, a loophole" to oppose it. Macdonald confessed his skepticism toward the kind of pacifism that he observed around him in America, dangerous and unrealistic. The only alternative he could come up with illustrated his struggle to define a viable radicalism in Cold War America: "if one continues to relate one's self to politics, then to do so within the bounds of what is possible today, right now or in the near future, that is, to cease applying ultimatum [sic] standards to political actions, which means, for example, supporting the Marshall Plan. [...] In short," he admitted, "political questions seem more insoluble than ever."³⁹ The different positions within the EAG suggested that U.S. and European intellectuals responded differently to the issues that the new bipolar order posed, and on the appropriate response to the Soviet threat. Those nuances would later be reflected in the attitudes of the different branches of the Congress for Cultural Freedom toward America and the Cold War: the Italian and French affiliates never subscribed to U.S. foreign policy to the extent that many American intellectuals did, maintaining a critical attitude that was sometimes read as anti-Americanism.

Despite the high hopes of Macdonald and McCarthy, the EAG never really got off the ground for several reasons. The first was the lack of a clear program and the hesitations of its main supporters, who struggled to define their goals beyond the vague

³⁹ Dwight Macdonald to Nicola Chiaromonte, 14 September 1948, box 2, folder 53, Nicola Chiaromonte Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University (hereafter Chiaromonte Papers).

formulation of a radicalism based on freedom and social justice. Camus himself became absorbed in domestic politics after returning to France, and failed to keep in touch with Macdonald. Another major problem was that the New York intellectual community, which should have provided support to its European counterparts, was far from united on the political and ideological premises of the enterprise. Although the *Partisan Review* editors and Sidney Hook signed the EAG manifesto and contributed to its fund-raising activities in the first months, they held increasingly different views on radicalism and the need to support America's Cold War efforts. Wilford explains the apparent contradiction of the involvement of the more "hawkish" elements among the New York intellectuals by speculating that, while skeptical about the more idealistic aspects of EAG, the *Partisan Review* circle was interested in the potential of the group as an anti-Stalinist weapon, and attempted to take over the organization to give it a more militant character.

A remark by Hook showed how little he was convinced by the elements of the project that did not touch directly on the Cold War. The NYU philosopher dismissed Chiaromonte's ideas, which provided the ideological bedrock of EAG, in unambiguous terms: his "metaphysical aberrations can be excused since he didn't have the benefit of an American education until too late, and it is clear that his heart is in the right place."⁴⁰ The tensions between the different factions in New York included a failed "coup" by Hook and his allies to take control of the organization. As Wilford noted, despite the failure by the *Partisan Review* group to turn the EAG into an anti-Stalinist organization, their efforts were not without consequences: "they succeeded in making its legacy not one of

⁴⁰ Sumner, *Dwight Macdonald and the politics Circle*, 206. Wilford recounted an episode that seems to confirm that the New York intellectuals' cold reception toward the EAG was also in part due to personal animosities: writer James Farrell responded to a lecture series by Chiaromonte on radical alternatives to Marxism observing "At least Marxism isn't boring and you are." Wilford, *The New York Intellectuals*, 164.

experiments in new forms of radicalism but of precursor of cultural Cold War committees.”⁴¹ Such difficulties eventually led McCarthy to withdraw from the EAG, leaving it without its animating force. The Europe-America Groups eventually folded in the spring of 1949, after months of paralysis caused by the divisions among their officers and members. Anti-Communism provided a more urgent and clearly-defined cause for U.S. intellectuals at the time, as Macdonald himself questioned his pacifism at a time when the Cold War seemed to preclude the possibility of a viable third camp. Chiaromonte urged Macdonald at least to keep the formula alive as a way to publicize and defend humanist principles, but Macdonald could think of few intellectuals with whom he would want to “plunge into brotherhood.”⁴²

With few exceptions, scholars have not devoted much attention to the Europe-America Groups and to the project of radical humanism that Macdonald and Chiaromonte tried to formulate in the late 1940s. When they have, they have tended to view it in the context of Macdonald’s or the New York intellectuals’ political disputes or as a potential path not taken in the postwar period. The experience of *politics* and the EAG, however, are also significant in the context of the history of the Congress for Cultural Freedom and its competing views about modernity, society, and the postwar order. Beside the limits of the project itself, the initiative lost its original impulse because some of the men who had contributed to the establishment of this transatlantic network of intellectuals – Chiaromonte, Camus – had returned to Europe and devoted themselves to the dramatic task of the reconstruction of democratic societies there. At least in the case of Chiaromonte, however (Camus’s case being unique also due to his uneasiness about

⁴¹ Wilford, *The CIA, the British Left and the Cold War*, 32-33.

⁴² Sumner, *Dwight Macdonald and the politics Circle*, 211; Wilford, *The New York Intellectuals*, 178.

playing the role of political and intellectual leader), such instances remained alive in his involvement with the Congress for Cultural Freedom both internationally and in Italy.

As tensions surrounding the Europe-America Groups proved, however, a more militant opposition to the Soviet Union was rapidly developing. The onset of the Cold War accelerated the replacement of the more ambivalent and radical positions in the United States and among the New York intellectuals in the 1930s and early 1940s. The *Partisan Review* circle, together with Hook and Burnham, was once again at the forefront of this process. After the failure of the EAG, the more hawkish elements promoted a new organization, the Friends of Russian Freedom (FRF), whose main goal was more explicitly to fight Communism. The FRF barely had the time to issue a manifesto before its officers replaced it with an even more aggressive and militant group, the Americans for Intellectual Freedom (AIF). The event that precipitated the shift was the announcement of the Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace, to be held in March 1949 at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, in midtown Manhattan. The Conference was part of the frontist strategy promoted by the Soviet Union, which aimed at presenting Communists as defenders of world peace against American imperialism. Its purpose was to rally neutralist and fellow-traveling intellectuals against the anti-Soviet policy of the U.S. government.⁴³

Members of the AIF joined the conference's public sessions to ask embarrassing questions about Stalinist repression to the Western and Soviet participants, who were also being denounced in the press as fellow-travelers and watched by the FBI.⁴⁴ The most dramatic episode was when Nicolas Nabokov, a Russian émigré to America, asked Soviet

⁴³ Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*, 45-56; Wilford, *The Mighty Wurlitzer*, 70-71.

⁴⁴ Wilford, *The Mighty Wurlitzer*, 70-71; Wilford, *The New York Intellectuals*, 196-97; Berghahn, *America and the Intellectual Cold Wars in Europe*, 129.

composer Dmitri Shostakovich whether he agreed with the condemnation of three Western composers – including Igor Stravinsky – as “decadent bourgeois formalists” and “lackeys of imperial capitalism.” The judgment had come from *Pravda*, the official voice of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and in the eyes of anti-Communists showed the subordination of cultural and artistic values to the dictatorship of the Party. Shostakovich answered Nabokov’s question by muttering his agreement with the *Pravda*’s statements.⁴⁵

Pointing out that the Soviet composer was more a hostage of his own delegation than a willing representative of Stalin’s regime, Frances Stonor Saunders has observed that Nabokov and his colleagues were “throwing punches at a man whose arms were tied behind his back.”⁴⁶ There is some truth to the fact that some artists and writers in the Eastern bloc probably resented the “simple-mindedness” of a certain kind of American anti-Communism, and that they suspected that U.S. intellectuals were not concerned with the fate of dissidents. At the same time, Shostakovich also had little doubts about what side of the Western debate on cultural freedom he thought more hypocritical, as he demonstrated in an outburst against Spanish painter and Communist sympathizer Pablo Picasso:

Don’t speak to me of him, he’s a bastard... Yes, Picasso, that bastard, hails Soviet power and our communist system at a time when his followers here are persecuted, hounded, and not allowed to work. [...] I too am a bastard, coward and so on, but I’m living in a prison. You can understand that I’m living in a prison, and that I’m frightened for my children and for myself. But he’s living in freedom, and he doesn’t have to tell lies. [...] [Picasso and other Western fellow-travelers] live in a world which no doubt has its problems, but they are free to speak the

⁴⁵ Decades later the composer would recall how the Soviet authorities had forced him to travel to New York, and his horror at thinking that upon his return he would be a dead man. For an account of Shostakovich’s personal travails and the background of his participation see Philip Deery, “Shostakovich, the Waldorf Conference and the Cold War,” *American Communist History* 11 (2012) 161-80.

⁴⁶ Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*, 50.

truth and to work, and they can do what their conscience dictates. And Picasso's revolting dove of peace! How I hate it! I despise the slavery of ideas as much as I despise physical slavery.⁴⁷

The Waldorf counter-demonstrations were a success and a turning point in the mobilization of the New York intellectual milieu. A partial exception was Macdonald, who confessed his discomfort at the alliance with picketing nuns outside the hotel, and his surprise at finding he had a lot in common with the conference participants against whom he had just protested.⁴⁸ Nonetheless, the event galvanized the members of the Americans for Intellectual Freedom and those who watched with favor to such initiatives in Washington's official circles. A month later, however, some of the same people had to face a much more depressing scene in Paris, which reminded them of the challenges that militant anti-Communism would encounter in Western Europe. The event was the "International Day of Resistance to Dictatorship and War," organized by David Rousset, a former inmate of Nazi concentration camps who was leading a campaign for an inquiry into the camp system in the Soviet Union, and the newspaper *Franc-Tireur*. The International Day reflected the French political situation more than the intentions of its American participants, as they were soon to find out. The area of the political spectrum to which Rousset appealed was that of the Rassemblement Démocratique Révolutionnaire (RDR), a left-wing galaxy of forces and individuals who rejected a bipolar confrontation between the two superpowers and searched for a viable third camp. Many of the participants were therefore as critical of the United States as of the Soviet Union, a

⁴⁷ Quoted in *Elizabeth Wilson, Shostakovich: A Life Remembered* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 271-72. The "dove of peace" that Shostakovich referred to was a drawing by Picasso that had become the symbol of the Partisans for Peace.

⁴⁸ Coleman, *The Liberal Conspiracy*, 12; Sumner, *Dwight Macdonald and the politics Circle*, 220.

position that many Americans considered – with only relative exaggeration – to be driven by widespread anti-Americanism among the French and other Western Europeans.⁴⁹

Sidney Hook discussed the experience in an article for *Partisan Review* published in July 1949, in which he could barely conceal his frustration at European intellectuals who “are excited by ideological novelties but are politically very immature.”⁵⁰ The RDR, devoid of mass following but with “considerable snob appeal,” had failed in Hook’s eyes to draw a sharp distinction from the simultaneous Congress of World Partisans for Peace in Paris, which had provided the reason for Rousset’s initiative. The organizers had for example invited to speak representatives of the Communist front Partisans for Peace, but failed to invite figures like Koestler, Burnham, or Aron, who “towered intellectually above most of the other participants.” The result was the incredibly low political level of the speeches, which prompted Hook to write that “not since I was a boy thirty years ago listening to the soap-boxers in Madison Square have I heard such banalities and empty rhetoric.”⁵¹

⁴⁹ The RDR was the most significant case of a political party “created and directed exclusively by intellectuals.” It never reached the organizational and ideological coherence of a party, lacking a clear platform and constituency. Many of its members shared with the Parti Communiste Français (PCF) a belief in the need for fundamental changes in French political and social life. Following the movement’s failure to establish a “third force” on the Left, some of its members, like philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre, moved toward the PCF, while others grew increasingly anti-Communist. Its failure was a demonstration of the impossibility, in postwar France, of advocating a combination of socialism, neutralism, and anti-colonialism without being associated with the Communist Party. See Pascal Ory and Jean-François Sirinelli, *Les intellectuels en France, de l’affaire Dreyfus à nos jours* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1986), 165-67; Michael Scott Christofferson, *French Intellectuals Against the Left: The Antitotalitarian Moment of the 1970s* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2004), 31-32.

⁵⁰ Sidney Hook, “Report on the International Day Against Dictatorship and War,” *Partisan Review* 16 n. 7 (July 1949), 722.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 726. The Partisans for Peace were a Communist front organization campaigning against weapons of mass destruction and the “warmongering imperialism” of the United States. See Lawrence S. Wittner, *One World or None: A History of the World Disarmament Movement Through 1953* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993); David Caute, *The Fellow-Travelers*, second edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).

French anti-Americanism was an especially pressing concern for Hook, who observed that virtually no one in the country seemed immune from some form of it. Even Rousset and *Franc-Tireur* had until recently followed the line of the Parti Communist Français “rather faithfully but with greater sensationalism and demagogy.” They had dropped the exclusively anti-American line only after Rousset and Georges Altman, two of the newspaper’s editors, had discovered in a recent trip “that the U.S. was neither decadent nor neo-Fascist, that Negroes are not lynched on every street corner, and that a strong union-trade movement was leading the struggle for progressive social legislation.” Even then, the magazine was “leaning over backward” to criticize American foreign policy and the Atlantic Pact in order to respond to the PCF’s accusations of being agents of American imperialism.⁵² Hook observed that the automatic association of criticism toward the Soviet Union with even more vehement attacks on American imperialism was common to most of the speakers, and worried that such an equivalence would undermine European will to resist any act of Soviet aggression. The philosopher went on to note that to American liberals the most difficult thing to understand was the reluctance of the non-Communist left to speak out openly against the USSR, combined with the bellicose anti-American rhetoric.

The larger problem was that the intellectuals’ position only reflected a general hostility to the U.S. among the public, which was “shockingly ignorant” of American society and culture. Its sources were the novels of social protest and revolt like Steinbeck’s *Grapes of Wrath*, Faulkner’s “novels of American degeneracy,” American

⁵² Hook, “Report on the International Day Against Dictatorship and War,” 722-23.

movies and Communist propaganda.⁵³ Hook stated therefore that “*the informational reeducation of the French public seems to me to be the most fundamental as well as most pressing task of American democratic policy in France,*” lamenting that nothing had yet been done. Significantly, he denied that it would require a “propaganda campaign” and assured that it would be enough to present the “sober facts” about American life, positive and negative, to generate a revolution in this attitude.⁵⁴

Echoes of Hook’s scathing judgments on a certain section of the French intelligentsia would remain in the opinions that Americans expressed about Italian and French members of the CCF in later years, although tempered by their more militant anti-Communism. From the view of neutralism as political immaturity to the unjustified anti-Americanism, Hook and others were forced to reckon with the especially unfavorable conditions for the kind of cultural offensive they would launch a year later with the help of covert CIA support. As the following chapters will discuss, anti-Americanism was an undisputed reality of European life – especially in France and Italy. At the same time, Hook’s predictions that a simple exposure of the nature of American society would greatly counter its hostile perception abroad proved to be too optimistic. Even those intellectuals who had first-hand experience of America, and unambiguously denounced the Soviet Union as the greatest threat to cultural freedom, showed a fundamental

⁵³ According to Richard Pells, what Hook lamented was a common feature of European intellectuals’ views of the U.S. throughout the twentieth century, namely the tendency to “base anti-American prejudices on the works of its most disenchanting and acerbic authors.” See Richard H. Pells, *Not Like Us: How Europeans Have Loved, Hated, and Transformed American Culture since World War II* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 19-20.

⁵⁴ Hook, “Report on the International Day Against Dictatorship and War,” 731. Emphasis in the original. Frances Stonor Saunders has argued that Hook’s notion that anti-Americanism could be eroded by “cleansing European minds” was in fact tantamount to advocating “the purging of those expressions of American life which he judged to be in conflict with the government’s ‘democratic policy’ abroad.” This was, she concluded, “a monumental distortion of the very principles of freedom of expression, irreconcilable with the claims of liberal democracy under whose auspices it was proposed.” Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*, 70.

difference with their U.S. counterparts who were willing to embrace wholeheartedly American foreign policy at the outset of the Cold War. Chiaromonte, for example, had cautioned Mary McCarthy against too close an involvement with the Waldorf counterdemonstration on similar grounds. In particular, he was suspicious of the “preordained act of conformism” that led many American intellectuals to more or less explicitly support the American position: “What the boys [*Partisan Review* editors Phillips and Rahv] and Hook do in the last analysis, is not to say they are happy about the State Department, but that finally they are prepared to yield to American *raison d’Etat* as against the Russians.”⁵⁵ Clearly, “exposure to the nature of American society” had not been enough to move Chiaromonte to support fully it in the Cold War, despite Hook’s predictions. The CCF and its patrons would have to come to terms with this reality, and they would repeatedly express their frustration about it.

“It Will Take All the Careful Transatlantic Planning We Can Muster”: The Involvement of American authorities from the OSS to the CIA

On March 27, 1949, the final day of the Waldorf-Astoria conference, the Americans for Intellectual Freedom held a rally at the conveniently named Freedom House. It attracted such a large crowd that police had to rope off a block on 40th Street between Fifth and Sixth Avenue, while the speeches were broadcast via loudspeakers to the people in Bryant Park.⁵⁶ After Nabokov had finished addressing the audience in the room, he recalled in his autobiography, he was approached by an acquaintance from his experience with the U.S. Office of Military Government (OMGUS) in Berlin after the

⁵⁵ Quoted in Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*, 55.

⁵⁶ Wilford, *The Mighty Wurlitzer*, 71; Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*, 54

war. The man was Michael Josselson, who after congratulating Nabokov on the “splendid affair” that he and his friends had set up suggested that they should organize something along the same lines in Berlin.⁵⁷ Nabokov’s account, as Saunders and other scholars have pointed out, is a more or less conscious distortion of the nature of the encounter, which was not a coincidence but rather the consequence of the actions that American intelligence and political leaders had undertaken.

Their interest in the anti-Communist activities of American and European intellectuals had developed over the previous years, and in fact dated back to World War II. The Office of Strategic Service (OSS), set up in 1942, was an intelligence agency dedicated to collecting and analyzing strategic information. Its purpose was to concentrate more effectively functions that were dispersed between several military and civilian agencies. As Wilford concludes, the record of the outfit during the conflict was a mixture of severe shortcomings and remarkable acts of bravery. More importantly, the OSS displayed some traits that would reemerge in its successor, the Central Intelligence Agency: a predilection for covert actions, the prevalence in its ranks of a distinctive Ivy-League, internationalist and liberal-minded milieu, and a tendency to “reach inward into American society” to recruit academics, émigrés and labor officials – despite the prohibition against operating at home.⁵⁸ During World War II, the OSS established links with European leftists and resistance movements opposed to the Axis powers, which the Cold War-era support for anti-Communist figures would later resemble. Ignazio Silone

⁵⁷ Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*, 54.

⁵⁸ Wilford, *The Mighty Wurlitzer*, 18.

was one of the people who collaborated with the OSS, which helped smuggle him back into Italy to work with the resistance networks already in place.⁵⁹

The end of the conflict brought about the dissolution of the agency, which could not overcome Truman's hostility and Americans' uneasiness with the idea of a permanent intelligence agency in peacetime. When the head of the OSS, William J. Donovan, handed Truman his proposal for a spy agency in the Oval Office, the president tore the envelope in two and handed it back to him.⁶⁰ Soon, however, the fear of Soviet expansionism forced the White House to reconsider the need for a powerful centralized body dedicated to gathering and analyzing intelligence. In July 1947, Truman thus established the Central Intelligence Agency and the National Security Council (NSC), whose functions were left unclear enough to later expand into covert operation against the Soviet Union.⁶¹ Only in 1948, however, did the CIA embark more decisively on the path of covert operations as the most effective way to operate in the theaters of the Cold War, with the National Security Council's directives NSC-4A and NSC-10/2. The inspiration behind the policy was diplomat George Kennan, and the application fell onto the newly created Office for Policy Coordination (OPC), whose staff was formally part of the CIA but in fact under Kennan's Policy Planning Staff (PPS) at the State Department.⁶² The head of the OPC – whose name, according to Saunders, was on purpose innocuous enough “to ensure plausibility while revealing practically nothing of

⁵⁹ Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*, 75. See also Stanislaw G. Pugliese, *Bitter Spring: A Life of Ignazio Silone* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009), 143-63; Biocca, *Silone*, 238-52.

⁶⁰ Wilford, *The Mighty Wurlitzer*, 20.

⁶¹ Wilford points out that Truman seemed to harbor some anxiety about taking this step, as he demonstrated in a mock ceremony in January 1946 in which he created the CIA's predecessor. He reportedly conferred on the appointed head of the agency a black cloak and wooden dagger and pronounced him “director of centralized snooping.” See Wilford, *The Mighty Wurlitzer*, 23.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 23-27; Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*, 38-40.

its purpose”⁶³ – was former OSS officer, Wall Street lawyer, and State Department employee Frank Wisner. The new division became characteristic within the CIA for its aggressive style and its tendency to operate “out of the lines.”⁶⁴ Among other things, it covertly paid for the travel costs of the American, German, and Italian delegations to the International Day of Resistance to Dictatorship and War in Paris.⁶⁵

As the U.S. government began to look for ways to fight the Soviet Union on the cultural plane, it naturally turned to those intellectuals who had denounced Communism and Stalinism since the late 1930s. According to historian Ellen Schrecker, the defectors from the Communist Party and the non-Communist Left were in fact influential in shaping the contours of American Cold War anti-Communism. The New York intellectuals popularized the notion that only ex-Communists could understand current ones, presenting themselves as experts and “teaching American liberals how to think about Communism.” Not only did they “legitimize anti-Communism in the eyes of the educated elites,” Schrecker argues, but they also helped craft the formulations that would underpin the political repression of McCarthyism only a few years later.⁶⁶ Other scholars have discussed the evolution of New York intellectuals from radical dissenters to supporters of American foreign policy in less than two decades. Wilford has described this process as more than just a “political *volte-face*,” arguing that the “institutionalization” of these intellectuals was the result of powerful hegemonic processes within American society that they could not easily withstand, despite their

⁶³ Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*, 39-40.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 40-42, 99.

⁶⁵ Scott-Smith, *The Politics of Apolitical Culture*, 96.

⁶⁶ Ellen Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 78-79.

attempts to preserve their independence.⁶⁷ Stephen Longstaff has noted that, for many former radicals, the unprecedented access that they received from official foreign policy circles had a significant impact. Fighting Stalinism after World War II “was going to be a very different business from what it had been in the thirties – as much a temptation, one might say, as an ordeal.”⁶⁸

American intellectuals, in fact, offered mixed responses to the attempts to “institutionalize” them. Some, at least initially, did not conceal their skepticism and suspicion in seeing “their” anti-Communist cause appropriated by the U.S. government, which they had previously accused of insufficient opposition to Stalin. According to Wilford, they also resented the attempt by the state to appropriate and utilize the “trans-Atlantic community of intellectual discourse” that *Partisan Review* and others had built over the previous years.⁶⁹ Others, however, had no qualms about lending their advice to those in Washington. In July 1949, James Burnham began his collaboration with the OPC, although his role remained secret and officially he merely took a sabbatical from NYU to work as freelance writer.⁷⁰ While he offered his advice on a wide range of issues related to worldwide Communism, relying on his expertise and past affiliation with the Trotskyist movement, Burnham also tried to nudge the OPC toward his own agenda to combat the Soviet threat. In fact, he told Hook that American secret service officers did not know “how to implement their knowledge,” and graciously concluded that “we ought to be able to find some way to help them.”⁷¹ Hook himself had cooperated with the CIA,

⁶⁷ Wilford, *The New York Intellectuals*, 137.

⁶⁸ Stephen A. Longstaff, “The New York Intellectuals and the Cultural Cold War: 1945-1950,” *New Politics (New Series)* 2 n. 2 (Winter 1989): 157.

⁶⁹ Wilford, *The New York Intellectuals*, 204.

⁷⁰ Wilford, *The Mighty Wurlitzer*, 74-75.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 76.

although unlike Burnham he had never devoted himself full-time to psychological warfare.

In the summer of 1949, following discussions that had taken place during Rousset's International Day of Resistance to Dictatorship and War, the plans for the Berlin Congress for Cultural Freedom began to take shape. While in Paris, Hook had discussed the need for a major event in Western Europe with Melvin J. Lasky, a figure who ideally combined the different strands that would come together in the CCF. Born in 1920, Lasky came from the same milieu of most of the New York intellectuals: he had moved from an immigrant Jewish background to Trotskyist radicalism at City College during the 1930s, to serve eventually in the U.S. Army during World War II. He remained in Germany after demobilization as a combat historian for the U.S. Seventh Army, and later as correspondent for the *New Leader* and *Partisan Review*. In October 1947, Lasky made a name for himself by storming the East Berlin Writers' Congress, a propaganda exercise set up by the Cominform to draw the Western intelligentsia toward its positions. The then-unknown American correspondent held the floor for thirty-five minutes in a flawless German, drawing comparisons between Hitler's regime and the new Communist police state.⁷²

The U.S. military authority in Germany saw the potential for such an aggressive stance, and provided Lasky with the financial support to set up the monthly magazine *Der Monat*. The new publication was aimed at supporting U.S. interests in Europe by

⁷² Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*, 27; Giles Scott-Smith, "'A Radical Democratic Political Offensive': Melvin J. Lasky, *Der Monat*, and the Congress for Cultural Freedom," *Journal of Contemporary History* 35 n. 2 (April 2000): 264-67. On the Writers' Congress and its implications see also Andreas Agoos, "Divisive Unity: The Politics of Cultural Nationalism during the First German Writers' Congress of October 1947," in *Becoming East Germans: Socialist Structures and Sensibilities after Hitler*, eds. Mary Foolbrook and Andrew I. Port (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2013), 56-78.

appealing to the German intelligentsia. It would do so through the illustration of American spiritual and intellectual achievements, and the reaffirmation of the common elements of Western culture in opposition to Communist propaganda. In Saunders's words, *Der Monat* was "a temple to the belief that an educated elite could steer the post-war world away from its own extinction."⁷³ Despite its association with the American authorities, the magazine established itself not only in West Germany but also abroad. Writing to Macdonald in December 1948, Lasky reported on a meeting in Zürich with Silone, who told him that there were many enthusiastic readers of *Der Monat* in Rome. "All of which opens up new possibilities," an upbeat Lasky concluded: "It could indeed help to rally a good many of the flagging spirits in Western Europe and could, as a matter of fact, become a common ground for Europe-America contact."⁷⁴ In his concern for a European dimension of the cultural confrontation with the Soviets, which echoed Macdonald's Europe-America Groups at the time, Lasky thus demonstrated the attention that American intellectuals paid to the situation in Europe, and his place in the developing network of personal and political alliances on which the CCF would rely.

Given his position of mediator between American and European intellectuals and the U.S. government, it is little surprise that Lasky was in the original group which discussed the possibility of a massive anti-Communist manifestation in West Berlin, together with German ex-Communists Ruth Fischer and Franz Borkenau. The goal, as Fischer explained to an American diplomat, was that of "giving the Politburo [the

⁷³ Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*, 27-30. On the establishment of *Der Monat* see also Scott-Smith, "'A Radical Democratic Political Offensive,'" 268-74.

⁷⁴ Melvin J. Lasky to Dwight Macdonald, 20 December 1948, b. 27, f. 707, Macdonald Papers. In the same letter, Lasky criticized an article by Chiaromonte in *politics* for his lack of practical insight on how to fight Stalinism politically rather than militarily, further suggesting the different interpretations of the common wish to build a transatlantic intellectual community even before the creation of the CCF.

executive committee of the Soviet Communist Party] hell right at the gate of their own hell.”⁷⁵ The proposal was picked up by Josselson, who by that time had left the U.S. army to work for the CIA, and passed on to Washington for approval. Michael Josselson had been born in a Jewish family in Estonia, but after living in Berlin and Paris during the interwar period he had migrated to America in 1936, and become a U.S. citizen. His European background and linguistic skills (he spoke four languages fluently) made him a perfect fit for intelligence activity during the war, and he worked on the de-Nazification of the German intelligentsia after the end of the conflict. Ironically, following a car accident while retrieving the costumes of the German State Opera that the Nazis had stored at the bottom of a salt mine outside Berlin, Soviet doctors saved the life of the man who, in Saunders’s emphatic formulation, “was, for the next two decades, to do most to undermine [the Soviets’] attempts at cultural hegemony.”⁷⁶

Although Wisner’s OPC waited months to approve the project of the Berlin Congress, Lasky pushed on unfazed with his plans – “freelancing,” as Scott-Smith put it.⁷⁷ He secured the support of West Berlin’s social democratic mayor, Ernst Reuter, and of several prominent German academics, and began to send out the invitations. Peter de Mendelssohn of the *New Statesman* quipped that, in order to organize the conference, all Lasky had to do was to send out invitations to his prominent contributors over the previous two years.⁷⁸ The editor of *Der Monat* had in fact sounded more cautions in writing to Burnham at the beginning of 1950 about the “emerging plan” for a conference

⁷⁵ Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*, 71.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁷⁷ Giles Scott-Smith, “The Masterpieces of the Twentieth Century Festival and the Congress for Cultural Freedom: Origins and Consolidation, 1947-1952,” *Intelligence and National Security* 15 n. 1 (Spring 2000): 125-26.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 124.

in Berlin: “It will take,” Lasky wrote, “all the transatlantic planning that we can muster.”⁷⁹ Burnham agreed on the delicacy of the task ahead, suggesting “that the Conference should be thought of rather modestly and that the primary efforts should be to make it good rather than splashy.” He then explained what it meant to “have it good”: “to include among the delegates a sufficient group of persons who are really reliable politically. This means much more than irresponsible big names.”⁸⁰

The Berlin Congress secured nonetheless some “big names,” although Burnham’s evaluation of their responsibility was not recorded. Five prestigious philosophers, each representing a different school and country, agreed to serve as honorary chairmen of the Congress: John Dewey, Bertrand Russell, Jacques Maritain, Benedetto Croce and Karl Jaspers. The heterogeneous composition of this patronage committee – Volker Berghahn has observed that if the five men had been put around a table they would have disagreed on almost every issue the Congress was convened to discuss – reflected the desire to stress the pluralism and tolerance of the Western tradition.⁸¹ Participants arrived from more than twenty countries, the largest groups – not delegations, as the invitations were on a personal basis – being the German and American ones. For the latter, among the attendees were Hook and Burnham, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., Chairman of the American Atomic Energy Commission David Lilienthal, writer James T. Farrell, and the black editor of the *Pittsburgh Courier* George Schuyler. Less conspicuous were the Italian contingent, led by Silone, and the French one, with the notable absence of Aron. Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, two of the most prominent French intellectuals of the

⁷⁹ Melvin Lasky to James Burnham, 24 January 1950, box 6, folder 53, James Burnham Papers, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University (hereafter Burnham Papers).

⁸⁰ James Burnham to Sidney Hook, 5 April 1950, b. 6, f. 38, Burnham Papers.

⁸¹ Berghahn, *America and the Intellectual Cold Wars in Europe*, 130.

postwar period, had in fact publicly disavowed the Berlin Congress and refused to attend.⁸² According to his wife, Silone himself had initially been reluctant to participate in the Congress, suspecting that the U.S. State Department was behind it.⁸³ The dominant political traditions were the liberal and the social democratic ones, with some participants more to the right.

The Berlin Congress: Proceedings and Reception in the Different Countries

The Congress was a significant success for anti-Communists, though their front was far from united.⁸⁴ The fundamental disagreement was between the proponents of a hard line against Communism, who sided more or less explicitly with the U.S. government, and those who harbored strong reservations about the American model. The two key figures in this polarization were, according to Peter Coleman, the “pugnacious and energetic” Koestler and the “gentle socialist moralist” Silone.⁸⁵ The former could rely on the support of the most influential members of the American delegation, who had already expressed their disappointment at Europe’s reluctance to join wholeheartedly in the anti-Communist campaign. Even Hook, however, had to concede that Koestler’s diplomatic skills were questionable, and that he would be “capable of reciting the truths of the multiplication table in a way to make some people indignant with him.”⁸⁶

Not surprisingly, the speeches by Koestler and Burnham turned out to be among the most controversial. The novelist spoke of the dramatic situation of the present, “when

⁸² Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*, 73.

⁸³ “Ignazio Silone, Allen Dulles and the CIA,” *The Times Literary Supplement*, 1 December 2000, 19.

⁸⁴ For a detailed account of the conference proceedings, see Grémion, *Intelligence de l’anticommunisme*, 15-51; Coleman, *The Liberal Conspiracy*, 19-32; Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*, 73-84.

⁸⁵ Coleman, *The Liberal Conspiracy*, 22.

⁸⁶ Hook, *Out of Step*, 438. See also Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*, 79, and Wilford, *The Mighty Wurlitzer*, 79.

man stands at a crossroad which only leaves the choice of this way or that.” He mocked the intellectuals who in such a time of crisis acted “like imbeciles” and shunned decisive actions, hiding behind a “neither-nor attitude” to advocate for compromise and synthesis. They were, according to Koestler, “victims of a professional disease: the intellectual’s estrangement from reality. And having lost touch with reality, they have acquired that devilish art: they can prove everything that they believe and believe everything that they can prove.” Although many of the “nimble-witted navigators in no-man’s land” certainly cherished freedom, the writer conceded, they had not yet learned that “there is a time to speak in relative clauses, and a time to speak in terms of yea and nay.”⁸⁷ At a later session, Koestler also stated that the old distinctions between Left and Right, Socialism and Capitalism, had lost their previous meaning *vis-à-vis* the totalitarian threat of the Soviet Union. The term “Left” had become nothing but an anachronism, implying a continuous spectrum between moderates and extremists and thus suggesting “an essential solidarity between liberal progressives and worshippers or tyranny and terror.” Because of the emotional power of the term, Western intellectuals were seduced into solidarity with the brutal Soviet dictatorship. In terms that almost anticipated the later debate on the “end of ideology,” Koestler argued that the old distinctions between capitalism and socialism were increasingly losing their significance, both domestically and internationally. Although Europeans were still “hypnotised by the anachronistic

⁸⁷ Arthur Koestler, “Two Methods of Action,” Congress Paper n. 13, Berlin Congress for Cultural Freedom, June 1950, series III, box 390, folder 4, International Association for Cultural Freedom Records, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago (hereafter IACF Records). Since the time I conducted research at the Special Collections Research Center, the collection has been reorganized. In case of discrepancies it is recommendable to ask the SCRC’s staff for clarification. See also Grémion, *Intelligence de l’anticommunisme*, 39.

battlecries [sic]" of the nineteenth century, history had moved on to a new conflict, which Koestler summed up in one phrase: "total tyranny against relative freedom."⁸⁸

For his part, Burnham directly addressed the issue of European neutralism and anti-Americanism, which would worry Americans throughout the existence of the CCF. "I will grant the horror of American comics and radio programs," he said, hinting also at the negative view of American mass culture held by many European intellectuals, "but I will still choose them as against the MVD [the Soviet Ministry of the Interior]." He went on to outrage many of the delegates when he claimed that he was not opposed to all atomic bombs, but only to those made in the Soviet bloc: the bombs made in Los Angeles and Oak Ridge had been the sole defense of Western European liberties for the past five years. Peace, according to Burnham, was impossible as long as the Soviet Union threatened the free world, and could be obtained only through a worldwide counteroffensive against Communism.⁸⁹

On the opposite side were a majority of the European delegates. French socialist André Philip compared postwar Europe to a sick man, "feeble after its long and painful sickness. The Americans send us penicillin to treat this illness, and the Soviets send us microbes." The Europeans' duty, therefore, was not to so much to cast their lot with either of the two, but rather to "deal with the microbes as soon as possible so that we no longer have need of the medicine."⁹⁰ The most notable dissenter from the Koestler-Burnham line, however, was Silone. In his opening address to the Berlin gathering, the Italian novelist drew an ideal continuity between the wartime resistance against Fascist

⁸⁸ Arthur Koestler, "The false Dilemma," Congress Paper n. 24, Berlin Congress for Cultural Freedom, June 1950, s. III, b. 390, f. 6, IACF Records.

⁸⁹ Coleman, *The Liberal Conspiracy*, 31; James Burnham, "Rhetoric and Peace," Congress Paper n. 20, Berlin Congress for Cultural Freedom, June 1950, s. III, b. 390, f. 5, IACF Records.

⁹⁰ Quoted in Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*, 79.

regimes and the fight against the new forms of oppression against the intellectual. He denied that the Congress was merely a propaganda stunt, defining it as a meeting of free men trying to follow their supreme duty “to tell the truth freely.” Silone acknowledged that obstacles against the freedom of the artist existed also in Western countries, although less visible: “we know that even in democratic countries, liberty is not a natural gift or benefit, neither is it one which is unchangeable or definitely acquired.”⁹¹ Discussing the results of a recent questionnaire promoted by UNESCO to determine the greatest obstacles to intellectuals, nonetheless, Silone pointed out that they came almost exclusively from the West, whereas the control of the State had muted the voice of artists in the Eastern bloc. “Because of this fact,” he claimed,

one category of persons is ignored and excluded from the enquiry [of UNESCO] and it is precisely these people who know more than the others; the writers and artists who are non-conformists, the exiles, the men who are in prison or relegated to concentration camps, and the great, immense number of those who must be silent. They are waiting for us, they are waiting for the Congress to complete the enquiry, to enable those people to speak who have been silent, to render the whole truth. There exists a phenomenon, the extent of which is entirely new in the history of culture. It is the concrete situation, not only economical [sic] but also psychological and moral, of writers and artists who live in countries in which all means of expression is the monopoly of the State or of a unique party. This is a phenomenon too serious and too vast in its horror for us to imagine that we dispose of it by using it exclusively as a rapid and summary subject of denunciation.⁹²

Although he, too, denounced Soviet totalitarianism, Silone’s tones sounded very different from those of Koestler and Burnham. It was no longer a time, he argued, when ideas that were clear to some could be expected to be accepted by all: truth had now lost its habitual and natural universality. “No free man,” Silone warned, “can actually arrive

⁹¹ Ignazio Silone, Inaugural Address, Berlin Congress for Cultural Freedom, June 1950, s. III, b. 390, f. 2, IACF Records.

⁹² Ibid.

at the truth by other means than by dialogue, by exchange, or by the force of ideas of those of opposite views. No free man can impose silence on his adversary without doing himself harm.” He did not conceal the divergences separating the participants to the Berlin meeting, but claimed that this diversity constituted the strength rather than the weakness both of the Congress and of a democratic society. The best way to counter the totalitarian threat would be, therefore, to remain true to the nature of democracy, and eschew any attempt to stifle criticism or “synchronize” intellectuals.⁹³ The writer concluded his address by wondering what the Congress could do in this new scenario, and explicitly linked the organization to the previous experiences that had united European intellectuals: “The Congress responds to an imperious desire, creating a necessity for many of us to consult our friends who come from other countries, to renew the ties of friendship of the time of resistance, and to find new ties.” Stressing again this point, Silone stated at the final mass meeting that “we are men of the resistance who pledge ourselves to a new league of resistance.”⁹⁴

British historian Hugh Trevor-Roper and philosopher A.J. Ayer also emerged as leading figures of the dissent against the crusading tones of Koestler and Burnham, and ensured that the Manifesto approved on the final day of the Congress was amended. The new formulation omitted an ambiguous clause that they interpreted as calling for a legal ban on Western Communist parties (although the authors denied that was the case). In an article he wrote for the *Manchester Guardian* a few weeks after the end of the Berlin

⁹³ Saunders pointedly speculates how Josselson, Burnham, and Lasky might have reacted to a remark by Silone during one of the preparatory meetings for the Congress. Apparently ignoring the CIA involvement, the Italian writer told of how, during World War II, “he had sacked anybody in his resistance movement who turned out to be a British or American intelligence agent, because he wanted to fight ‘ma guerre à moi’ with a clean conscience.” Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*, 75.

⁹⁴ Silone, Inaugural Address; Quoted in Dittberner, *The End of Ideology and American Social Thought*, 113.

Congress, Trevor-Roper expressed his discomfort at the belligerent and militant tones struck by some of the participants. He argued that the event had been a missed opportunity and merely a “Wroclaw in reverse.”⁹⁵ Trevor-Roper’s description of the Berlin Congress focused on the nationalist mood of the German audience, ominously reminiscent of the Nazi gatherings, and on the dominant role played by an alliance of “rootless European ex-Communists,” obsessed by their hatred for the Soviet Union and Communism.⁹⁶

When Lasky wrote him to rebut his portrayal of the Berlin Congress, Trevor-Roper clarified that to him “the real distinction was between the ex-Communists who felt practical political responsibilities toward national groups or other societies in Europe (e.g. Silone and Reuter) and those who were free from such responsibilities (e.g. Koestler and Burnham).” Using as an example the peasants of Silone’s novel, *Fontamara*, he argued that in response to Koestler’s “either - or” alternative they would probably vote Communist. That, Trevor-Roper added, was “an undesirable result which could be avoided by admitting such other alternatives as Koestler denied. I think that this point was obvious to (say) Silone, who has the Italian people to think about. I think it was ignored by Koestler who has no such responsibility - and by Burnham who, in America, has no near-communist vote seriously to worry about.”⁹⁷ Trevor-Roper also privately confided to American art historian Bernard Berenson that the Congress had been “a totally illiberal demonstration dominated by professional ex-Communist *boulevardiers*

⁹⁵ The reference was to the World Congress of Intellectuals in Defense of Peace, held in the Polish city of Wroclaw in August 1948. The event, organized by Soviet sympathizers, turned out to be mainly a forum to accuse the United States of imperialism and reactionary policies.

⁹⁶ Hugh Trevor-Roper, “Ex-Communist v. Communist,” *Manchester Guardian*, 10 July 1950.

⁹⁷ Hugh Trevor-Roper to Melvin Lasky, 28 July 1950, box 124, folder 3, Sidney Hook Papers, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University (hereafter Hook Papers).

like Arthur Koestler & Franz Borkenau, confident in the support of German ex-nazis in the audience.”⁹⁸ Trevor-Roper’s reservations apparently created some resentment among U.S. intelligence officers, who asked the British Foreign Office “Why did your man spoil our Congress?” He nonetheless struck a responsive chord with and helped shape the initial perception from Great Britain of the CCF as a “sinister cabal of fanatical ex-nazi and Communist ideologues.”⁹⁹

An echo of Trevor-Roper’s scathing judgment, however, could be found among observers from Continental Europe as well. The Congress organizers and its sponsors were probably not surprised by the negative coverage in the Communist press, where it was portrayed as an American propaganda stunt or ignored altogether. More concerning, however, was the cold reception among those milieux that the new organization hoped to engage. In the Italian *Corriere della Sera*, for instance, art critic G. A. Borgese – himself a participant in the event – explained the “mistakes of Berlin.” The first had been in the quality of the invitees, since the few illustrious intellectuals were overwhelmed by the “mass” of politicians bringing an aggressive Cold-War attitude to the Congress. Among them, a small group of ex-Communists had “subjugated and crushed” the rest of the hall, “unequaled for the volume of their voices and the impetuosity, almost bayonet-in-barrel, with which they climbed the podium and blew in the microphones.”¹⁰⁰ While these ex-Communists had disavowed the contents of Soviet Marxism, they had maintained its spirit of “totalitarian bluntness, the fist-shaped brain.” The words had changed, but just by looking at them one could mistake them for “Stalinist missionaries” rather than

⁹⁸ Quoted in Jacob Heilbrunn, *They Knew They Were Right: The Rise of the Neocons* (New York: Doubleday, 2008), 55.

⁹⁹ See Wilford, *The CIA, the British Left and the Cold War*, 194-95.

¹⁰⁰ G. A. Borgese, “Errore di Berlino,” *Corriere della Sera*, 8 October 1950. My translation.

intellectuals at a meeting. “By the second day,” Borgese sentenced, “all culture was Korea”: according to the author, the political implications of the Cold War – dramatically symbolized by the outbreak of the Korean War – had trumped the attempts to talk about cultural freedom in a more neutral and detached way.¹⁰¹

The second mistake was the Manichean character of the Berlin Congress, and its apparent refusal to admit that the West, too, needed some honest self-criticism and awareness of the internal threats to cultural freedom. To stress the need for unambiguous opposition to the Communist threat, Koestler’s speech had urged the Congress participants to heed the biblical injunction “Let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay.” To such stark oppositions, Borgese opposed a more nuanced approach to the complexity of the international situations and the shortcomings of the Western bloc – “Yea and yet, No although” – that had failed to materialize. The Berlin Congress had also failed to speak to Eastern European intellectuals and to convey both a sense of sympathy for their sufferings and some practical help for them. Borgese concluded his article expressing the fear that any truly cultural gathering would be impossible for the foreseeable future, given the polarization of the world. Citing criticism from the British press, he wondered whether it could be possible to “shout and think at the same time,” and whether the Berlin Congress had shouted so loud as to intimidate the echoes.¹⁰²

In France, the French leftist Catholic magazine *Esprit* struck a similar note in its evaluation of the Congress. It was, first of all, clearly a Cold War initiative organized under the auspices of the U.S. authorities: the magazine quoted with some concern the *New York Herald*’s definition of the Berlin meeting as an “intellectual punch” to the

¹⁰¹ Ibid. My translation.

¹⁰² Ibid. My translation.

Soviet Union and East Germany. The fact that the funding was coming from the U.S. government, according to the editorial, seriously undermined its claim to be concerned about “cultural freedom.”¹⁰³ *Esprit* also criticized the quality of the participants, claiming that the truly independent personalities were only a handful and did not play a central role. Rather, the contributions came almost exclusively from “certified anti-communist theoreticians (for the most part former communists), reactionary politicians, neo-fascists.” The magazine singled out Koestler and Burnham for their ideological zeal and rigidity, which prevented other delegates from stating the fact that one did not have to be Communist in order to acknowledge that Communism was not the only threat to cultural freedom. The attempts by people like Silone or French socialist André Philip to introduce some nuance into the debate had slightly blunted the “arms of integralist Americanists,” but they had been unable to turn the Berlin Congress toward a more fruitful debate. The editorial concluded with the fear that Silone’s presence in the steering committee of the newly formed organization could not counterbalance the likes of Koestler, Burnham and Rousset for long, but could be used instead to legitimate “their maneuvers.”¹⁰⁴

The Congress officers tried to counter the negative perceptions in the press, responding directly to the allegations. Thus, for example, the CCF released a point-by-point rebuttal of the *Esprit* editorial; among other things, it denied that the Manifesto was exclusively directed against the Soviet Union, and claimed that the original idea was as much Franco-Italian (from discussions between Silone and Rousset the previous year) as it was German. François Bondy, named director of publications of the new organization, wrote to the prestigious newspaper *Le Monde* to deny that Burnham had called for a

¹⁰³ A. R., “Liberté de la culture et « Poing intellectuel »,” *Esprit* XVIII n. 9 (September 1950), 372.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 373-74. My translation.

“holy war” against the Soviet Union in Berlin.¹⁰⁵ Despite its efforts, however, the dominant impression of the event in France and Italy emerged clearly and coalesced around a few points: the questions about the sources of funding, and the implications about the independence of the organization; the overtly political tones, reflecting Cold War concerns rather than exclusively cultural ones; the prominent role of ex-Communists, and their excessive ideological zeal (with the general exception of Silone); the lack of an open recognition about the shortcomings of Western societies, and the attempt to impose a stark polarization among intellectuals as well. Such issues would repeatedly come up to hamper the work of the CCF in Italy and France. Moreover, these doubts went beyond the printed pages and were expressed at a personal level as well: writing to Silone shortly after the Congress, Chiaromonte dryly noted: “Here, a few who have returned told me about the Congress. No one with enthusiasm.”¹⁰⁶

Conclusion

In an article published in 1946, French writer Bertrand d’Astorg seemed to describe, without knowing it and four years before its creation, the Congress for Cultural Freedom. He discussed the evolution of Arthur Koestler from his Communist past to the increasingly vocal opposition to the Soviet Union in the 1940s, distancing himself from Koestler’s militant anti-Communism. The author, however, went further: he imagined an international movement of intellectuals, most of them ex-Communists marked by their “bitter experience,” united in the opposition to Communist propaganda. Among the leaders of such a movement would be Koestler and poet Stephen Spender in England,

¹⁰⁵ *Le Monde*, 21 December 1950.

¹⁰⁶ Nicola Chiaromonte to Ignazio Silone, 19 July 1950, b. 4, f. 132, Chiaromonte Papers. My translation.

Malraux and Camus in France, and Silone and Croce in Italy.¹⁰⁷ With the exception of Camus – not for lack of trying by the organizers – all these men were present at the Berlin Congress in June 1950, or would agree to lend their name to the CCF in the following years. Bertrand d’Astorg’s prescience, although impressive, was not a coincidence: in the aftermath of World War II, and *vis-à-vis* the growing concerns that the USSR’s actions raised about its expansionist intents, the contours of a network of anti-Communist intellectuals had begun to take shape. A majority of its members was willing to choose the United States as the lesser evil, even without subscribing completely to its policies. American intelligence did not create these conditions, but rather put the resources of the Western superpower at the disposal of the anti-Communist message of these intellectuals. As historian Pierre Grémion has observed, if these men had to bring themselves to accept some compromises with the demands of U.S. cultural diplomacy, the opposite was also true. The CIA would repeatedly learn the need to respect the autonomy of this intellectual community, on whose prestige it rested its strategy.¹⁰⁸

In the wake of the Berlin Congress, the situation remained unclear about both the nature of and the potential for such a diverse gathering of anti-Communist intellectuals. Although virtually all of them agreed on their denunciation of the Soviet Union and its allies in the Western bloc, they disagreed on a large number of issues: the state of Western democracy and its own shortcomings, the perception of America as the leader of the “free world,” the nature of the new bipolar world and of the Western bloc. As the subsequent history of the CCF would show, another fundamental ambiguity regarded the

¹⁰⁷ Bertrand d’Astorg, “Arthur Koestler, Prix Nobel 1960,” *Esprit* XIV n. 10 (October 1946), 378-98.

¹⁰⁸ Grémion, *Intelligence de l’anticommunisme*, 92-93.

extent to which the organization should be involved in political – as opposed to purely cultural – activities, and how one could distinguish between the two. These disagreements did not follow rigid national divisions, as the same debates had been taking place within each country since the end of World War II. Nonetheless, several observers remarked on a fundamental tension between a majority of American delegates, who tended to identify more unproblematically the cause of cultural freedom with that of America’s confrontation with the Soviet Union, and Europeans. Silone emerged as the high-profile representative of the latter, more ambivalent about U.S. power and the merits of Western society, and his inclusion in the Executive Committee of the Congress for Cultural Freedom ensured that these hesitations would find a voice in the new organization.

The Berlin Congress was not merely the beginning of the CCF, but also the culmination of a decades-long political and intellectual evolution on both sides of the Atlantic. The European and American intellectuals who gathered in Berlin in June 1950 brought to the city that came to symbolize the “synecdoche of the Cold War” the experiences of the previous decades. Viewed from this perspective, as Wilford suggested, the cultural Cold War that was taking shape was not just an ideological confrontation between America and the Soviet Union. It was also “a battle in an ongoing civil war within the modern western intelligentsia,” with Stalinists on one side and various anti-Communist groups on the other.¹⁰⁹ There was a “direct line of continuity” between the experiments in transatlantic partnership that ex-Communists had conducted in the 1930s and mid-1940s, and the weapons with which the U.S. would wage the cultural Cold War

¹⁰⁹ Hugh Wilford, “‘The Permanent Revolution’? The New York Intellectuals, the CIA and the Cultural Cold War,” in *The US Government, Citizen Groups and the Cold War: The State-Private Network*, ed. Helen Laville and Hugh Wilford (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 198.

in the 1950s. The roles of professional revolutionaries and cultural cold warriors, in fact, had more in common than it appeared at first.¹¹⁰

That background had provided them with a transnational network of like-minded thinkers, who shared a firm opposition to Stalin's Soviet Union and a general belief that the Western model of liberal democracy, however imperfect, was worth defending. At the same time, this broad agreement did not imply uniformity of views on the shortcomings of Western societies – including and in particular the United States. The intellectuals who had participated in the Berlin Congress, and who would choose to affiliate with the organization that came out of it, would still need to flesh out the actual meaning of cultural freedom and anti-Communist, and apply them to the world around them. They would do so in ways that would reflect their own national contexts and personal and political experiences, and at times clash over the policies that they advocated for the Congress. The complex background of the new transatlantic “league of resistance” that Silone announced to the crowd in West Berlin contained the premises for both the common tenets shared by the CCF members and the disagreements that emerged between them. The next chapter will thus describe how its intellectuals, and in particular the French and Italian members of its governing bodies, tried to shape the contours of a cultural Cold War different from the one that Americans had originally envisioned.

¹¹⁰ Wilford, *The CIA, the British Left and the Cold War*, 27; Wilford, *The New York Intellectuals*, 137.

CHAPTER 2

A DIFFERENT CULTURAL COLD WAR: THE ROLE OF FRENCH AND ITALIAN INTELLECTUALS IN THE CONGRESS FOR CULTURAL FREEDOM

In the wake of the exhilarating atmosphere of the Berlin Congress for Cultural Freedom, discussions began about how to turn the event into a permanent organization, and what the latter should look like. Arthur Schlesinger, whose teaching commitments at Harvard prevented him from attending the meeting of the Executive Committee in November 1950, wrote down his thoughts to Irving Brown, the European representative of the American Federation of Labor (AFL).¹ He suggested Swiss writer Denis de Rougemont as titular head of the Congress, to whom an American such as Nabokov could be associated for “the actual executive tasks of program and organization” (the Executive Committee in fact appointed both men). He stressed that many American intellectuals hoped that the executive leadership for the Congress could be found among European intellectuals, for reasons of practicality but also appearances. “I hope very much that the permanent structure will have a European facade [sic],” Schlesinger wrote. “It seems to me that it would be very bad to have an American as the dominant figure in the Congress in Europe.”² Ironically, a few years later Ignazio Silone would choose the same metaphor to assert the independence of the intellectuals associated to the CCF

¹ On Brown and his part in the CIA’s covert operations among European trade unions, see among others Wilford, *The Mighty Wurlitzer*, 93-111. Brown’s activities in support of the non-Communist unions in France and Italy earned him the definition of “Scarface, the notorious American fascist racketeer” in the French Communist daily. See Frédéric Charpier, *La CIA en France. 60 ans d’ingérence dans les affaire françaises* (Paris: Seuil, 2008), 42. My translation.

² Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. to Irving Brown, 22 November 1950, box 13, folder 10, Irving Brown Papers, George Meany Memorial AFL-CIO Archive, Special Collections & University Archives, University of Maryland College Park, College Park, MD (hereafter Brown Papers). I consulted the Brown Papers while still at the National Labor College Archives in Washington, D.C. They have subsequently been donated to the University of Maryland’s Special Collections & University Archives.

during a meeting of the Executive Committee. Pointing out the continuing uncertainty about the division of responsibilities within the organization, he lamented how a small circle had been in charge of proposing and organizing most of the initiatives, with little participation from Congress affiliates. If the democratic character of the CCF turned out to be nothing but a fiction, he added, it would be best to cease its activities altogether: “I believe that no one among us is willing to be simply an adornment, the stone of a façade.”³

The juxtaposition of Schlesinger and Silone’s words goes beyond the personal positions of the two men – who would in fact agree on a significant number of issues regarding the line of the Congress activities. It rather points to the larger contention of this chapter, which touches on the role of European intellectuals within the CCF’s international structure. In the several contexts in which the Congress operated, its officers and affiliates pursued distinctive and at times conflicting objectives, which reflected the convictions and agency of its members. The experiences of intellectuals in France and Italy diverged repeatedly from those of their counterparts in other places, and repeatedly fell short of, or ran counter to, the expectation that American policymakers had about the working and goals of the CCF. This reflected in part the political context in their countries, with the strength of Communist parties and their intellectual sympathizers, and in part their own priorities and agenda. French and Italian intellectuals waged a different cultural Cold War than their American or British colleagues, whom scholars have studied in much greater depth. A look at their interpretation of cultural warfare and anti-

³ Minutes of the CCF Executive Committee, 24-25 January 1955, 73, box 1, folder 6, American Committee for Cultural Freedom Records, Tamiment Library & Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University (hereafter ACCF Records). My translation.

Communism can thus challenge and complicate historians' assumptions about the CCF and America's role in the world.

I argue that, however important the pressures from Washington were, the influence of French and Italian intellectuals on the general direction of the Congress was greater than previous scholars have acknowledged. Important figures of the organization's Executive Committee – such as Silone, Raymond Aron, and Nicola Chiaromonte – played a key role in shaping CCF's policy according to their own views of what forms of anti-Communism could be more effective in Europe and in the world. Rather than go along with directives coming from U.S. covert sponsors, these intellectuals displayed a significant degree of autonomy in their involvement with the organization.

I also argue that their contributions must be placed in the context of the cultural Cold War as it took place in France and Italy, which informed their notions of anti-Communism and cultural freedom. Their role as public faces of the CCF both globally and in their own countries, far from making them puppets to be maneuvered, increased the agency and independence of figures like Silone or Aron. The Congress used their prestige in circumstances where it helped it further its goals, for example in establishing a dialogue with Eastern European intellectuals, but so did they. These intellectuals advocated for their own priorities and convictions inside the CCF – or outside, sometimes ignoring it altogether and claiming their autonomy. While they never questioned the opportunity for the Congress's anti-Communist activity, they made sure that their voices were heard when it came to defining its tone and content.

Another facet of their cultural Cold War was the uneven reception of what historians consider one of the most important intellectual legacies of the CCF, the debate on the “end of ideology.” The notion that the ideological passions of the previous decades had subsided, at least in the West, was a key element that identified the Congress from the 1950s onwards. It also earned it greater respectability and the attention of academic and non-academic audiences that had been previously suspicious of the CCF’s anti-Communist tones, especially in Great Britain and the U.S. Elsewhere – in Italy, for example – the “end of ideology” theme had nonetheless a smaller impact on the intelligentsia and the universities. This depended in part on the different academic and philosophical traditions, which in turn influenced the development of the social sciences most closely associated with the notion. It also reflected the interests and convictions of the intellectuals representing the CCF in those countries, who in some cases felt that the paradigm did not describe their own personal and national experiences.

Finally, a significant phenomenon associated with the Congress has concerned the global spread of American artistic movements, and in particular Abstract Expressionism, in the years after World War II. Several historians have argued that the U.S. government consciously employed such seemingly independent cultural endeavors as Cold War tools. The “revisionist” argument has maintained that sponsorship of artists like Jackson Pollock, directly or through organizations such as the CCF and the Museum of Modern Art in New York, contributed to their success in America and abroad. In doing so, these artists became accomplices in a propaganda effort to highlight the image of the U.S. as a free and culturally vibrant society, implicitly superior to the repressive regimes of the Communist world. This chapter argues that the CCF and local archives offer scarce

evidence that the organization tried to promote actively such aesthetic questions in the two countries. Whether due to lack of pressures from its officers, or to the peculiar dynamics of the production and criticism of modern art in France and Italy, such considerations seem to have played a very limited role in the experience of the Congress in the 1950s. Italian and French artists responded to the conceptual and stylistic innovations of Abstract Expressionism, rather than as passive recipients, by reappropriating and transforming them. While American art gained new legitimacy in the late 1940s and 1950s, it was far from an undisputed canon.

The cultural Cold War that the CCF waged in France and Italy, therefore, overlapped with the organization's general policy in many areas, but differed from it in some significant others. This chapter highlights this tension within the history of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, and the different character and meaning that its activity could take in the contexts in which its members operated. From disagreements on the direction of the organization to the reception of intellectual and artistic notions, CCF activities in France and Italy were unique in many respects. To recover this complexity, thus, can help better assess the successes and failures of U.S. cultural diplomacy in Europe.

The Influence of European intellectuals on the Congress for Cultural Freedom

As the echoes of the Berlin meeting subsided, the promoters of the CCF began to work on how to turn the event into a permanent organization. In addition to the encouragement from many of the participants in the proceedings, they received the

enthusiastic support of its sponsors in Washington. According to Michael Warner, the reactions in the U.S. government to the Berlin Congress ranged “from pleased to ecstatic.” Defense Department representative General John Magruder had defined it as “a subtle covert operation carried out on the highest intellectual level” and “unconventional warfare at its best” in a memorandum to Truman’s Secretary of Defense, Louis A. Johnson. U.S. officials in Germany reported that the event had boosted the morale of West Berlin, and they hoped that it could continue to have a positive effect on Western intellectuals.⁴ The initiative was once again in the hands of an unofficial committee of familiar names: writer Arthur Koestler, philosopher (and CIA consultant) James Burnham, sociologist Raymond Aron, Irving Brown, and the editor of *Der Monat*, Melvin Lasky. The meetings, which took place with almost daily frequency at Koestler’s house in Paris, prompted the French Communist newspaper *L’Action* to declare that a “terrorist militia” was being trained in secret.⁵ The men involved agreed on the need to devote special attention to the two Western European countries in which the work of the Congress seemed to face greater obstacles: a laconic statement in the report of one of the meetings simply said “First priority: France, Italy.” The plans envisaged the creation of movements connected with the central offices of the CCF but rooted in their national contexts. These organizations would create a large anti-Communist front including professional classes, students, and unions, and overcome traditional party divisions by emphasizing the cultural aspect of their work.⁶

⁴ Warner, “Origins of the Congress for Cultural Freedom,” 96.

⁵ Daniel Kelly, *James Burnham and the Struggle for the World: A Life* (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2002), 162; Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*, 90.

⁶ Notes on meeting at Fontaine le Port, 18 July 1950, s. II, b. 2, f. 8, IACF Records. For a more detailed discussion of the plans for the national committees and their actual realization, see chapters 4 and 5.

The self-appointed steering committee, however, soon faced opposition from both America and Europe. In Washington, Frank Wisner and the OPC were infuriated with Melvin Lasky for his prominent role during the Berlin Congress. They feared that his ties with American authorities in Germany would convince European intellectuals that the Congress was nothing but a U.S. propaganda effort, thus compromising it from the start. Wisner wrote in an internal memorandum that Lasky's visibility had been "a major blunder," and had ignored Wisner's explicit instructions in a previous memorandum. He stated in no uncertain terms that the OPC would be unwilling to continue to back the organization, "unless means can be found to sanitize this by operation by the removal of Lasky, Burnham, and other persons of known or traceable official significance from overt roles." Wisner clarified that his request was to be delivered to the field "as an instruction," and obtained the removal of the editor of *Der Monat* from the CCF staff.⁷ The CIA officer, however, added a post-scriptum striking a much more positive note. The report on the Congress had been shown to Secretary Johnson and to President Truman, and both men had expressed their satisfaction for the operation. "I can only hope," a more upbeat Wisner concluded, while probably also guarding the CIA's control over the initiative, "that the rough edges which have recently appeared are not brought too sharply to the attention of these lofty officers. In any case this development underscores in red everything which I have said about the necessity for tidying up this operation and eliminating all of the 'Irish pennants.'" ⁸

⁷ Frank G. Wisner to Breckinridge, "Berlin Congress for Cultural Freedom; activities of Melvin Lasky," 8 August 1950, Central Intelligence Agency Archives, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD. Lasky continued nonetheless to play a central role as magazine editor and close advisor to Josselson. See Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*, 85-86.

⁸ Wisner to Breckinridge, 8 August 1950.

Koestler and Burnham, also involved in the original Congress plans, were among the early casualties of the logistical and political transition to a permanent organization together with Lasky. Both had been controversial among European delegates for their militant tones, which left no room for compromise between a frontal assault against Communism and the neutralists' implicit complicity with it. The French magazine *Esprit* had even warned intellectuals not to "Koestlerize" themselves, i.e. not to attack contemptuously the fellow-travelers.⁹ Although he initially contributed to the plans for the new organization, by the end of 1950 the combined effect of the pressures to adopt a more nuanced stance and Koestler's own nervous breakdown pushed him to the side of the CCF, increasingly disagreeing with the way the Paris Secretariat was shaping it.

Finally, Burnham was the last of the early prominent figures to suffer a rapid fall within the CCF ranks. The disagreements were mostly political, as the former Trotskyite did not share the shift in the organization's character in the months following Berlin. Burnham, already well under way in his evolution toward the right, had nonetheless maintained the characteristic zeal that once led Louis Fischer, one of the contributors to *The God That Failed*, to describe him as "communistically anti-Communist."¹⁰ He kept pushing both with the OPC in Washington and his fellow intellectuals in Paris for a united front – including right-wing groups like the Gaullists in France – engaged in direct political warfare. The CIA and the CCF's Secretariat pursued instead the strategy of anchoring the organization within the milieu of the non-Communist Left, and of emphasizing cultural diplomacy as its main goal. Following years of private protests and increasing detachment, Burnham eventually resigned from the CCF and its American

⁹ Coleman, *The Liberal Conspiracy*, 33.

¹⁰ Wilford, *The CIA, the British Left and the Cold War*, 91-92.

affiliate in the mid-1950s. He complained that the organization had developed into a “narrow and partisan clique,” and no significant action was made to convince him to change his mind.¹¹ As Wilford suggests, the trajectory of Koestler and Burnham’s involvement mirrored what happened in other CIA frontist organizations, with the marginalization or replacement of ex-Communists with CIA operatives or figures more in line with the agency’s policy.¹² It was Michael Josselson, in particular, who emerged as the animating force of the Congress, first unofficially and then as the Administrative Secretary of the Executive Committee.

The development of a permanent organization that would follow through along the lines of the Berlin Congress was far from smooth. As historian Pierre Grémion has noted, “nothing would be falser than to describe the first steps of the Congress for Cultural Freedom as liberal romance enshrouded in democratic transparency. Progress is chaotic, scattered with pitfalls, incomplete information, personal intrigues, and exacerbated conflicts in a milieu of extremely susceptible writers and journalists.”¹³ CIA case officer Lawrence de Neufville, in fact, later cautioned against “thinking there was a system for anything in those days. It was all improvised.”¹⁴ Slowly, however, its contours began to take shape. The first decision was to base it in Paris rather than in Berlin, a choice that Giles Scott-Smith finds easy to explain given U.S. foreign policy interests after World War II. In the first place, one of the key issues of the early Cold War was how France would align itself in an increasingly bipolar world. As far as intellectuals

¹¹ James Burnham to Robert Gorham Davis, 15 September 1954, b. 3, f. 4, ACCF Records.

¹² Wilford, “‘The Permanent Revolution?’,” 198-99. The most fitting parallel is the support for the American Federation of Labor’s Jay Lovestone, a former Communist who in the late 1940s-early 1950s acted as a conduit for CIA operations in Europe. The increasingly diverging agendas of the CIA and Lovestone, who had his own views about the best way to fight Communism and resented CIA interference, eventually led the two to interrupt their cooperation. See Wilford, *The Mighty Wurlitzer*, 51-69.

¹³ Grémion, *Intelligence de l’anticommunisme*, 69. My translation.

¹⁴ Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*, 174; see also Scott-Smith, *The Politics of Apolitical Culture*, 93.

were concerned, French cultural life jealously maintained its independence in the face of increasing American presence in Europe. The French capital preserved its status as reference point for intellectuals worldwide even despite the country's decline from the role of global superpower.¹⁵

The core of the new organization was constituted by an Executive Committee and an International Secretariat. The Executive Committee, which included the most prestigious figures actively associated with the CCF, decided the policy and direction of the organization. It would normally meet no more than once or twice a year, but could be convened in case of emergencies requiring an immediate response.¹⁶ The International Secretariat ran instead the day-to-day operations of the Congress for Cultural Freedom. It organized the public activities of the organization – international conferences and seminars, demonstrations against the Soviet Union or its satellites, and press releases. It also supervised the network of magazines that the CCF sponsored, including the French and Italian ones, and kept regular contacts with the national committees.¹⁷ By autumn 1951, the Congress had also stabilized its sources of revenue, as the CIA perfected its system of conveying funds to the organization through the conduit of formally independent foundations. Grémion estimated that, until then, the American Federation of Labor had provided around \$170,000 to sponsor five activities.¹⁸ The central figure in the running of the Secretariat was Administrative Secretary Michael Josselson, an Eastern

¹⁵ Scott-Smith, “The Masterpieces of the Twentieth Century Festival and the Congress for Cultural Freedom,” 131-32.

¹⁶ A smaller body, the Board of the Executive Committee, could occasionally perform the same function.

¹⁷ The Congress promoted the creation of national committees in dozens of countries, and provided them with financial and logistical support. It did not formally have any authority on their activities, as they were only affiliated with and not directly dependent from the International Secretariat. Nonetheless, the latter maintained frequent contacts and informal pressure on the committees to ensure that their activities would not represent an embarrassment or contradict the CCF's general mission.

¹⁸ Grémion, *Intelligence de l'anticommunisme*, 74. On the CIA's system of covert funding through front foundations the best source remains probably Saunders' *The Cultural Cold War*.

European immigrant to America who served in the U.S. army in Germany during World War II. Also central was Secretary General Nicolas Nabokov, a Russian-born composer who had migrated to the U.S. in the 1930s and joined the circles of New York intellectuals. These two men, very different under virtually every point of view, were key figures in negotiating between American interests and intellectuals in Europe and in the rest of the world.

The CIA's agenda and the dynamics between U.S. policymakers and intellectuals thus played an important role in shaping the early stages of the organization. Equally important, however, was the willingness of European intellectuals to lend their prestige and names to its cause. In doing that, the members of the CCF attempted to define the mission and nature of the organization along lines that they thought would be more effective. At the Executive Committee meeting in Brussels, in November 1950, Silone took the opportunity to send out a message more attuned to European sensibilities. Speaking at the public session of the gathering, he stressed the need for every individual – but in particular for the artist – to defend the rights and dignity of the human being against any usurpation from the State. In denouncing the brutalities behind the Iron Curtain, the writer offered a rallying cause and the blueprint of a positive agenda for the Congress:

It has been said that our age can be defined as the age of invention, of the disintegration of the atom; it should be added the disintegration of the soul. I don't know which of these two inventions is more frightening. Both anyway threaten the very life of mankind. You know that the liberal movement of the modern age has begun with the restoration of the *habeas corpus*. And now in the twentieth century, at a time when our pensions solve the problem of everyone's well-being, we are thrown back onto our line of defense. At this time, the rallying cry of the new

resistance against the totalitarians will have to be *habeas animam*: the right of every creature to its soul.¹⁹

Silone's powerful formulation became one of the symbols of the CCF, and in the coming years the Paris Secretariat would often use it to describe its mission. It also allowed the organization to take advantage of the prestige that the writer enjoyed among other intellectuals, even those unaffiliated with the Congress, and in particular among Eastern Europeans. That the CCF relied initially on the credibility of its members to establish its credentials, however, also meant that their views would have a special influence on the direction of the organization, rather than be dictated from above.

More than just making nice speeches or lending their names to the letterhead of the CCF, Italian and French intellectuals were directly involved in the discussions within the organization about the nature of its activities. For their presence in the Executive Committee and their prestige, the most important among them were Raymond Aron in France – together with the Austrian-born Manès Sperber, who had long settled in Paris – and Ignazio Silone and Nicola Chiaromonte in Italy. In most cases their contribution did not reflect a specifically national perspective, but rather their personal convictions and beliefs. On issues of cultural freedom and totalitarianism a fundamental agreement existed among the members of the CCF, which highlighted the transnational character of the ideal of the “republic of letters” they aspired to. In some instances, however, their input was informed by assumptions and experiences that set these men apart from other members of the Executive Committee, and they would bring echoes of their domestic concerns to the larger discussions about the future of the CCF. This is not to suggest that

¹⁹ Minutes of the CCF International Executive Committee, 27-30 November 1950, s. II, b. 2, f. 8, IACF Records. My translation.

their views were rigidly determined by their nationality, of course: disagreements could emerge among fellow countrymen on any given issue, and alliances form across national boundaries. Nonetheless, the Italian and French members of the Congress tended on the whole to distinguish themselves in some fundamental ways. They expressed a more skeptical view of militant anti-Communism than their American counterparts, and remained ambivalent in their views of the U.S. and the Atlantic alliance. They also tended to push for dialogue with intellectuals in the Soviet bloc, and to emphasize the cultural elements of the CCF's activity rather than the overtly political ones. As Pierre Grémion put it, the French and Italian branches of the CCF constituted the "left wing" of the organization throughout their existence. They served as a reference not only for the Europeans more uncomfortable with U.S. policies, but also for those Americans distant from the militant anti-Communism of Sidney Hook, such as Mary McCarthy and Hannah Arendt.²⁰

The first significant disagreements after Berlin on what the Congress should be came to a head over the proposal to organize a large public meeting in Paris in 1951. The Koestler-Burnham wing of the organization, supported by a majority in the American Committee for Cultural Freedom (ACCF), pushed for a mass demonstration of a clearly political character. They argued that Communist totalitarianism was the main threat to cultural freedom, and that the CCF should not refrain from denouncing it unequivocally. The ACCF feared that the Congress overestimated the dangers of a forthright anti-Communist stance in Europe and Asia. The emphasis on purely cultural undertakings would result, in their view, in a loss of the true purpose of the CCF and its effectiveness, and a pandering to European neutralist sentiment. On the opposite side of the debate,

²⁰ Grémion, *Intelligence de l'anticommunisme*, 401.

proponents of a cultural festival (most Europeans and Nabokov, whom the Executive Committee had recently appointed Secretary General) stressed the need to present a positive message rather than a negative anti-Communism. To celebrate the accomplishments of the “Western tradition” – a notion that the Festival would contribute to establish as much as it celebrated it as a *fait accompli* – allowed the CCF to gain the respect of European intellectuals, who were suspicious of too overtly political and pro-American initiatives.

Ultimately, the latter camp prevailed, relying on both the weight of a majority of the European CCF members and on the support of its CIA sponsors.²¹ The Festival received a mixed response from the French and European press, and confirmed among the hard-liners the fear that the CCF was shirking away from the kind of aggressive anti-Communism they deemed necessary in Europe. Nabokov defended the event as a psychological success in the “complex and depressingly morbid intellectual climate of France.” Of course, he complained, in any other country it would have counted on more sympathy and support, not to mention a more friendly press coverage. Nonetheless, “I still believe that it was the only kind of action we could have undertaken here in Paris which would have established the Congress in the minds of the European intellectuals as a positive, and not only a political, organization. I sincerely believe that now the Congress is not only well-known, but is respected by many intellectuals who don’t agree with us.”²² Despite his best efforts, he failed to convince Hook on that front. The NYU philosopher, in fact, offered a scathing assessment of the Festival in his autobiography. The “elaborate and expensive” event had tried to win over neutralist intellectuals in

²¹ For a more exhaustive discussion of the debates and decisions that led to the Paris Festival, both in Europe and in the U.S., see chapter 4.

²² Nicolas Nabokov to Sidney Hook, 3 July 1952, s. II, b. 30, f. 1, IACF Records.

Europe “by dazzling them with artistic delights after the high cultural season in Paris was over.” Despite the “laughable” efforts at “desperate rationalization to show that all of these activities had something to do with the defense of the free world,” Hook wrote, “actually it did more to further Nabokov’s career and reputation than to further cultural freedom.” Not one to mince words, he dismissed the Festival as “an extravaganza that provided junket tours for hundreds, and left the congress saddled with a bureaucracy whose subsequent care and feeding was a burden on his resources.”²³

“Partisans of an Aggressive Defense of Freedom”? Debating the Nature of the CCF

In the wake of the festival, the Executive Committee met to discuss the next steps. Chiaromonte immediately stated that it posed the question of the organization’s politics. The main result of the event, he argued, had been to dispel the notion that American and European cultures were separate and autonomous, and to show that cultural freedom was the element that connected them. European intellectuals, however, tended to forget this cultural community due to nationalism. In France, in particular, it was difficult to separate cultural nationalism from a certain kind of political one, which usually corresponded to neutralism. The Congress, unlike Stalinists and nationalists, should operate a sharp distinction between culture and politics: its goal was not to defend a specific position, but the principle of modern civilization and freedom, entirely beyond the political questions. This was especially important for the activities in the national contexts, where the problem of knowing “whose side one is on” constantly hampered the work of the committees. Chiaromonte thus concluded, in full agreement with Silone, that

²³ Hook. *Out of Step*, 445-46.

the CCF should move decisively in the direction of cultural activities, and accord ample freedom of action to its national sections.²⁴ It is easy to read in these positions not only the reservations about the more aggressive forms of Communism, but also an echo of the actual problems that Chiaromonte and the Italian committee were facing at the time in talking to neutralist and undecided intellectuals, and in convincing them that the organization was not merely a front for U.S. propaganda in Europe. The specific situations of Italy and France will be discussed more in detail in the next chapters, but the record of the CCF shows that some of the difficulties they faced traveled beyond their borders and informed how intellectuals debated the general orientation of the Congress.

After the Paris Festival, the Congress, having established its credentials as more than an anti-Communist organization, continued to expand its scope. It promoted the “Science and Freedom” Congress in Hamburg in July 1953, a gathering of scientists to advance the idea that scientific research should be free from state interference and denounce the treatment of scientists in the Eastern bloc.²⁵ It also expanded its network of publications and magazines, initially limited to the *Der Monat* in Germany and *Preuves* in France (originally the CCF bulletin and later expanded into a full-fledged magazine). Between 1953 and 1956 appeared *Encounter* in Great Britain – which would become the Congress’ most successful publication – *Tempo Presente* in Italy, and others aimed at Austria, Latin America, India, and Australia. Less literary in character, *Soviet Survey* focused on the social and cultural trends within the Soviet Union, while the bulletin *Science and Freedom* (a by-product of the Hamburg Congress) discussed issues related to

²⁴ Minutes of the CCF Executive Committee, 31 May 1952, 22-23, s. II, b. 3, f. 1, IACF Records. My translation.

²⁵ Coleman, *The Liberal Conspiracy*, 104-08; Scott-Smith, *The Politics of Apolitical Culture*, 143-45.

the scientific and academic communities.²⁶ The nature of the CCF's activities also reflected the evolution of the international situation: Stalin's death, in March 1953, marked the end of the most acute phase of the early Cold War, and pushed the organization to emphasize an alternative rationale and mission than simple anti-Communism.

The disagreements on what the Congress should be, thus, re-emerged in virtually the same terms at an Executive Committee meeting in January 1955, attended by almost all the most important European and American members. The Paris Secretariat had circulated a note in advance to introduce the debate about the balance between the political and cultural activities of the Congress, and to reassess the latter. Looking at the developments of the previous months, the note stressed as the paramount issues the problem of coexistence between the two blocs, and the new forms of cultural offensive coming from the Soviet Union. The thaw between the two superpowers presented the CCF with a different challenge, and the need to determine how to approach the issue of dialogue with Eastern European intellectuals, whether they be official representatives of the State or dissenters.

Silone was the first to speak, and clearly expressed his disagreement with the terms in which the question was posed. Even if the West could be sure that the new relaxation of tensions was permanent – and it could not, according to the writer – it would be a mistake to establish a direct interdependence between the fight for cultural freedom and the “fluctuations of diplomatic relations” between nations. “In the domain of

²⁶ In 1962, the Congress also helped launch *Minerva*, a magazine dedicated to the discussion of the “governmentalisation of science,” i.e. the social and political implications of scientific research and scholarship. See Elena Aronova, “The Congress for Cultural Freedom, *Minerva*, and the Quest for Instituting “Science Studies” in the Age of Cold War,” *Minerva* 50 n. 3 (September 2012): 316-21.

culture,” Silone claimed, “coexistence is permanent”: the intellectuals’ task was to be constantly open to and engage with new works of art or ideas, even from behind the Iron Curtain; if they failed to maintain some contacts with their adversaries, it would no longer be a fight but a monologue.²⁷ Silone then moved to the larger question of the tension between purely cultural activities and others of an explicit anti-Communist character, and once again brought it back to the reality of the national contexts in which the CCF operated. In France and Italy, where Communism took the form of a mass movement rather than a “sect,” it was a heterogeneous mixture of social and cultural groups – revolutionary workers, peasants, libertarian intellectuals – who had joined the Party for profoundly different reasons. Against such an amalgam, the most effective strategy was not the frontal assault but a multifaceted approach, mirroring the Communist structure itself, to disaggregate and divide its parts. Citing the work of the Italian committee, Silone argued that the only option within the means of the CCF was to concentrate on those intellectuals who had joined the Communist Party to fight clerical reactionaries or Fascism, and to show them that such a fight would be more effective if independent from Communist control. He added:

I think it is necessary, once and for all, to agree on the fact that to demand more from us would mean that we would give up on these tasks. [...] If we want to accomplish our particular task, which is to strike at Communism in the cultural domain and among intellectuals, we must take upon ourselves the cultural democratic claim (*revendication*), which means that we cannot be exclusively an anti-Communist organization, because true anti-Communism in the cultural domain is to be vigilant and fight for freedom against any other enemy of freedom.²⁸

Arguing on both utilitarian and moral terms, Silone concluded that the CCF should not refrain from intervening in all cases where cultural freedom was in danger. It

²⁷ Minutes of the CCF Executive Committee, 24-25 January 1955, 19, b. 1, f. 6, ACCF Records.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 21. My translation.

should also strive to give a positive meaning to its definition of freedom – for example against censorship and religious persecution and in favor of a lay state – rather than leave those causes to Communists. Silone’s emphasis on the cultural aspect of the confrontation met with broad agreement from other members of the Executive Committee, like English poet Stephen Spender and Indian politician Mino Masani. Aron, while sharing the overall message, pointed out the differences between France and Italy that Silone seemed to have overlooked. The first was that the French Communist Party, unlike the Italian one, had always been perceived by the French as Moscow’s fifth column, and there was never a concern that it would come to power on its own. Moreover, given its usual ideological rigidity in following the Soviet line, the times of relaxation of international tensions were the most dangerous for its ability to attract intellectuals and spread the “contagion.” The final difference was that in France the separation between politics and culture could not be as clear as elsewhere, because cultural freedom in the country was under no serious attack. Claiming to fight for cultural freedom in France, therefore, would look suspicious and lead people to question their ulterior motives; it would be better to accept the fact that the CCF in France had an ideological role in defending freedom, but that it inevitably translated most of the time onto a political terrain.²⁹

The apparent unanimity was broken, not coincidentally, by Sidney Hook, who offered to “test” such a general agreement by raising some questions, and sounded somewhat skeptical about it: “I think I will agree with him [Silone] if he agrees with me, but I am not sure whether he agrees with me.” He began by questioning the premise that a fundamental change in the international context had taken place, arguing instead that “the

²⁹ Ibid., 25-27.

free world is weaker than it was when we started, our tasks greater, and our forces less commensurate with our tasks.” Hook also challenged the separation between cultural and political spheres, and argued that the task of the CCF members was to be “partisans of freedom in the field of culture”:

Because of the world in which we are living we are anti-Communists, not only anti-Communists, of course, but strongly anti-Communist, because the chief threat at the moment comes from the Communist world. Now this very phrase or word “anti-fascist” never did. We should ask ourselves: why is it that one could be anti-fascist without people asking “Well, what are you for?”. But today one can’t be anti-Communist without getting a question “What are you for?” Everybody knew what you were anti-fascist [sic] - you were for the things that the fascists were trampling into the ground. Since we are anti-Communist in a similar cultural context, everybody should know what we are for, viz., the things of the spirit that the Communists are destroying.³⁰

Hook conceded that “there are a lot of people who are anti-Communists who are also opposed to us, like Franco and McCarthy,” but argued that it should not embarrass the CCF in its militant anti-Communism. “We should not let our discomfort with the term affect the position which we hold as partisans of an aggressive defense of freedom,” he concluded.³¹

He then defended the American Committee for Cultural Freedom, which had been criticized at the meeting for its aggressive tones, and deemed generally valid its accusation that the CCF concentrated too much on purely cultural enterprises. Despite the fact that other violations existed in the world, CCF activities should be directed toward

³⁰ Ibid., 32-33. It is not surprising that Hook made an explicit comparison between Fascism and Communism, as U.S. intellectuals after World War II were increasingly pointing out the structural similarities between the two apparently opposite regimes, and subsuming them under the common notion of “totalitarianism.” On how the idea came about and how it was influenced by the early Cold War, see Abbott Gleason, *Totalitarianism: The Inner History of the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Christofferson, *French Intellectuals Against the Left*, 5-17; Cooney, *The Rise of the New York Intellectuals*, 67-94; Berghahn, *America and the Intellectual Cold Wars in Europe*, 77-107; Wilford, “Playing the CIA’s Tune?,” 18-19.

³¹ Minutes of the CCF Executive Committee, 24-25 January 1955, 33.

the main threat to cultural freedom, i.e. Communist totalitarianism. His second criticism of the Congress was that it refrained from certain initiatives for fear of appearing as an American organization furthering U.S. interests. Finally, Hook lamented that many intellectuals in Western Europe were losing the will to defend freedom, and defined as a “pious wish” the idea that freedom was indivisible: “In Western Europe particularly there are a great many intellectuals who have come to feel in the last few years, that survival is the be-all and end-all of existence, and that we should not put freedom first. [...] People are more willing to make compromises on what used to be beyond compromise. Perhaps it is natural enough for those living in Europe. But then, we ought to be aware that they are willing to make compromises and start from there.”³² Hook concluded by acknowledging that every national committee would devise the most effective way to deal with Communism in their own country, but affirmed that dialogue on specific issues should not prevent the international organization from reasserting its fundamental beliefs. As to the identification with America, the philosopher assured the Executive Committee that “reflection” would show that “insofar as there is an American cause on cultural freedom from the point of view of those in this organization, it is also a European cause, it is also a universal cause. It only may appear to be American because most of our resources are American, or because in the political field, America is the chief obstacle to Communist world domination.”³³

Other members jumped into the discussion, which by this time had become a confrontation between two different ways to understand cultural diplomacy. Josselson

³² Ibid., 34-35.

³³ Ibid., 36. Irving Brown, invited to add to the “American point of view,” agreed with Hook on the rejection of a dichotomy between politics and culture, and of Silone’s definition of coexistence as an unavoidable fact of life.

expressed his disagreement with Hook, saying that it would be a mistake to surrender cultural activities and that it was precisely through those that the Congress widened its reach. Lasky and Nabokov, along similar lines, highlighted the fact that even cultural initiatives had a political significance, if properly set up. François Bondy, the editor of *Preuves*, argued instead that it was evident that the people who had come to the Congress had done so not mainly because anti-Communist. Rather, they were interested in an internationalist association of people looking for mutual exchange of ideas and values. The huge difference in climate and situations in the different places made it necessary to preserve such a character, and to find a “community of ideas” within which to resolve the differences brought about by the national pressures, cultures, and milieux. Anti-Communism was no longer enough as a unifying force, but the Congress should rather try to define a “positive faith,” which was intrinsic in its international nature.³⁴

Swiss writer and CCF president Denis de Rougemont tried to sum up the different positions saying that each national affiliate would determine the best course for its country within a common goal. He added that the separation between cultural and political could be resolved by stating that the mission of the Congress was not to promote culture *per se*, but to defend it when threatened by totalitarian forces. Not everyone, however, was ready to move on to the next item on the agenda: Chiaromonte and Silone declared themselves not satisfied with the discussion, showing that the problem went beyond the principle of the autonomy of the national committees. They lamented that “our American friends have discussed a bit among themselves. The Secretariat has responded. But for our part, on the French and Italian side, the discussion has not ended,

³⁴ Ibid., 57-58.

because it appears that there are serious difficulties.”³⁵ Stressing the fact that their goals should be commensurate to the resources available, Silone claimed that the Italian committee could simply not tackle political issues that were outside of its experience such as China – an example that Hook had brought up earlier. The committee could provide its members with information, “but to accept to take a position which would be in some way imposed on us by others, i.e. by facts and reasons that are beyond our experience, the Congress for Cultural Freedom as it is in Italy is incapable of doing that.”³⁶ Both Italians addressed directly “our American friends,” and urged them to understand that the fight against Communism, in order to be more effective, had to take into account differences in national temperament and development. They implicitly suggested that Americans looking at anti-Communism abroad seemed unaware of the complexities of the task, and that their abstract formulations lacked in clear and concrete proposals.

The discussion at the January 1955 Executive Committee was in certain respects quite ordinary. The question of the general policy of the Congress was a recurrent one, and its members would continue to debate it every few years; moreover, the exchanges always remained very civil and without dramatic confrontations. It was also, however, uncommon insofar as all the major actors contributed to the debate at length, and fleshed out in detail the different points of view. It is not a coincidence that, in the discussion between a more politically militant approach to the work of the organization and a cultural one, the men who represented the opposite tendencies were respectively from the United States and Italy and France. In fact, the debate about what to do in the latter

³⁵ Ibid., 60. My translation.

³⁶ Ibid., 61. My translation.

countries seemed at times to assume a larger significance, and to become a proxy for the larger discussion about what the CCF could and should do, and what its limits were. Far from taking orders from the Paris Secretariat or Washington, European intellectuals not only pushed back against the expectations on how they should conduct their activities at home, but also tried to shape the policy of the Congress to reflect their own understanding of anti-Communism and cultural freedom.

“La fin est finie”: The Limits of the “End of Ideology” Debate

The experience of Italian and French intellectuals diverged in another fundamental respect from the histories of the Congress for Cultural Freedom that scholars have generally written. The CCF is largely credited, if not for inventing the notion, for popularizing the “end of ideology” debate through its events and publications. At the General Assembly held in Milan in September 1955, in particular, a large number of participants and observers remarked upon the substantial agreement on the rejection of ideological solutions among people from different areas and political traditions. One of the reasons for the success of the theme in the following years was its resonance with the experiences of the postwar intellectual generation, which had come to see ideology as fanaticism and simplified judgments on reality. By rejecting it, the new paradigm was especially appealing in offering to replace ideology with a dispassionate empirical method, which would allow looking at each issue on its own merits.

The Milan Congress met for six days in September 1955, with 140 delegates from about two dozen countries – a majority European and American – joining its sessions. In its tone and in the composition of its participants, it marked a clear departure from the

Berlin Congress of five years earlier, which had included a significant element of propaganda. Nabokov himself put it succinctly to Julius “Junkie” Fleischmann, the president of Fairfield Foundation: he explained that the CCF had turned down the request from American poet Allen Tate to be invited to the event because “the Milan Conference is for economists, sociologists, and philosophers.”³⁷ It was, in fact, a meeting in which academics and social scientists played a prominent role, and in which an apparent agreement on a set of conclusions surprised some of the participants. Among the unstated goals of the event was to encourage the evolution of non-Communist Western unions, increasing the participation of European social democrats into the Atlantic community.³⁸ The different sessions dealt with topics such as “The Challenges to a Free Society,” “Economic Systems: Their Aims and Their Realities” (on the similarities and differences between capitalist and Communist systems), “Threats and Obstacles to a Free Society” (dealing with developing countries and the lasting hold of nationalism), and “The Resilience of Freedom.” A majority of the Congress delegates more or less explicitly pointed out that socio-economic systems like Western capitalism and Eastern socialism, previously thought as virtual opposites, were increasingly showing some elements in common. One of the results of these changes that the “industrial age” was bringing about was that the old ideological divisions, and their prescriptions for regulating a society and addressing its ills, seemed to have fewer and fewer contacts with the current situation. In fact, the most successful countries had been those who had combined elements of free market and State intervention in original ways. New tools and disciplines seemed to

³⁷ Nicolas Nabokov to Julius Fleischmann, 20 June 1955, s. II, b. 135, f. 5, IACF Records.

³⁸ See Michael Hochgeschwender, “Il Fronte culturale della guerra fredda: Il Congresso per la Libertà della Cultura come esperimento di forma di lotta transnazionale,” trans. Teodoro Tagliaferri, *Ricerche di storia politica* VI n. 1 (March 2003): 53.

provide a better path forward for the industrialized world, but also for developing countries that were looking for models to grow out of poverty.³⁹

In a report written for *Encounter* after the end of the conference, Edward Shils identified a single theme that provided coherence to the disparate interventions: “almost every paper was in one way or another a critique of doctrinairism, of fanaticism, of ideological possession. [...] This turning point might be described as the end of ideological enthusiasm.”⁴⁰ Shils also remarked on the widespread feeling among the participants that they no longer needed to justify the Western capitalist system *vis-à-vis* the Communist critique, almost the “quiet conviction that Communism had lost the battle of ideas.”⁴¹ In those same years Raymond Aron and Daniel Bell, both closely associated with the CCF, also theorized this exhaustion of the old ideologies and contributed to giving it the label with which it became associated. To the extent that it could be identified with any organization, then, the Congress for Cultural Freedom was involved from the outset in the formulation and popularization of the “end of ideology,” and consciously made it “its” theme. Years later, Bell would write to Josselson that “if anything has emerged, intellectually, out of the Congress since Milan it is the statement, iterated [sic] now several times, that the old ideologies have lost

³⁹ On the Milan Congress see Coleman, *The Liberal Conspiracy*, 108-11; Grémion, *Intelligence de l'anticommunisme*, 153-226; Scott-Smith, *The Politics of Apolitical Culture*, 145-53.

⁴⁰ Edward Shils, “Letter from Milan: The End of Ideology?,” *Encounter* V no. 5 (November 1955), 53. Macdonald voiced a much more critical opinion on the event, lamenting that the general consensus had resulted in an essentially boring event: see Dwight Macdonald, “No Miracle in Milan,” *Encounter* V no. 6 (December 1955): 68-74.

⁴¹ Shils, “The End of Ideology?,” 54.

their intellectual content, and cannot be accepted seriously. This is, our special theme, and we think it ought to be restated as the basis for an examination of the mass society.”⁴²

Job Dittberner has noted the underlying ambiguity of the notion, which evolved over time and came to mean different things. At the Milan Conference, the “end of ideology” was intended “as both prescriptive and descriptive. It purported to describe an actual situation: “successful” governments were not following the formulas of traditional political doctrines. And because those traditional political doctrines were considered bankrupt, the conference *prescribed* a flexible, pragmatic approach to political and economic problems.”⁴³ While couching itself in the reassuring language of social sciences and dispassionate factual observations, then, the “end of ideology” also served a useful political function. It encouraged the elites of the developing countries to resist the lure of Communist ideology, which offered no real solution to their plight, and rather follow the path provided by Western mixed economies. Critics of the paradigm repeatedly pointed out this contradiction between the “objective” character of its premises, and the *de facto* implication of a justification of the socio-political status quo, but could not prevent its success.

According to Giles Scott-Smith, the “end of ideology” theme was not merely a coincidental by-product of the CCF’s anti-Communism, but it represented the attempt to offer a wider and more constructive vision to its members, and to move beyond a purely negative stance – it was, in fact, the closest the Congress came to a “counter-faith”

⁴² Daniel Bell to Michael Josselson, 25 November 1958, s. II, b. 86, f. 2, IACF Records. On the relationship between the CCF and the “end of ideology,” see also Aronova, “The Congress for Cultural Freedom, *Minerva*, and the Quest for Instituting “Science Studies” in the Age of Cold War,” 309-12.

⁴³ Dittberner, *The End of Ideology and American Social Thought*, 127.

alternative to Communism.⁴⁴ After the Paris Festival, it was necessary to broaden the perspective of freedom of expression in a free society by linking it to an overall interpretation of social, political, and economic behavior in the West that offered something more constructive than anti-Communism. The “end of ideology,” thus, pointed the way not only to the end of scarcity through hyper-productive capitalism, but also to the application of behavioralism and technocratic management for the solution of all socio-economic problems. By promoting it, the CCF became a “forum for managing European imperial retreat by promoting the expertise of US-European world leadership for the successful development of the Third World, along the way building alliances with non-Western intellectuals who associated with this cause.”⁴⁵

The conferences in Hamburg, in 1953, and Milan showed that the organization had developed an identity largely based on a “common belief in the exhaustion of ideological motivation, to be replaced by a more practical ‘empirical realism’ as the basis for all intellectual endeavour in the social and practical sciences.”⁴⁶ Although its members might not entirely agree on their historical or philosophical references, they shared the belief in the need to chart the course to a post-ideological society. Such an evolution also presented political incentives, as it reflected the growing importance, in Western European nations, of the center-left and center-right parties from which the CCF drew the majority of its members. The consensus emerging around the “end of ideology” in socio-political thought, argues Scott-Smith, was in many ways “an extension of the

⁴⁴ Scott-Smith, “The Congress for Cultural Freedom,” 140. See also Giles Scott-Smith, “The Congress for Cultural Freedom, the End of Ideology and the 1955 Milan Conference: ‘Defining the Parameters of Discourse’,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 37 n. 3 (July 2002): 437-55.

⁴⁵ Scott-Smith, “The Congress for Cultural Freedom,” 140; Scott-Smith, *The Politics of Apolitical Culture*, 138.

⁴⁶ Scott-Smith, *The Politics of Apolitical Culture*, 139.

‘consensus society’ of managed capitalism as envisaged by the Marshall Plan,” and it could be considered “as the Plan’s intellectual dimension.”⁴⁷ Equally important, the theme could coalesce the disillusioned elements of the postwar European scene and confront “the emotive power of the Soviet Union as the progressive society.”⁴⁸

The reception of the end of ideology “line,” however, was not uniform throughout the organization, and it resonated in some places more than in others. The problem came up during the preparatory work for the Milan Conference, as Nabokov reported to the Executive Committee at the beginning of 1955 – thanking the Italian committee in particular for its “helpful criticism.” In the previous months, he and Josselson had met with Silone and other members of the Associazione italiana per la libertà della cultura (AILC) to discuss the proposed themes, and had faced a recurring complaint: the proposals were too vague, and did little to solve the problems they faced at home. Economist Ernesto Rossi, in particular, dismissed them as useful only for some “rhetorical outbursts” by a few big names. He suggested instead that Italian participants would be more interested in discussing topics more relevant to their experiences, such as industrial monopolies and state intervention in a market economy.⁴⁹

Nabokov reassured Silone that the CCF had taken into account the Italians’ criticism in a new draft of the conference preamble, but the results were far from satisfactory. Writing to Josselson a few months later, Silone – in complete assent with the most important members of the AILC, including Chiaromonte and Rossi – reiterated his criticism. He claimed to be willing to undertake a pilgrimage to Lourdes or Santiago de Compostela in exchange for having the Congress cancelled or moved elsewhere, “in the

⁴⁷ Ibid., 113.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 142; see also Scott-Smith, “The Congress for Cultural Freedom,” 141-42.

⁴⁹ Ernesto Rossi to Ignazio Silone, 10 October 1954, s. II, b. 289, f. 11, IACF Records.

exclusive interest of the Italian movement for cultural freedom.” The revised draft, he claimed, had only confirmed the AILC’s worst impressions: “it is an initiative where rhetoric is balanced only by naiveté, because the eclecticism of the invitees will make any further discussion impossible. I would be happy, at the time of the World Congress, to travel to Cuba...”⁵⁰ While reassuring Silone that the CCF did not wish to compel pilgrimages for any of its members, Josselson vigorously defended the plans for the Milan Congress, arguing that the prestige of the organizing committee made the accusations of rhetoric and naiveté grossly unfair. He added that the eclecticism of the participants, far from preventing discussion, was the essence of the CCF itself: without the effort to bring together people of different persuasions, the organization would lose its *raison d’être*.⁵¹ The argument seems to have temporarily muted Silone’s reservations, but the writer dryly remarked a few months later that the organizers gave a different version of the Milan Congress every time they talked about it, leaving the impression that they did not know exactly what they wanted from it.⁵²

During a meeting of the CCF Executive Committee, an apparently simple matter of translation hinted at a larger divide within the organization. Some members, including Hook, objected to the translation into French of the tentative title of one of the sessions, “Symbols and Rituals of a Free Society.” The idea to investigate the “emotional” basis of a democratic society was an important one, many agreed, but the Frenchmen would probably laugh about the concept if expressed in such terms. Similarly, Chiaromonte

⁵⁰ Ignazio Silone to Michael Josselson, 14 December 1954, s. II, b. 289, f. 11, IACF Records. My translation.

⁵¹ Michael Josselson to Ignazio Silone, 20 December 1954, s. II, b. 289, f. 11, IACF Records.

⁵² Ignazio Silone to Michael Josselson, 3 February 1955, s. II, b. 290, f. 1, IACF Records. The AILC also questioned the selection of delegates to the Congress, complaining that it would be difficult to explain to its members why more prestigious personalities who seldom participated in the work of the committee had been invited and other, more active ones had not.

objected to some of the formulations in the draft on the grounds that it would be hardly comprehensible for the Italians and the French delegates, lamenting its abstract character.⁵³ This brief exchange pointed to an important problem for the work of the CCF, which went beyond the adaptation to the political conditions of each country and to the personalities involved. In some cases, the very language and concepts resulted difficult to translate, literally and metaphorically, in a way that spoke meaningfully to the intended intellectual and academic milieu. France and Italy were, in this sense, much more similar to each other than to the Anglo-Saxon tradition of philosophical discourse.

Such an uneven development helps explain the different influence and reception of the Milan Congress, and its characteristic “end of ideology” theme. It was especially successful in the United States and Great Britain, where it was mostly elaborated in the works of sociologists Daniel Bell, Edward Shils, and Seymour Martin Lipset. According to Grémion, in America the notion was associated to the theme of American exceptionalism, and it supported the revisionist theory of U.S. capitalism elaborated by the Democratic left.⁵⁴ Its most popular advocate was Bell, whose 1960 collection of essays – unequivocally titled *The End of Ideology* – drew heavily from papers presented at various CCF events.⁵⁵

Raymond Aron had been one of the first to formulate the idea, and took the lead in the efforts the CCF made to expand and clarify its implications; he too, however, would later feel uncomfortable with some of its uses and try to “demystify” it. In 1955,

⁵³ Minutes of the CCF Executive Committee, 24-25 January 1955, b. 1, f. 6, ACCF Records.

⁵⁴ Grémion, *Intelligence de l'anticommunisme*, 344, 336.

⁵⁵ Daniel Bell, *The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties*, revised edition (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1988). For more on the book and its role in the debates among U.S. intellectuals about mass society, see Berghahn, *America and the Intellectual Cold Wars in Europe*, 96-107.

Aron published his critique of French leftist intellectuals and their enduring fascination with Marxism, *The Opium of the Intellectuals*. His conclusion, entitled “The End of the Ideological Age?,” argued that Western capitalism had changed significantly in the past decades, due to new methods of organization and planning. Not only such an economic system no longer corresponded to any of the old “pure doctrines,” but the prospect of gradual reforms appeared more promising than its violent overthrow. In his interpretation, the “end of ideology” meant the end of a particular form of thought encompassing and explaining systematically all the historical world.⁵⁶ The success of the paradigm also reflected a change within the CCF itself, which began to emphasize its involvement in the social sciences and the new theories of government and development. While in its early stages the symbols of the Congress had been writers like Silone and Koestler, after the Milan Congress sociologists like Aron, Daniel Bell and Edward Shils were more and more setting the tone. As Scott-Smith put it, by the mid-1950s “the Aron-Polanyi axis began to displace that of de Rougemont-Silone as the major intellectual influence in the workings of the Congress.”⁵⁷

The emerging centrality of a sociological approach to the study of society, which the CCF embraced and contributed to its growth and the development of its agenda, was however less evident in France and Italy. The intellectual scene in the two countries was less receptive to the “end of ideology” concept to begin with. Konstantin A. “Kot” Jelenski, a Polish aristocrat who had left his country in 1939 and had become a Congress officer after strong pressure from Aron, explained it to Josselson following a visit to

⁵⁶ Scott Smith, *The Politics of Apolitical Culture*, 147-48; Grémion, *Intelligence de l'anticommunisme*, 361.

⁵⁷ Scott-Smith, *The Politics of Apolitical Culture*, 147; see also Grémion, *Intelligence de l'anticommunisme*, 161.

Rome.⁵⁸ Reporting on his conversations with the head of Mondadori, one of the largest Italian publishing houses, the Polish émigré noted that one of the questions had been about the “ideological direction” of some CCF publications. When Jelenski had tried to present the official Congress line – defense of cultural freedom and analysis of the new industrial societies devoid of ideological mystifications – he had received a telling response: “That’s precisely what troubles me. I don’t trust this American, anti-ideological theses. Our publishing house has a political and ideological position, and I don’t think that the names I see here [including Aron] correspond to that position.”⁵⁹

Silone himself remained much more skeptical about the possibility to coalesce Western intellectuals around the notion, echoing and at the same time influencing its penetration among the Italian intelligentsia. Accordingly, the CCF-sponsored initiatives in Italy and the activities of its national committee saw little emphasis on the “end of ideology” as a theme for reflection. In an article he wrote for *Tempo Presente* in 1961, Silone directly tackled the issue. While Aron was unquestionably correct in considering the current political and party ideologies anachronistic, he wrote, their abandonment was not an inevitable outcome: history was full of examples of “ideological scaffolding” which had long survived the society that had generated it. Moreover, something deeper than inertia contributed to Silone’s skepticism about the disappearance of the traditional categories of Left and Right:

It is likely that, vis-à-vis any established order, there will always be different behavior between the man who accepts it and the man who criticizes it. It is difficult to foresee that the well-being brought by the industrial society could distract men from the permanent problems of the relationship between politics, religion, and morality, between the individual and society, between men and women, and so on, and that on such issues – even conceding that everyone

⁵⁸ Coleman, *The Liberal Conspiracy*, 123-25.

⁵⁹ Konstantin Jelenski to Michael Josselson, 28 May 1962, s. II, b. 197, f. 8, IACF Records. My translation.

could be well-fed, well-dressed, and well-housed – everyone could share the same opinion. As long as that will be the case, unless a dictatorship prevented its expression, there will be right and left.⁶⁰

In France, the reception of the “end of ideology” was inscribed in the context of the transition from the Fourth Republic to the Fifth, which entailed substantial changes in the political and intellectual scene. The reaction to the Milan Congress was, generally speaking, more favorable than to the Berlin Congress in 1950 or the Paris Festival in 1952. Reports on the proceedings appeared in several newspapers, frequently written by sympathetic observers.⁶¹ A fundamental difference from the debate in the UK and U.S. was, however, that the works of Edward Shils and Michael Polanyi were largely unknown in Paris; Daniel Bell’s *The End of Ideology* itself was not even translated in French. Even Aron’s own work, historian Pierre Nora has written, “met with success only among the candidates to the École Nationale d’Administration.”⁶² The result, according to Grémion, was that the whole debate was reduced to a simplistic critique of Marxism, and attacked by journalists and academics close to the PCF. In fact, the book that was widely discussed in the French capital in 1960 was not Bell’s, but Jean-Paul Sartre’s heavily theoretical *Critique de la raison dialectique*. France, thus, did not experience the kind of debates that took place in America or Great Britain, and was less responsive to the increasing role of the social sciences in CCF activities.⁶³

⁶⁰ Ignazio Silone, “Agenda: Benessere, miseria e moralità IV,” *Tempo Presente* VI n. 3 (March 1961), 166. My translation.

⁶¹ See Grémion, *Intelligence de l’anticommunisme*, 223-24; for an overview of the responses in different countries see also the CCF’s own Press Summary, s. III, b. 399, f. 2, IACF Records.

⁶² Pierre Nora, “America and the French Intellectuals,” trans. Michael Taylor, *Daedalus* 107 n. 1 (Winter 1978), 327. The École Nationale d’Administration is an elite graduate school forming the cadres of the French civil service.

⁶³ Grémion, *Intelligence de l’anticommunisme*, 360-61, 498.

The most visible result of the shift in CCF activities towards the social sciences was a program of seminars and conferences, often sponsored in collaboration with universities, to discuss the problems of democracy and development. The program, whose first director was Bell, aimed at creating a network of like-minded intellectuals who could gather and, in smaller settings, explore the issues that had emerged since the Milan Congress. The CCF thus promoted a series of seminars under the title of “Tradition and Social Change,” which were aimed in particular at non-Western elites dealing with the problems of industrialization and modernization. In 1957, for instance, it co-sponsored a seminar on changes in Soviet society with St. Anthony’s College at Oxford, which according to Hugh Wilford marked the “final arrival” of the Congress in Britain.⁶⁴ The Committee in charge of its program, which also included Aron and Shils, focused on topics such as “Political Democracy in New States,” or “Workers’ Participation in Management.” The question of the “end of ideology” also recurred, taking two separate connotations: on the one hand, the challenges of industrial society (alienation from work, inequalities of reward) were increasingly common in the socialist bloc as much as in the capitalist world. On the other hand, the traditional Western ideologies of radicalism, liberalism, and conservatism appeared obsolete, and seminar participants were asked to consider whether a new intellectual consensus could be possible.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Hugh Wilford, “‘Unwitting Assets?’: British Intellectuals and the Congress for Cultural Freedom,” *Twentieth Century British History* 11 (2000): 53. Wilford also interestingly notes how Congress officers employed a “sexualized language of flirtation and seduction” to describe their attempts to earn the trust of foreign intellectuals. On the Oxford seminar marking the massive arrival of sociology as the dominant – though not exclusive – orientation see also Grémion, *Intelligence de l’anticommunisme*, 355.

⁶⁵ Minutes of the First Meeting of the Planning Committee on Tradition and Social Change, 3 December 1957, s. II, b. 4, f. 4, IACF Records; Memorandum by Daniel Bell, “Tradition and Social Change I: The End of Ideology,” undated (but 1957), s. II, b. 4, f. 4, IACF Records. On the seminars, see Coleman, *The Liberal Conspiracy*, 111-22, and Scott-Smith, *The Politics of Apolitical Culture*, 157-59.

This trend resulted in closer ties with the academic world, especially in the United States and Great Britain, and with the Ford Foundation, which became the privileged conduit for non-governmental cultural diplomacy. In places where the development of social sciences was not as marked, however, the CCF found less resonance among and participation from local intellectuals.⁶⁶ Silone himself repeatedly complained about the direction that the CCF was taking in the late 1950s and early 1960s, and urged his colleagues not to confine their activities to the domain of sociology. He lamented the “lack of spirituality” of the Congress and admitted scarce interests for the seminars that were playing an increasing role in the activities of the organization.⁶⁷

The evolution of the positions among CCF members could not help but reflect the larger trends in the world and among intellectuals. If the “end of ideology” was first suggested and then celebrated in the Western Europe of the mid-1950 – and even there not uniformly, but especially in Great Britain, Germany, and in part France – the rest of the world did not seem to take notice. Reflecting the organization’s growing concern for the developing world, the Congress had to deal with the fact that ideological convictions continued to be a powerful motive in the politics of many countries.

The question of how to reconsider its most characteristic formula in light of the world situation emerged clearly in the early 1960s. In October 1962, the Executive Committee discussed a report by American sociologist Edward Shils about the perspectives for the CCF in the new decade – all the members had been encouraged to

⁶⁶ On the CCF and the debates on the “end of ideology” and mass society, see also Berghahn, *America and the Intellectual Cold Wars in Europe*, 103-07.

⁶⁷ Minutes of the CCF Executive Committee, 15-16 October 1964, 41-42, s. II, b. 5, f. 5-6, IACF Records; Minutes of the CCF Executive Committee, 8-9 October 1965, 3-4, 32, s. II, b. 6, f. 2, IACF Records. Silone’s remarks were echoed by French poet Pierre Emmanuel, who had joined the CCF in the late 1950s, and who similarly criticized the excessive emphasis on social aspects over the philosophical ones.

write down their thoughts for the discussion, but Shils was apparently the only one to take the invitation seriously.⁶⁸ In his report, he touched on the problem of the divide between the older anti-Communists and the new generations, who had not lived through the same experiences and were not interested in the same issues. The CCF therefore had to find a “positive idiom” to “stabilize and articulate the anti-ideological, anti-utopian, humanitarian liberalism which is our foundation,” rather than just express it as a critique of past doctrines.⁶⁹ Related to this was, according to Shils, the need to clarify the question of “end of ideology”:

The “end of ideology” has already taken place-- although we have still to learn what we meant by it when we coined the phrase in 1955 [...]. In any case, the ideologists as we knew them in the 1930's, 1940's, and 1950's are routed. But what do we ourselves believe politically, both in terms of principle and in terms of analysis of possibilities and prospects? [...] I imagine we will come up with something akin to the humane liberalism of the Enlightenment; but it cannot be the same liberalism which stood so long and then seemed to lose its power of attraction.⁷⁰

In the discussion, Shils stated his position even more explicitly:

If we are at the end of ideology we ought to know what we ourselves believe; if we don't believe in the old nonsense, we ought to know what new non-nonsense we believe in, and we ought to clarify our minds without making it a doctrine or a dogma, and we ought to try and clarify the intellectual charter of the Congress in a way which will provide the framework in which different standpoints can be accepted, and not just out of a random amiability in having friends of different political convictions to understand the principle by which we can have within our body persons of a diversity of views.⁷¹

The first to respond and tackle the issue was Aron, who acknowledged that the original formulation was being used in a much less precise way to oversimplify the intellectual landscape. The CCF, in fact, was losing touch of the situation of ideological

⁶⁸ Minutes of CCF Executive Committee, 10-11 March 1962, 3, s. II, b. 5, f. 4, IACF Records.

⁶⁹ Edward Shils, “Further Thoughts on the Congress in the ‘60’s,” CCF Executive Committee, 10-11 March 1962, 4, s. II, b. 5, f. 4, IACF Records.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

⁷¹ Minutes of CCF Executive Committee, 10-11 March 1962, 3, s. II, b. 5, f. 4, IACF Records.

and political debates in the word, which in 1962 was very different from that of 1950. Silone followed up along similar lines, and explained that it was the idea of the “end” of ideologies that made him most uncomfortable. “The task of an intellectual,” he claimed, “is always to demystify all that has become old in the world of ideologies; but one also risks making anti-ideology an ideology in itself, because the pragmatic method becomes pragmatism, that is a new ideology which is used to give a simplified image of reality.”⁷² Others shared the belief that the identification of the Congress with the end of ideology theme had possibly become too close: Sperber reminded the Executive Committee that the phenomenon was far from universal, especially in Third World countries; Masani feared that the CCF members were becoming “prisoners of this phrase,” and pointed out that neither was the Soviet Union relaxing its ideology, nor was it the task of the organization to invent a new ideology with which to fight Communism.⁷³ Historian Pierre Grémion has in fact observed that there existed a gap between the “end of ideology” as a conceptual problem and as an instrument of organizational identity: the subtleties of the philosophical debate faded in the 1960s, and the label became identified with the refusal of dogmatism and the acceptance of the industrial society.⁷⁴

Fittingly, it was Aron who had the last word on the “*discussion éternelle*.” Acknowledging that the word “ideology” could itself mean almost a dozen different things, he urged to stop using the concept altogether (“*la fin est finie*”), or to find a different expression to refer to it. Regardless of the semantics, Aron argued that the phrase itself had never meant other than the end of the “transfiguration into absolute values of economic techniques,” i.e. Marxism and Communist theory. New ideologies

⁷² Ibid., 11. My translation.

⁷³ Ibid., 13-15, 18.

⁷⁴ Grémion, *Intelligence de l'anticommunisme*, 396.

would replace them, however, and the task of the CCF would be to analyze and discuss them as part of a normal dialectic. “The Congress,” he concluded, “is not defined by the end of ideologies. These ideologies are dead. Long live ideologies!”⁷⁵

The debate crystallized a feeling that some intellectuals within the CCF had developed over the previous years, and spoke to the tension between the public face of the organization and the people shaping its policy. While the original formulation of the “end of ideology” in the mid-1950s maintained a significant degree of open-endedness and complexity – in most of its first iterations it was accompanied by a question mark that later got lost – by the early 1960s it had assumed a less nuanced connotation. In its later versions, the end of ideology paradigm moved closer to a celebration of Western society, seen as the place where fanaticism and blind ideology had been replaced by a rational and successful system able to combine growth and social justice. Even more problematic was the fact that, as Alessandro Brogi has pointed out, the “end of ideology” argument “still implied a form of [American] exceptionalism that was bound to grate on European intellectuals.” The celebration of a non-ideological industrial society, based on a neocapitalist economy and political consensus, resembled a lot the ideal – if not the reality – of their country that Americans promoted.⁷⁶

Such undertones did not sit well with those intellectuals who remained critical of many facets of their own societies, and even those who had helped formulate the idea questioned its oversimplification and the potentially political uses. This is not to mean that the CCF abandoned the “end of ideology” theme altogether, as Aron had suggested in passing. A closer reading of the reception of the notion among its members, however,

⁷⁵ Minutes of CCF Executive Committee, 10-11 March 1962, 35. My translation.

⁷⁶ Alessandro Brogi, *Confronting America: The Cold War between the United States and the Communists in France and Italy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 393.

problematizes Scott-Smith's argument that the CCF successfully developed a positive identity based on the "common belief in the exhaustion of ideological motivation." As Brogi noted, to claim that the "end of ideology" theme was "the turning point that ended ideological warfare in Western Europe" is probably an overstatement.⁷⁷ As they did in other cases, the intellectuals associated with it chose to what they would subscribe and from what they would keep their distance. Either by challenging its initial premises (Silone) or by denouncing the distortion of its original meaning (Aron), they showed the limits of the hegemonic power of the "end of ideology" and, given their influence on their own national debates, contributed to its colder reception.

"We Ignored That an Atlantic Art Existed": Abstract Expressionism and Its Uses

One of the most controversial topics of the historiographical debate concerning American cultural diplomacy and the Congress for Cultural Freedom has been the U.S. government's political exploitation of Abstract Expressionism in the late 1940s and 1950s. The movement obtained worldwide success in the aftermath of World War II, and it constituted the first distinctively American artistic creation to achieve such international prominence. Its main exponents – the most celebrated were Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning, Arshile Gorky, and Mark Rothko – reprised some of the themes and impulses of earlier European schools like Surrealism and German Expressionism, but introduced elements that critics defined as characteristically American. Pollock, in particular, became associated with "action painting" – a style in which the artist spontaneously splashes or dribbles the paint onto the canvas. With the

⁷⁷ Ibid., 185.

help of sympathetic art critics like Clement Greenberg and Harold Rosenberg, Abstract Expressionism became the dominant artistic expression of 1950s America, and was exported by museums and imitators all over the globe.⁷⁸

A revisionist school, which has developed since the mid-1970s, has nonetheless drawn attention to the use that American authorities have made of an allegedly independent movement to further U.S. interests, and prop up the political and intellectual status quo. Max Kozloff, Eva Cockroft, Serge Guilbaut, and David and Cecile Shapiro, among others, have painted a very different picture from that of the irresistible ascent of a new avant-garde movement that replaced Paris as the center of the art world by showcasing a fresh, “American” style. In their telling, the reasons for its success lay in the ideological needs of U.S. officers in the Cold War, and in the links consciously forged behind the scenes between American authorities and the influential figures controlling museums and private institutions.⁷⁹ The history of this “cultural imperialism” mirrored in fact that of the intellectuals associated with the CCF in at least two fundamental respects. In the first place, it served the Atlanticist agenda of the early Cold War, presenting America as not only an integral part of Western culture, but also the ideal environment for freedom of expression and artistic creation. Moreover, it had its roots in the

⁷⁸ See among others Clifford Ross, *Abstract Expressionism: Creators and Critics* (New York: Abrams, 1990).

⁷⁹ The most significant interventions of revisionist historians and art critics have been collected in Frascina, *Pollock and After*: Max Kozloff, “American Painting During the Cold War,” 107-23; Eva Cockroft, “Abstract Expressionism, Weapon of the Cold War,” 125-34; David and Cecile Shapiro, “Abstract Expressionism: The Politics of Apolitical Painting,” 135-51; Serge Guilbaut, “The New Adventures of the Avant-Garde in America: Greenberg, Pollock, or from Trotskyism to the New Liberalism of the “Vital Center,”” 153-66. See also Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art*. I am also drawing from Saunders’ *The Cultural Cold War* and Schrecker’s *Many Are the Crimes*, although they wrote decades after the revisionist school and cannot therefore be considered as part of it; their arguments nonetheless build on and endorse the work of the scholars listed above.

intellectual developments within the U.S. Left in the 1930s, and in the abandonment of radicalism and Marxism.

If a single man could be credited with creating the movement without ever holding a brush, that man was *Partisan Review* art critic Clement Greenberg. According to the Shapiros, his 1939 article “Avant-Garde and Kitsch” constituted “the manifesto and program” of Abstract Expressionism. The article was a response to the dominant artistic movements of the 1930s, in particular Social Realism, and opened the way to a redefinition of art and its relationship with society. Whereas Social Realism was “programmatically critical of capitalism” and aimed to contribute to its disestablishment,⁸⁰ Greenberg theorized the artist’s abandonment of politics in favor of a modernist and elitist avant-garde. Also due to the disillusionment toward the Soviet Union after the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 1939, the relationship of the artist to the masses was no longer the central concern of major painters and intellectuals as in the 1930s, and the attention shifted back to the individual.⁸¹ Throwing his considerable prestige behind the then-scarcely known Jackson Pollock, Greenberg praised the American artist in an explicit comparison with contemporary French painters. According to Guilbaut,

Greenberg emphasized the greater vitality, virility, and brutality of the American artist. He was developing an ideology that would transform the provincialism of American art into internationalism by replacing the Parisian standards that had until then defined the notion of quality in art (grace, craft, finish) with American ones (violence, spontaneity, incompleteness).

⁸⁰ Shapiro and Shapiro, “Abstract Expressionism,” 147.

⁸¹ Guilbaut, “The New Adventures of the Avant-Garde in America,” 155-57; Clement Greenberg, “Avant-Garde and Kitsch,” *Partisan Review* 6 n. 5 (Fall 1939), 34-49. Saunders has also pointed out that Greenberg’s article, by positing the need for a deep connection between progressive artists and an elite of enlightened patrons, set out the ideological rationale for accepting sponsorship from high places: see Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*, 258-59.

Brutality and vulgarity were signs of the direct, uncorrupted communication that contemporary life demanded. American art became the trustee of this new age.⁸²

In one of his most famous formulations, Greenberg claimed that “the main premises of Western art have at last migrated to the United States, along with the center of gravity of industrial production and political power.”⁸³ Another important theoretician of Abstract Expressionism was art critic Harold Rosenberg, who coined the term “action painting” in a 1952 article. He also famously stated that “what was to go on canvas was not a picture but an event,” suggesting that the act of making a picture took precedence over the actual product. The painter’s act thus became a gesture of liberation and a repudiation of political, moral, and aesthetic values – though, as critics have pointed out, that in itself became an aesthetic, both political and moral.⁸⁴ Cockroft has also drawn an explicit connection between these artistic trends and the “end of ideology” theme, arguing that the separation of art from politics with the resurgence of abstraction was part of a general tendency in intellectual circles towards “objectivity” that served American interests in the Cold War.⁸⁵

According to the revisionist school, however, Abstract Expressionism still lacked a crucial element to impose itself as the new dominant paradigm: the sponsorship of powerful patrons like the CIA and private institutions such as the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York. In some cases, the connections and personal and social ties between these worlds facilitated their coordination. Thomas Braden, for example, who as head of the CIA’s International Organization Division played a crucial role in the American cultural Cold War, before joining the agency had been executive secretary of

⁸² Guilbaut, “The New Adventures of the Avant-Garde in America,” 159.

⁸³ Clement Greenberg, “The Decline of Cubism,” *Partisan Review* 15 n. 3 (March 1948), 369.

⁸⁴ Shapiro and Shapiro, “Abstract Expressionism,” 139.

⁸⁵ Cockroft, “Abstract Expressionism, Weapon of the Cold War,” 132.

MoMA from April 1948 to November 1949.⁸⁶ The movement constituted the ideal style for propaganda activities aimed at persuading the world of the superiority of the U.S. social and economic system: it was fresh and creative, but at the same time devoid of explicitly political content. In the context of the anti-Communist climate of the early Cold War, however, cultural projects officially sponsored by the American government were severely limited by the constraints provided by the conservative forces in the U.S. Congress, ready to denounce the artists' former Communist affiliations or the "un-American" content of their works. According to Ellen Schrecker, the controversies over Abstract Expressionism were the artistic equivalent of the partisan conflict over the "loss of China."⁸⁷ Offering a rather original interpretation, some critics even suggested that modern art was really a means of espionage, if one knew how to read it: in some cases, they claimed, abstract paintings were nothing but secret maps revealing the location of strategic U.S. fortifications.⁸⁸

As it did with the CCF, the CIA stepped in to circumvent such constraints and promote American art abroad, with the help of private groups acting as a front. Once again, Frances Stonor Saunders has claimed, the "sublime paradox of American strategy in the cultural Cold War" presented itself: "in order to promote an acceptance of art produced in (and vaunted as the expression of) democracy, the democratic process itself had to be circumvented."⁸⁹ The MoMA was particularly active in sponsoring exhibitions that included a sizeable representation of Abstract Expressionists, and in exporting them abroad. Its International Program footed the bill for dozens of exhibitions all over the

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 128.

⁸⁷ Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes*, 401.

⁸⁸ Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*, 253.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 257.

world, and drew on its connections within government circles and the CCF to promote the works of Abstract Expressionists. The art establishment was so effective in promoting and dispersing their work that, according to the Shapiros, “to an unprecedented degree, and for more than a decade, they effectively routed other stylistic and philosophic expressions in American painting.”⁹⁰ Between 1954 and 1962, MoMA was mostly responsible for the American pavilion at the Venice Biennale – the only one to be privately owned – effectively providing the official U.S. representation that the government could not offer.⁹¹ Museum director Alfred J. Barr would formulate the explicit linkage between artistic tendencies and Cold War imperatives, according to Cockroft. In an article written in 1952, Barr dispelled the notion that modern art was “communistic,” and rather recast it as a cultural weapon against America’s enemies. Totalitarian regimes found their artistic equivalent in Realism, he argued, but the Hitlers and Stalins of the world feared and prohibited abstract art.⁹²

The political implications were immediate: as Guilbaut put it, “Expressionism became the expression of the difference between a free society and totalitarianism; it represented an essential aspect of liberal society: its aggressiveness and ability to generate controversy that in the final analysis posed no threat.” Pollock’s paintings, while offending both the Left and the Right, revitalized and strengthened the new Cold War liberalism.⁹³ Ultimately, the members of the revisionist school agreed on the cost that Abstract Expressionists had to pay for this Faustian bargain with their powerful patrons.

⁹⁰ Shapiro and Shapiro, “Abstract Expressionism,” 140.

⁹¹ Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*, 267-71.

⁹² Cockroft, “Abstract Expressionism, Weapon of the Cold War,” 129-31; Alfred J. Barr, “Is Modern Art Communistic?,” *The New York Times Magazine*, 14 December 1952. On Barr, see also Macdonald’s reportage in *The New Yorker*: Dwight Macdonald, “Action on West 53rd Street,” *The New Yorker*, 12 and 19 December 1953.

⁹³ Guilbaut, “The New Adventures of the Avant-Garde in America,” 163.

The disruptions caused by the dominance of the movement for more than a decade would have negative consequences all over the world throughout the twentieth century. During the 1950s, this “subtle form of censorship” severed the connections between art and social responsibility: realism was all but banished from the art galleries, and “a chill had descended over the American art world.” Dissenting intellectuals had unknowingly become “useful tools in the international propaganda war”: “The artist creates freely. But his work is promoted and used by others for their own purposes.” They had achieved international importance at the price of integrating into “the imperialist machine of the Museum of Modern Art.” Several artists, unable to cope with the contradiction of “being showered with material rewards” for works that “howled their opposition to bourgeois materialism,” would eventually take their own lives or develop pernicious addictions.⁹⁴

Other scholars have taken issue with some of the arguments by revisionists, or pointed to the fact that the support for modernist avant-garde was far from universal among American officials and museum curators. Michael Kimmelman has questioned the notion that MoMA consciously pushed a specific movement, pointing to the competing viewpoint intrinsic to the nature of such a large organization. The Museum was actually “slow to take up Abstract Expressionism’s cause,” and even then its efforts were “relatively isolated.”⁹⁵ While not challenging the broader revisionist point that modernist art served the political aspirations of a certain American social class, Robert Burstow has argued that its members were far from committed to promulgating avant-gardism.

Although “sophisticated East Coast liberals” in the CIA shared political beliefs and social

⁹⁴ Shapiro and Shapiro, “Abstract Expressionism,” 148; Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes*, 401-03; Cockroft, “Abstract Expressionism, Weapon of the Cold War,” 132; Guilbaut, “The New Adventures of the Avant-Garde in America,” 163; Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*, 278.

⁹⁵ Michael Kimmelman, “Revisiting the Revisionists: The Modern, Its Critics, and the Cold War,” *Studies in Modern Art* 4 (1994): 39-55.

backgrounds with those who financed and managed institutions like MoMA, unlike specialist professionals they did not necessarily accept the most extreme forms of modernist art as emblematic of liberal democracy.⁹⁶ Moreover, the CIA privileged the longer established European forms of modernist art, at least initially, to challenge the Soviet Union in the struggle for the mind of Western Europe: the embrace of American modernists like Pollock took place only later, in the second half of the 1950s and in a changed Cold War climate.⁹⁷ Nancy Jachec has instead challenged the narrative independent left's "rapid acquiescence to postwar liberal ideology" in the 1940s, arguing that modern art became increasingly important as a form of political dissent within its discussion on the future of socialism.⁹⁸

If critics have highlighted the contested nature of the political uses of Abstract Expressionism, however, they have presented a less nuanced picture of the receiving end of this kind of "cultural imperialism." In the accounts of both the revisionists and their critics, American efforts were aimed at passive recipients. In Cockcroft, the tactics of the CIA-MoMA partnership were designed to "woo European intellectuals" through the promotion of Abstract Expressionism. In Jachec, the movement was associated with the American avant-garde and "handed back to a European audience by politically shrewd institutions as a means of quelling leftist criticism of American-style democracy, and thus encouraging European political and economic integration based on an American

⁹⁶ Robert Burstow, "The Limits of Modernist Art as a 'Weapon of the Cold War': reassessing the unknown patron of the Monument to the Unknown Political Prisoner," *The Oxford Art Journal* 20 n. 1 (1997): 68, 75.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 77. Burstow also pointed out that, given the dearth of historical evidence, the revisionist assertions that have become commonplace in later historiography were based almost exclusively on two sources: Braden's article "I'm Glad the CIA is Immoral," and Christopher Lasch's "A Brief History of the Congress for Cultural Freedom."

⁹⁸ Jachec, *The Philosophy and Politics of Abstract Expressionism*, 1. Jachec also challenges, like Burstow, the conflation of Abstract Expressionism with the conservative ideology of the State Department, and the notion that the U.S. government promoted the movement since the early 1950s.

precedent.” Abstract Expressionism was used to “pacify the leftist intelligentsia” in countries like France and Italy, “with the promise of maintaining socialist values within a form of liberal democracy that was not only tolerant of them, but strong enough to sustain and even encourage them.” Ultimately, it succeeded in establishing itself as the free expression of leftist values upon European unaligned leftist audiences, who came to embrace it as a new demonstration of leftist critique of technocracy as opposed to capitalism per se.⁹⁹

Yet, European intellectuals did more than merely receive the new artistic dogmas. Saunders herself acknowledged that the reception of these works and exhibitions was not universally enthusiastic. A show on “Twelve Contemporary American Painters and Sculptors,” hosted in 1953 by the Musée National d’Art Moderne in Paris with behind-the-scenes support from MoMA, the CCF, and the CIA, drew explicit criticism. Apparently noticing the “political maneuvering,” elements of the French press made “snide references” to the Musée as a new outpost of “United States territory,” and to the painters as “Mr Foster Dulles’ twelve apostles.”¹⁰⁰ A few years later, another show at the Louvre received “on the whole very spiteful” reviews, as many critics were “baffled or outraged” and remarked negatively on “the size, the violence,” and the “disturbing power” of works by U.S. Abstract Expressionists.¹⁰¹ Kimmelman adds that the reception of the 1955-56 exhibition “Modern Art in the United States” in London was mixed:

⁹⁹ Cockroft, “Abstract Expressionism, Weapon of the Cold War,” 126; Jachec, *The Philosophy and Politics of Abstract Expressionism*, 8, 15.

¹⁰⁰ Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*, 270.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 274.

Abstract Expressionism was the most discussed section, but there was “an overwhelming preference for the more realistic canvases.”¹⁰²

Europeans, in fact, responded with interest to the new movement coming from the United States, and artists were influenced in their own work by Pollock and others. After all, the movement of the *art informel* (or informalism) had been developing in Europe since the end of World War II as a reaction to the trauma of the conflict, and shared some conceptual and stylistic elements with its U.S. counterpart.¹⁰³ According to critic Dore Ashton, American artists drew from the experimentations of Italians such as Romolo Burri or Lucio Fontana. On the other hand, Italian artists, who had remained isolated from their peers under the Fascist regime, were “anxious to establish connections with the twentieth century,” and looked to America as the paradigm of modernity. If however, the encounters and mutual contamination strengthened the avant-gardes in both countries, they also stirred up competition and jealousy toward the success of the Abstract Expressionist school, even to the point of veiled accusations of having corrupted the jury of the Biennale.¹⁰⁴ The significance of the fact that America was at the forefront of the new artistic tendencies was certainly not lost on the observers. More often than not, however, Europeans were less inclined to draw explicit connections between the artistic and the political sphere, and their own sensibilities and traditions colored the reception of Abstract Expressionist works.

¹⁰² Kimmelman, “Revisiting the Revisionists,” 48.

¹⁰³ The very fact of the similarities between Abstract Expressionism and *art informel* had in fact made the former the ideal candidate for government-sponsored promotion: see Jachec, *The Philosophy and Politics of Abstract Expressionism*, 14.

¹⁰⁴ Dore Ashton, “L’arte moderna tra due rive dell’Atlantico: Italia e America a confronto,” in *Immaginari a confronto. I rapporti culturali tra Italia e Stati Uniti: la percezione della realtà tra stereotipo e mito*, eds. Carlo Chiarenza and William L. Vance (Venice: Marsilio, 1992), 130-37.

This section does not attempt to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the impact of Abstract Expressionism on the artistic worlds of France and Italy, which would be beyond the scope of this work. Rather, it concentrates mainly on the connections between the Congress for Cultural Freedom and the new movement, to highlight the mixed responses to it. It does so by taking into account the two magazines, *Preuves* and *Tempo Presente*, as the venues where artistic debates were carried out most consistently. While the CCF also promoted exhibitions and festivals, these larger events usually fell under the purview of the International Secretariat. The magazines, on the other hand, reflected better the local sensibilities and their evolution over time. While this brief discussion does not aim to exhaust the debate on the reception of Abstract Expressionism by CCF affiliates in France in Italy, it nonetheless complicates a narrative that has not fully acknowledged its contested nature.

On the one hand, the two magazines responded positively to the elements of novelty introduced by the movement. In 1953, painter and critic Michel Seuphor commented favorably in *Preuves* on two art exhibitions in Paris, one of them the MoMA-sponsored “Twelve Contemporary American Painters,” with a strong contingent of Abstract Expressionists.¹⁰⁵ The author seemed disappointed by the choice of the organizers to cover a wide range of movements rather than provide a more in-depth treatment of few selected ones. In fact, he implied that there was great curiosity in the French capital toward the new tendencies coming from the U.S. The article emphasized the universal nature of American art, at a time when nationalist impulses were gaining new strength:

¹⁰⁵ On the same exhibition, see Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*, 269.

It is through the universalism of a Pollock, of a de Kooning, of a Glarner, of a Tobey, of a Clifford Still, of a Hoffman, of twenty others, that America has developed, over the past few years, a painting tradition (*peinture*). The distinctive elements of race or climate play a much smaller part than the purely private concerns of the artist; worries, anxieties, certainties and enthusiasms strangely similar to those of the same generations of painters in Paris. Free men are united in the investigation of the immense realm of private life. Shackled men know nothing but material needs.¹⁰⁶

Seuphor – who, it should be pointed out, was himself an abstract painter – scoffed at the critics of the movement, especially those associated with preconceived, “nationalist” ideas. “It is necessary to wait that [those ideas] decay and collapse. Luckily, painters don’t paint for art critics.”¹⁰⁷ A few years later, a debate in *Tempo Presente* highlighted a similar conception of abstractism, identifying its opponents – on either side of the Iron Curtain – with “the enemies of all modern art, of all open and declared modernity.” The contributors portrayed the members of the movement in a generally positive light, as innovators and rebels, and abstractism itself as an international movement, opposed in Italy by conformists and conservatives. The hostility toward it was more a sign of the modern man’s unpreparedness to recognize modern art as its own, than of the latter’s flaws: while for centuries abstract art had been limited and fragmented, it was for the first time developing on a global scale, causing a shock in societies not used to abstractism.¹⁰⁸ At the same time, the significance of this art as described by one of the authors hardly sounded like a ringing endorsement of modern society:

What [the abstract artists] tell us with their works [...] is that any previous civilization is barbaric, that our own civilization is still barbaric, that we have no revealed truth to rely on, that we are barely at the beginnings of humanity, and that this truth must be painfully searched,

¹⁰⁶ Michel Seuphor, “L’Amérique à Paris,” *Preuves* III n. 28 (June 1953), 81. My translation.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 81. My translation.

¹⁰⁸ Giuliano Piccoli, “La Biennale degli astrattisti,” *Tempo Presente* III n. 8 (August 1958), 670-73; Riccardo Barletta, “L’astrattismo è un vizio?,” *Tempo Presente* IV n. 1 (January 1959), 55-58.

discovered, conquered, with struggle, difficulty, and all kinds of defeats for who knows how long.¹⁰⁹

While the two magazines – in particular *Preuves* – repeatedly took an interest in Abstract Expressionism through articles and surveys,¹¹⁰ their appraisal was not uncritical. *Tempo Presente* reprinted an article by Harold Rosenberg offering a scathing review of a celebratory biography of Jackson Pollock, written by a British gallery director. The article challenged the myth that had developed around the artist – who had died in a car accident in 1956 – and the notion that he had radically transformed American art. Rosenberg also stressed the stereotypes that were generally used to describe Pollock’s “intrinsically American” style – the “Pollock legend of primitive creation on a continental scale,” as he called it. In the work of its biographer, “bigness” became a cliché and an aesthetic concept that obscured Pollock himself, reducing him to little more than a myth. Finally, Rosenberg downplayed the role that the artist played in theorizing “action painting,” crediting it to the broader movement.¹¹¹ Another article, this time by an Italian critic, offered a sober assessment of an exhibition in Rome dedicated to Mark Rothko, one of the artists that the MoMA and the CCF had been promoting since the late 1940s. Even though he stated that “the truly significant painting of the years between 1945 and 1960 has originated almost exclusively in the United States,” the author cautiously suggested that it might be useful to raise some doubts on the actual greatness of Rothko – not at the same level as great American painters such as Gorky or Pollock. Such a reappraisal was especially necessary given the current exaltation for American art, which

¹⁰⁹ Piccoli, “La Biennale degli astrattisti,” 672. My translation.

¹¹⁰ See “Enquête : Tendances de la Jeune Peinture,” *Preuves* VI n. 68 and n. 69 (October and November 1956); Giovanni Urbani, “La parte del caso nell’arte d’oggi,” *Tempo Presente* VI n. 7 (July 1961), 491-99; “Enquête: L’art informel en questions,” *Preuves* XIV n. 156 (February 1964), 3-30.

¹¹¹ Harold Rosenberg, “Alla ricerca di Pollock,” *Tempo Presente* VI n. 8 (August 1961), 611-15. The quotes are taken from the original article, published in the February 1961 issue of *Art News*.

was taking place just at a time when that art was beginning to fall prey to commercial speculation and mass consumption.¹¹²

Even more telling is the report that Konstantin Jelenski wrote about the Paris installation of “Modern Art in the United States,”¹¹³ appeared in *Preuves* in May 1955. Jelenski, a key member of the CCF organization and of the magazine’s staff, began by condemning the Europeans’ skepticism toward American painting and sculpture, and predicted that this feeling of “cultural superiority” would soon be anachronistic. Despite his favorable predisposition, however, the exhibition – which was the product of a collaboration between the Musée d’Art Moderne and MoMA – had been a bitter disappointment. The problems began with its “general conception,” according to Jelenski:

We expected from America, because it is linked in our minds to the new, to the surprising, and to the unpredictable, the unconventional use of more striking methods to show us — through its blossoming and its crystallization — a half-century of its esthetic. Now, [...] the general impression plunged us back melancholically into the atmosphere of the « universal exhibitions » visited in the Thirties.¹¹⁴

Specifically, Jelenski complained about the very thing that the covert sponsorship of the event was supposedly trying to achieve: the preponderance of Abstract Expressionism over other schools. “Very generous with the abstract artists, abundantly represented,” he observed, “the Museum of Modern Art was less so with certain categories of American « figurate artists ».” The following sentences would have raised some troubling concerns for anyone interested in using art to bolster the image of the U.S.: “Has one maybe applied some mysterious standard of « Americanism » to the artists chosen? That would also explain the absence of Max Ernst, whom no one here

¹¹² Cesare Vivaldi, “La « superbia » di Rothko,” *Tempo Presente* VII n. 6 (June 1962), 445-47.

¹¹³ In France the exhibition was titled “50 Ans d’Art aux Etats-Unis.”

¹¹⁴ K. A. Jelenski, “Cinquante ans d’art américain et « Slinky »,” *Preuves* V n. 51 (May 1955), 68-69. My translation.

considers an « American » artist.”¹¹⁵ If some attempts to politicize covertly Abstract Expressionism were under way, then, they were not as subtle as their sponsors might have thought.

Eventually, however, Jelenski’s article veered away from Abstract Expressionism and painting altogether, and hinted at the recurring question of what Europeans chose to see and emphasize in the images of America that they received. The European visitor to the exhibition, he claimed, found greater significance in the more original and distinctive forms of American art, namely the graphic arts: architecture, photography, industrial design. The reason was inseparable from what U.S. society symbolized, i.e. the perceptions of mechanization and mass production.¹¹⁶ A similar conclusion, in fact, was echoed in the article in *Tempo Presente* that reflected on the meaning and implications of abstract art:

The main responsible for the current deterioration of the artistic logic [...] is the mass condition that inevitably influences artistic life. The artist, having lost the sense of his unique and liberating function, feels like one of the mass and hangs on, with others like him, to discoveries like large strokes of color and big brushes that he will exploit until their exhaustion. [...] Many abstract artists seem to have the specific and only function of « producers of visual images ».¹¹⁷

In conclusion, a look at *Preuves* and *Tempo Presente* can at least complicate the interpretation of Abstract Expressionism as a Cold War weapon. This brief examination of the two magazines does not exhaust the debates on the political uses of Abstract Expressionism or its reception in France and Italy – nor does it aim to. It questions,

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 69. My translation.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 70. Kimmelman reaches similar conclusions about the general reception of the exhibition in Paris: critics focused more favorably on the sections showcasing American architecture, photography, and industrial design. Some of them noted that the painting section was weighted toward abstraction, and gave more sympathetic treatment to the “primitives”: “Clearly, this exhibition did not have the effect of elevating American abstraction in the eyes of French critics.” See Kimmelman, “Revisiting the Revisionists,” 48.

¹¹⁷ Barletta, “L’astrattismo è un vizio?,” 57. My translation.

however, the interpretive framework of “cultural imperialism” in which many scholars have placed their works. Such a notion presupposes passive European – or, for that matter, global – audiences, which diligently absorbed the message that the CIA or State Department wanted them to. On the contrary, artists and visitors of U.S. exhibitions already came with ideas about America and its art that, while not set in stone, helped shape their reception and the penetration of new movements. These people brought their own artistic and cultural traditions to their encounter with Abstract Expressionism, or any other American cultural artifact, and often saw it as part of a dialogue rather than a one-way process. Moreover, observers usually chose to see and emphasize – either positively or negatively – the aspects that they were most interested in. For many European intellectuals, abstract art became another way to talk about the issues related to mass society and consumerism. Finally, the unquestionable respect for the stylistic innovations of its artists did not automatically translate onto the political level. Even members of the CCF, who were in general more favorably predisposed toward the U.S., could still maintain a critical attitude toward it. Jelenski, for example, did so in voicing his doubts about political conformism influencing the selections for the Paris exhibition. In fact, a passing remark in *Tempo Presente* probably offers a fitting way to question the extent to which Abstract Expressionism was as successful as a tool of cultural imperialism as some of the revisionists have argued. Commenting on a magazine’s distinction between a “European” and an “American” art – the latter having derived from Jackson Pollock and being “more free” and “more modern” – the article sardonically observed: “We knew the Atlantic Alliance, but we ignored that an Atlantic Art existed.”¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸ Enzo Golino and Aldo Garosci, “Riviste italiane ed estere,” *Tempo Presente* VIII n. 6 (June 1963), 69. My translation.

The Dialogue with Eastern Intellectuals

The prestige of the intellectuals associated with the CCF represented an important asset for the organization. Paradoxically, the more these figures asserted their independence from the Congress and criticism toward Cold War bipolarity, the more they became valuable spokespersons for the CCF among the neutralist and undecided audiences. This aspect of the relationship between the Paris Secretariat and its affiliates is best exemplified by Silone and the Italian committee, and their role as mediators with Eastern European intellectuals. With the assent of the central offices of the Congress, Silone and others were at the forefront of the attempts to promote an intellectual *détente* beginning in the mid-1950s, and helped shape the approach of the organization to the issue. At the same time, their centrality allowed them a degree of leverage and autonomy that could generate tensions with CCF officers or other members of the Executive Committee.

More than any other aspect of the activities of the CCF, the attempts to establish a dialogue with Eastern European intellectuals reflected the international situation and the turns of the Cold War. At the peak of the confrontation between East and West, most Congress activities related to the Soviet bloc were concentrated on denouncing Stalin's dictatorship and providing help to exiles and dissenters. As Coleman details, a wide range of proposals were advanced in 1950 to support exiles and intellectuals behind the Iron Curtain: a "university of exiles," underground contacts with dissenters, stipends and material support. In its first two or three years, however, the CCF mostly let other groups and organizations carry out those plans. Following Stalin's death in 1953 and the partial

relaxation of the relations between the two blocs, the Congress leadership began to explore new ways to engage Eastern European intellectuals in a transnational dialogue across political divisions. Jelenski, together with Silone and others, was a key figure in this area. The Polish émigré was optimistic about the possibility to circumvent the Soviet authorities, and reach the writers and artists at the center of the tentative attempts to express some dissent from the Communist Party, especially in Poland or Hungary. In March 1956, Silone and Spender participated in a meeting in Venice sponsored by the Société Européenne de Culture (SEC), an organization dedicated to promoting East-West dialogue that some CCF members viewed as close to fellow-traveling. The Eastern European delegates attending the meeting were chosen by the Soviet authorities, which prevented a frank discussion on censorship and cultural freedom.¹¹⁹

Nabokov then urged the Congress to take the initiative of sponsoring an East-West meeting of editors, which took place in Zürich in September under the chairmanship of Silone. In order to dispel the suspicion that the meeting was an anti-Communist event, it was not officially under the auspices of the CCF. Moreover, the invitations went out in the name of Maurice Nadeau, the editor of the leftist *Lettres Nouvelles*, which together with *Critique* represented French magazines. The results of the Zürich meetings were mixed, as the active engagement of the Polish participants was counterbalanced by the low level of the Russian delegates. Nonetheless, Jelenski stressed it as a step in the right direction and argued that it had had the positive effect of exposing some Russian editors to Western influence, and dispelling some of the illusions about the Communist world among French leftists. Silone and Russian editor Ivan Anassimov would also begin a public exchange on the issue of censorship and control of Soviet

¹¹⁹ Coleman, *The Liberal Conspiracy*, 129-30.

literature, although it soon came to an end when Silone felt that Soviet authorities were preventing Anassimov from speaking freely.¹²⁰

The Zürich encounter, however, did not sit well with one of the most important members of the CCF's Executive Committee, and led to one of its "angriest" meetings yet according to Coleman. Aron strongly protested against the selection of "third-rate fellow-travelers" to represent France, while he and *Preuves* had been excluded. Aron's outrage reflected the fact that he had been part of a small minority of French intellectuals who had challenged the neutralist Left in the late 1940s and early 1950s, and what he considered a "fashionable misreading" of Marxist theories for current political debates. More than personal resentment, however, was at stake: the battle against neutralism and fellow-travelers, he argued, was still being fought in France, and it was inexcusable to exclude the voices that had constantly denounced them just when events were proving them right. The meeting was, he complained, "the gravest thing that has happened to the Congress for a long time."¹²¹

The discussion singled out Silone, absent from the Executive Committee meeting, as the person responsible for the "scandal" of excluding *Preuves* in favor of other French magazines. Aron explicitly blamed the Italian writer's "recklessness" (*inconscience*), saying that he would not tolerate something like that again. Sperber agreed with Aron in condemning the initiative, and in finding Silone at fault for shunning *Preuves*: "all of a sudden this becomes an ultra-personal, Silonian policy, and those who are in the know will understand me and the others will have an inkling." This, Sperber concluded, was

¹²⁰ Ibid., 129-33. Silone's magazine *Tempo Presente* published the exchange: see Ivan Anassimov, Ignazio Silone, "Un dialogo difficile: dal disgelo al neo-stalinismo," *Tempo Presente* II n. 2 (February 1957), 85-98; Ivan Anassimov, Ignazio Silone, "Dialogo impossibile," *Tempo Presente* II n. 4 (April 1957), 275-76.

¹²¹ Coleman, *The Liberal Conspiracy*, 132-33; Minutes of CCF Executive Committee, 27 October 1956, 60-61, s. II, b. 4, f. 2, IACF Records.

not admissible in light of the fight that *Preuves* had waged in the most difficult conditions in France for the past years, and a serious tactical error.¹²² The outburst was indicative of the fact that CCF officers, when pursuing certain policies, had to tread very carefully around the sensibilities of the intellectuals involved. Aron and Sperber, having been directly involved in the heated confrontations of the early Cold War in France, resented the impression that the Zürich meeting had overlooked them.

The accusation that the initiative had been strictly “Silonian” – something that Josselson and Jelenski tried to deny, apparently not very successfully – was probably accurate, but it also missed an important point on the working of the Congress itself. The strength of the organization, and its ability to penetrate certain milieux, was closely tied to the prestige of the intellectuals who would lend their names to it.¹²³ For Silone, as well as for others, the kind of intellectual exchange that the Congress was meant to promote began at such a personal level. While the CCF could support and facilitate the work of those individuals opposed to Communism in the name of cultural freedom, it could hardly prevent them from pursuing their own agenda or looking for alternative ways to reach it. The Italian writer had all but explicitly stated his conviction during a meeting of the editors of the CCF magazines, held in Rome in the summer of 1956. When the participants had touched on the problem of how to deal with the “so-called thaw in East-West cultural relations,” Silone had clearly insisted on a few points. The first was that the form of such contacts mattered more than the content itself: the objective was to

¹²² Minutes of CCF Executive Committee, 27 October 1956, 69-70. My translation.

¹²³ The same thing was true, ironically, for France and Aron: following a conversation with French sociologist Bertrand de Jouvenel, an officer of the Rockefeller Foundation reported that “if the Congress is known in France, it is as something in which Raymond Aron is active.” JM (John Marshall) Diary excerpt, 16 December 1957, box 2, folder 18, Series 1957/100, Record Group 2, Rockefeller Foundation Records, Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, NY (hereafter Rockefeller Records).

“privatize” interactions among intellectuals and avoid official or state organizations, to circumvent the control of Soviet authorities. Related to this aspect was the need for the Congress for Cultural Freedom not to be involved directly, but to let individuals and magazines take the initiative of privately inviting Eastern European intellectuals.¹²⁴ Such an impulse to “privatization,” while opening up possibilities for dialogue with the Soviet bloc, also entailed fewer possibilities for the CCF to intervene in the activities of its affiliates.

If, after all, anyone had imagined that Silone would look chastised by the complaints by Aron and Sperber, those expectations would be soon disappointed. At the following Executive Committee meeting, the question of how to engage Eastern European intellectuals came up again. Arguing against the idea of boycotting Soviet intellectuals, Silone asserted the importance of meetings like the one in Zürich, where the latter could be pressed and questioned. When de Rougemont suggested that the Congress should no longer promote such initiatives in light of the Soviet repression in Hungary, Silone pointed out that the meeting had not come from the CCF but from him personally. At de Rougemont’s remark that it was, after all, still originating from “our group,” Silone dryly commented: “Many other things originate from me. I am not an employee of the Congress. I can take a number of initiatives without asking for the Congress’ opinion.”¹²⁵ In fact, the Congress recognized the usefulness of Silone as a mediator with Soviet intellectuals, given the begrudging respect that his anti-Fascist credentials earned him. He would continue to explore the possibilities of dialogue, through either personal initiatives or the Italian committee, and to encourage dissenters in the Soviet Union or its satellites.

¹²⁴ Melvin J. Lasky, “Editorial Report,” 20 June 1956, b. 15, f. 375, Macdonald Papers.

¹²⁵ Minutes of CCF Executive Committee, 20 November 1956, 107-09, s. II, b. 4, f. 3, IACF Records. My translation.

The CCF ultimately benefited from these activities, as well as those of others that indirectly pursued its goals or reflected positively on the organization. As in the case of the Zürich meeting, however, it was much easier for the Congress to provide its members with the means to realize their own projects, than to instruct them on how to approach certain issues or people.

While this was true for all the individuals who lent their names to the anti-Communist campaigns of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, it was especially so for the work it carried out in France and Italy. This reflected not only the personality of the members involved, but also the peculiar conditions of the political and intellectual life in the two countries. The strength of the French and Italian Communist Parties, and the suspicion toward the United States, contributed to a more difficult penetration into the local intelligentsia, and required a balancing act between the requests of the Secretariat and the conditions on the ground. The second section of this dissertation will discuss how the Congress operated in France and Italy, both via personal relations and through the work of the national committees and magazines. Besides influencing the general policy at the level of the Executive Committee and the Secretariat, French and Italian intellectuals constantly chose how to adapt the anti-Communism of the CCF to their own needs and beliefs, and how to redefine cultural freedom to speak effectively to their national audiences. Before that, however, the next chapter looks more in detail at one of the recurring issues that accompanied the CCF throughout its existence: its relationship with America, and the shadow that it cast over the activities of the organization.

CHAPTER 3

IN SEARCH OF THE “UNSOPHISTICATED, OLD-FASHIONED AMERICAN LIBERALS”

In the spring of 1963, the officers of the Congress for Cultural Freedom had finally managed to arrange for Ignazio Silone to tour the United States, an achievement more noteworthy than it might sound. The Italian writer enjoyed a remarkable prestige worldwide as an opponent of both Fascism and Communism, and the Congress hoped that he could help increase the organization’s visibility and prestige. Plans for Silone’s visit, in fact, originally dated back to the first half of the 1950s, and had been made and aborted several times. In addition to the writer’s frail health, CCF officers had had to resign themselves to Silone’s irritating habit of last-minute cancellations. In 1963, however, Daniel Bell could finally write to Michael Josselson in Paris that Silone had arrived to New York, “and seem[ed] to be enjoying himself.” Bell also added, with a note of disbelief, what an acquaintance of his had once told him about Silone’s reluctance to visit the country: he “had resisted earlier efforts to visit the U.S. because he knew all about it—from the movies, he said!”¹ The visit, however, did not go smoothly: the following month Silone was hospitalized for health problems, and had to cut short his tour. In a letter to Nicola Chiaromonte, the writer – who was at odds with the Catholic Church and described himself as “a Christian without a Church” – recounted an episode that had happened in the hospital. “As an Italian I even had to receive a number of condolences for the death of Pope John [XXIII]; eventually I got annoyed and told them that I had never seen him, not even from afar, and that I am ready to bet that they will elect a new pope.” At the same time, he still claimed to be glad to have finally made the

¹ Daniel Bell to Michael Josselson, 20 April 1963, b. 19, f. 6, Josselson Papers.

long-awaited trip: “now I realize how important it was to see certain things. [...] I am interested in talking to people, not in seeing landscapes.”² Silone’s complicated relationship with America was in many ways unique, but not far from that of other intellectuals who associated with the CCF. Mutual curiosity for profoundly different realities mixed with haphazard notions and stereotypes that traveled in both directions. Whatever the image that one had about the U.S., however, its importance to anti-Communism and cultural freedom was obvious to everyone.

In her history of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, written from a critical perspective, Frances Stonor Saunders describes “a curious triumvirate” at work in late-1940s Germany: Melvin Lasky, editor of the German magazine *Der Monat*, Michal Josselson, CIA operative and later CCF Administrative Secretary, and Nicholas Nabokov, future Secretary General of the Congress. The three men, all American citizens by birth or naturalization, “stood poised at the cutting edge of what was to become, under their guidance, one of the most ambitious secret operations of the Cold War: the winning over of the Western intelligentsia to the American proposition.”³ Similarly, historian François Furet has argued that the Berlin Congress of June 1950 “gathered those who, by free choice, hated the Communists, and formed a battalion bearing the signature of the United States.”⁴ Such formulations, while grounded in the involvement of the American government in the creation of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, obscure the extent to which its efforts were contested, resisted, or ignored. They encapsulate the difficulty of describing the experience of the CCF in dealing with foreign intellectuals, and the

² Ignazio Silone to Nicola Chiaromonte, 6 June 1963, b. 3, f. 77, Chiaromonte Papers.

³ Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*, 31.

⁴ François Furet, *The Passing of an Illusion: The Idea of Communism in the Twentieth Century*, trans. Deborah Furet (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), 430.

importance of looking closely at the contexts in which it operated. Not only was it harder for the CCF to accomplish this task in places like France and Italy, but the very notion of what constituted success could be very different. The organization was quite effective in the effort to support anti-Communist intellectuals and give them a platform to express their own beliefs with greater reach. To “win them over” to the “American proposition,” however, was a more delicate task.

The relationship between Americans and Europeans in the CCF was a key element of the activities of the organization. Given the perception of the close association of the Congress with U.S. money and interests, the problem of how to position itself *vis-à-vis* the Western superpower was inescapable. On the one hand, French and Italian intellectuals had to deal with the American members of the CCF, whose ideas of anti-Communism and cultural freedom could be significantly different from theirs. The personalities involved were, to put it mildly, not always very diplomatic, and the personal relations could be more delicate than the intellectual arguments. Nicola Chiaromonte offered a glimpse of this problem when he wrote to Ignazio Silone about a seminar the CCF sponsored in 1951: “Maybe it’s not a bad thing that Americans meet with people who raise objections, as a matter of fact Sidney Hook behaved much better than usual. More modest.”⁵

On the other hand, European intellectuals confronted a “symbolic” America, the image of the superpower as it appeared from across the Atlantic. In their eyes, as well as those of Europeans in general, it was a mixture of promise and threat that could be criticized or admired, but never ignored. Richard Pells has argued that “much of the

⁵ Nicola Chiaromonte to Ignazio Silone, 18 September 1951, b. 4, f. 133, Chiaromonte Papers. My translation.

conversation between the United States and Europe, before and after 1945, has been characterized more by an exchange of metaphors than by a sharing of information.” More than a real country, America was for many Europeans a receptacle for fear and fantasies, a symbol.⁶ Historian Rob Kroes has written convincingly about the role that America played in the cultural and intellectual life of people abroad “as construct, an image, a *fantasma*”:

Especially in our century, America has become even more present in the minds of non-Americans, as a point of reference, a yardstick, a counterpoint. In intellectual reflections on the course and destiny of their countries and cultures America became part of a process of triangulation, serving as a model for rejection or emulation, providing views of a future seen in either a negative or a positive light.⁷

Such a cultural pull long predated the spread of mass consumption in the twentieth century, and went beyond the material plane. “America as empty space, the epic America of the frontier, America as mythical West,” had become in Europe a symbol of freedom and independence. In fact, according to Kroes, its promise of a new world was so powerful that it could vie with contemporary utopian views offered by Marxism or similar emancipation movements.⁸ U.S. culture, however, has been constantly reappropriated and transformed by its supposedly passive recipients abroad, who have drawn on American cultural codes to make them their own. The result, argued Kroes, was that American culture has become an international “*lingua franca*,” often a liberating force, over which the mother country no longer held much authority.

Similarly, CCF members looked with interest to the United States, but brought with them their own sensibilities and notions, and chose how to engage with it. The

⁶ Pells, *Not Like Us*, 2.

⁷ Rob Kroes, “American Empire and Cultural Imperialism: A View from the Receiving End,” *Diplomatic History* 23 n. 3 (Summer 1999): 464.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 468.

enduring fascination with American society and its distinctive qualities (individualism, the myth of the frontier) made them receptive to its development and, especially, to its contradictions. Thus, racism and discrimination were widely discussed in Europe – or in the rest of the world, for that matter – and not only by anti-Americans. McCarthyism was another serious concern, raising questions about American democracy abroad. Finally, the character of America as a “mass society,” and the increasingly unpopular Vietnam War, were the focus of particular criticism in the late 1950s and 1960s. Even CCF members discussed critically the darker aspects of American society, sometimes to the dismay of their allies in the U.S. In part out of their own convictions, and in part to avoid being identified as tools of American propaganda by their domestic opponents, these intellectuals thoroughly questioned the “American proposition” and were at best ambivalent about its merits.

American intellectuals were aware of the problematic perception of the U.S. abroad, and tried to use the platform of the Congress and the American Committee for Cultural Freedom (ACCF) to counter them. A constant element of their discussions was the concern that the world was conjuring up a distorted view of American society, potentially dangerous in the long run, and that a better effort at conveying its real nature would have a significant impact on intellectuals’ opinions of America. U.S. intellectuals living on both sides of the Atlantic discussed the most important issues, such as race relations or McCarthyism, with an awareness that their echo went beyond the national boundaries, and affected how the world would see America. Many of them also worried that what transpired in the U.S. could hamper the work of the CCF in Europe, using the argument to promote their positions. If the concern for what was going on in Europe

united them, American intellectuals disagreed on how to interpret it and on what this meant for America. Proponents of a harder anti-Communist line worried that the Congress was not doing enough to counter the Kremlin's advances on the psychological front, while moderates and liberals feared that the anti-Communist excesses could push Europeans away from the U.S.

Beside the European perception of America, the CCF also had to deal with how its U.S. members viewed their counterparts, especially in Italy and France. Their political sympathies and cultural traditions sometimes puzzled observers from afar, and required an effort to understand and describe very different realities. Oversimplifications about the political situation and the possibilities to intervene existed side by side with more nuanced analyses. These different positions showed the tensions and disagreements not only between the two sides of the Atlantic, but also within the U.S. and European intellectual communities. There was no single "American" position, nor French nor Italian. The assessment of conservative American Committee members was often at odds with that of liberal intellectuals, and the same was true for the other countries in which the CCF had a sizeable presence. Nonetheless, some of the problems and issues debated were common to all the political shades of U.S. members, and the distance with their counterparts in Europe – or the Paris office itself – often visible.

This chapter examines the different facets of this relationship between America, Italy and France, real or perceived by the other part, through the CCF and its activities. It looks at how intellectuals on both sides of the Atlantic discussed, among themselves or with each other, about themselves and the "other."⁹ It also uses recently declassified

⁹ The notion of "other" employed here is based on a distinction between American and Western European intellectuals, in particular French and Italian. While significant differences existed within each group, both

documents to suggest how the CIA viewed the situation in Europe, what it considered to be the role of American intellectuals *vis-à-vis* the mission of the Congress, and how some of these intellectuals actively shaped that notion. The limited availability of such sources at this time only allows for an initial assessment of the perspectives within U.S. official circles, but a significant one nonetheless. The time period considered is mostly the first half of the 1950s, for reasons related to both content and sources. The first years of the CCF were those in which its members debated most forcefully the nature of the organization and its goals, an issue that was central in the confrontation between American and European intellectuals. With the suspension of the activities of the American Committee, U.S. intellectuals who disagreed with the line of the Paris Secretariat had fewer opportunities to voice their concerns, and rather withdrew from direct involvement with the CCF. The disappearance of the ACCF as an active participant in the debate, together with the lack of access to CIA documents from later years, makes it more difficult to trace the views of American intellectuals on the CCF's work in Western Europe in the 1960s. The issue of the relationship of French and Italian intellectuals with the myth and reality of America, on the other hand, will also be discussed in the chapters dealing with the Congress' French and Italian magazines.

This chapter concentrates mainly, though not exclusively, on a few American figures who were more significant than others for their role or convictions: Sidney Hook, James Burnham, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., Nicolas Nabokov, and Dwight Macdonald. The only person to serve in an official capacity in both the American Committee (as chairman

sides recognized distinctive traits that characterized the positions of intellectuals in the U.S. and in Europe *vis-à-vis* Communism and cultural freedom. I am not suggesting that CCF members found these differences insurmountable to work together, but they were aware of them and used them in their own works and correspondence.

and later in the Executive Committee) and in the Congress for Cultural Freedom (as an Executive Committee member) was Hook. Nabokov was an officer of the CCF Secretariat in Paris, while Burnham, Schlesinger, and Macdonald were members of the American Committee only. Hook and Burnham provided the perspective of the right wing of the American Committee, which advocated for a more militant anti-Communist line and looked with skepticism at European intellectuals. Schlesinger and Nabokov represented instead the liberal groups within the CCF and its American Committee. They argued for the need to counter undemocratic domestic phenomena, such as McCarthyism, not least due to the negative effect that such an image of America would have abroad. Except for Nabokov, who appears to have been unaware of the connections, at least at the outset, these three men had been involved since the late 1940s and early 1950s with the CIA and its Office of Policy Coordination (OPC). Through their correspondence it is therefore possible to piece together a partial picture of how the agency looked at the problem of intellectual warfare in Europe, and what it suggested. Unlike them, Macdonald was never a “witting” asset for the U.S. cultural diplomatic efforts. He was, however, actively involved in the American Committee, and in constant correspondence with Europeans critical of certain aspects of the CCF and of U.S. foreign policy, most notably Chiaromonte. He offers therefore a countervailing perspective on the transatlantic connections among members of the CCF, and complicates the idea of the CCF as an instrument to further the “American proposition.”

Scholars have already explored the intricate relationship between America and Europe during the Cold War, especially at the level of popular culture. They have described the fascination for American society, its wealth and promise of opportunity.

They have also tried to explain the strength of anti-American feelings that also emerged during the “American century,” and went beyond the disagreements over foreign policy.¹⁰ This chapter traces a particular aspect of this relationship more in depth, arguing that the unique mixture of mutual interest and misunderstanding was an important element of the Congress for Cultural Freedom – as well as American diplomacy at large. The CCF provided intellectuals with a network of magazines, seminars and activities that made this transatlantic relation closer, and at the same time highlighted the differences between them.

“Snobs and esthetes”: The View from America

Despite the repeated assurances that the Berlin Congress had been an entirely independent event with no governmental involvement, it was clear to virtually everyone that America was inextricably associated with it. According to its detractors, the whole initiative was an elaborate cover for State Department intervention into European matters – few people suspected the recently-established CIA, at least initially. Even those who were sympathetic to its goals, however, could not ignore what Grémion called the “German-American axis” that defined the early stages of the organization.¹¹ The real problem, therefore, was not whether America would play a role in the CCF, but “which” America. The United States, its society and culture, could evoke very different sets of

¹⁰ On anti-Americanism in the twentieth century, see Pells, *Not Like Us*; Philippe Roger, *The American Enemy: A Story of French Anti-Americanism*, trans. Sharon Bowman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Peter J. Katzenstein and Robert O. Keohane, eds., *Anti-Americanisms in World Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007); Egbert Klautke, “Anti-Americanism in Twentieth-Century Europe,” *The Historical Journal* 54 n. 4 (December 2011): 1125-39; Max Paul Friedman, *Rethinking Anti-Americanism: The History of an Exceptional Concept in American Foreign Relations* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

¹¹ Grémion, *Intelligence de l’anticommunisme*, 22, 309-10. On the CCF in Germany, see Hochgeschwender, *Freiheit in der Offensive?*.

values and ideas, especially to the milieu that the Congress targeted. On the one hand was a libertarian and progressive society, where individuals could leave behind the forces that oppressed them in the Old World. The American West, in its mythical features even more than in its reality, stood in stark contrast with the institutional and social limitations to freedom in Europe. In the aftermath of World War II, Franklin Delano Roosevelt and the New Deal were also very popular among European intellectuals, who saw in his administration's record a concern for social justice and economic reform. Alongside this admirable America, however, was one at which Europeans looked with suspicion: a country of rampant capitalism and monopolies, of aggressive foreign policy and virulent anti-Communism.

U.S. intellectuals who worked with the CCF were aware of this ambivalence, and some of them openly discussed how to present their country in order to secure the support of the European intellectuals they needed to increase the prestige of the Congress. Thus for example Patricia Blake, writer and wife of Nabokov at the time, wrote Arthur Schlesinger in October 1950 that "all the Congress' French, German, and Italian contacts who are distressed at the "professional anti-C quality" of the American representation, spoke very highly of you. They all say "We need more like Schlesinger." This was the Silone view too." She added that, for the upcoming meeting of the Executive Committee in Brussels, the CCF needed "very badly" an American sponsorship "which won't scare the hell out of all the nice non-communists we need to do a job in Europe. The neutralist equivalent of "Wall Street lackey" is a big deterrent, as I am finding out more and

more.”¹² In an attached memorandum expanding on this aspect, Blake reported the complaints of her European contacts about the “unilateral” tendency of the U.S. sponsorship, and argued that America “should be represented, in name and in person, by a broader base of leaders of liberal trends and social progress, well-known defenders of civil rights, and creative artists.” Such figures would help attract the wavering non-Communist left, more difficult to engage than more organized groups like the Gaullists in France or the political Catholics. The memorandum suggested as “first priority” a list of figures to invite in order to inspire the confidence of European intellectuals: Roosevelt’s son, Ralph Bunche, John Dos Passos, Upton Sinclair, Senator Paul Douglas, Sinclair Lewis, Roger Baldwin, and Dorothy Thompson.¹³

Such concerns were echoed by Europeans as well. In a report by two members of the Paris Secretariat about their visit to Rome in October 1950, they stated that Silone and others had expressed the fear that the American delegation was unrepresentative. The Italian Committee strongly urged the participation of university professors and liberal political writers such as Schlesinger himself.¹⁴ Around the same time, François Bondy, director of CCF publications, wrote to Sidney Hook in New York hoping that the American delegation to the Brussels meeting of the CCF Executive Committee would include famous writers such as Dos Passos, whose presence would have encouraged the French and Italian delegates.¹⁵ Europeans, thus, were most interested in those intellectuals who combined opposition to the Soviet Union with criticism for the

¹² Patricia Blake to Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., 16 October 1950, box 384, folder 1, Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. Papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library (hereafter Schlesinger Papers).

¹³ Memorandum “American sponsors,” unsigned (but Patricia Blake), undated (but October 1950), b. 384, f. 1, Schlesinger Papers.

¹⁴ See François Bondy and George Altman, “Rome report,” undated (but October 1950), s. II, b. 173, f. 2, IACF Records.

¹⁵ François Bondy to Sidney Hook, 16 November 1950, b. 135, f. 2, IACF Records.

shortcomings of American society and calls for social reform. Schlesinger openly acknowledged as much in a letter to Hook around the same time, in which he suggested sending someone from the Arts Division of Americans for Democratic Action (ADA) to the Brussels meeting. He admitted that there might be some “doctrinaire resistance” to some of the names, but “from the viewpoint of our neutralist friends in Europe, it is precisely these late-comers -- the ones who gave the USSR the benefit of so many doubts -- who are likely to be most effective.”¹⁶ It seemed like little had changed since Hook himself, in an article for *Partisan Review*, had blamed French anti-Americanism on a distorted image of the United States derived from the novels of social protest and revolt (Steinbeck), of “degeneracy” and “inanity” (Faulkner and Sinclair Lewis).¹⁷

Americans in the CCF had therefore to walk a thin line between the need to attract European intellectuals to the organization, and the desire to respond to some of the criticism toward the U. S. that they found popular among them. The location of the Congress in Paris certainly provided them with one of the most challenging environments for this task, as they were well aware. The atmosphere of the French capital was one of the first things that Nabokov perceived upon arriving to take up his post as Secretary General in early 1951, and he wrote back to the United States to try to convey this sense. In his first report to the American Committee in New York, he reminded U.S. intellectuals to use every caution in approaching local figures to ask for financial and political support: “One should never forget in dealing with the French that they should be treated like newborn babies whose skin is delicate and readily bruised.” Nonetheless,

¹⁶ Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. to Sidney Hook, 6 November 1950, b. 124, f. 3, Hook Papers.

¹⁷ Hook, “Report on the International Day against Dictatorship and War,” 731.

Nabokov added, it was imperative for the CCF to push to raise more funds from Europeans, both a practical and a moral necessity:

Since the war, European intellectuals have been talking a great deal about total commitment [sic]. Yet when it comes to make an active step towards a total commitment, they shy away from it. Money is a symbol of such a commitment and we should ask for it, otherwise those who work and cooperate with us inevitably will in their own eyes, and in the minds of everyone “Lackey’s of Wallstreet [sic]” and “tools of American Imperialism.”¹⁸

What the American Committee could do was, more importantly, to help building a more positive image of America among French (and European) readers. *Preuves*, the bulletin of the CCF that later turned into its French-language magazine, could especially use contributions from the U.S. providing information about its life and culture, and its fight against discrimination and prejudice. Nabokov suggested that an emphasis on “the upward trend of American society” and on “America as a permanent revolution” would be most effective, and appealing not only to the French but to Europeans in general. Other suggested topics were the problem of individual freedom, the history of the labor movement, and freedom of education, besides general descriptions of U.S. culture.¹⁹ The “good” America, in other words, was a potentially useful asset that U.S. intellectuals should help exploit.

Despite his optimism, Nabokov continued to struggle with the problem of making progress with the French milieu and establishing the Congress as a respected reality on the European scene. Shortly after his report to the American Committee, he admitted to James Burnham that “the difficulty here is that although people talk a lot about commitment, nobody wants to commit himself. There is a kind of lassitude and apathy or

¹⁸ Nicolas Nabokov, “Report no.1 to the American Committee,” 22 May 1951, s. II, b. 3, f. 1, IACF Records.

¹⁹ Ibid.

rather tiredness in the air which one has to struggle against daily.”²⁰ In the summer of 1952, after the overall positive reception of the Paris Festival, Nabokov wrote to Hook that the event had been a psychological success “in the complex and depressingly morbid intellectual climate of France.” “Of course, in any other country it would have had both more sympathy and more support,” he added, but “I still believe that it was the only kind of action we could have undertaken here in Paris which would have established the Congress in the minds of European intellectuals as a positive, and not only a political, organization.”²¹

Around the same time, Arthur Schlesinger wrote a couple of long reports to his CIA contacts, detailing the situation of the CCF and the impact of the Festival on the French scene. Not surprisingly, his assessment closely coincided with Nabokov’s. In the first one, after briefly discussing the shift in Communist policy in Western Europe toward “long-term demoralization” and penetration of democratic societies, he praised the Paris Festival for projecting the image of America as a vital cultural community, which did not threaten the European one but rather presented itself as its continuation. The Festival had also worried the neutralists by disturbing “their complacent assumption that the ‘technocratic barbarism’ of America was as hostile to the cultural traditions of the West as the ‘technocratic barbarism’ of Russia.” Finally, it had relieved the Congress of the “ideological taint” of Berlin, where Europeans had identified the CCF with ex-Communists such as Koestler and Burnham, and reasserted its emphasis as a pro-culture organization. The decision by Nabokov and the organizers to avoid giving the Festival “a political and an American character,” Schlesinger wrote, had been correct:

²⁰ Nicolas Nabokov to James Burnham, 16 June 1951, s. II, b. 90, f. 12, IACF Records.

²¹ Nicolas Nabokov to Sidney Hook, 3 July 1952, s. II, b. 30, f. 1, IACF Records.

Similarly the Americanization of the Festival would have been a grievous mistake. The European intellectual feels himself threatened by American culture. Over-emphasis on the American aspects of culture increases his sense of impending vulgarization and obliteration. By refusing to rub in the USA all the time, the Festival quietly made the point that Europe and America share a common culture, equally appreciated on both sides of the Atlantic; that all should work together to protect the common heritage; that American culture, far from being a threat to European culture, is a fulfillment of it.²²

In the second memorandum, Schlesinger dealt more in depth with the CCF and some of its personalities. He also discussed the particular atmosphere in Paris, where some observers feared that “the insularity, provincialism and self-indulgent neutralism of the French intellectual meant that the Festival had two strikes against it in Paris before it could come to the bat.” On balance, Schlesinger defended the choice on the grounds that French intellectuals remained a more important target not only because of the country’s strategic position, but also due to the continent-wide influence of the Parisian intellectual life. Rather than to “encourage the already awakened people on the frontier,” the liberal intellectual saw the usefulness of the Festival in the attempt to “wake up the confused and apathetic people behind the lines.” In that sense, despite some criticism about the selection of the music and the paintings – “gripping and complaint are inherent in the nature of Paris and of the French intellectual” – the Festival had been a success.²³

Schlesinger also offered some clues about Nabokov’s awareness of the CCF’s covert sponsorship, at least at the beginning. Addressing the complaints that ticket prices were too high, he explained that Nabokov, “who was not informed about the sources of the funds,” felt some obligations to defray some expenses through ticket sales. Even more tellingly, he expressed his belief that Nabokov would not constitute a security risk and

²² Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. to William M. Kinter, 9 June 1952, b. 375, f. 2, Schlesinger Papers.

²³ Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. to Kenneth Giniger, 9 June 1952, b. 375, f. 2, Schlesinger Papers.

that the activities of the Congress would benefit if he were “a witting participant.”²⁴ The reason was related to what he said about the ideal profile of people engaged in this kind of activities: “It seems to me far more important to have people charged with a deep and active sense of belief in what they are doing -- people who would rather be doing this than anything else -- than to have men for whom this is just another job. We need missionaries, not functionaries.” People like Nabokov, AFL representative Irving Brown, or Lasky – “for all the occasional trouble they cause” – were therefore indispensable to an enterprise such as the Congress. “The people with a sense of belief and conviction will often have the defects of their virtues,” Schlesinger conceded. “But the virtues are essential: no amount of discretion or tractability can take the place of the primary selflessness and dedication which alone can inspire others to the same dedication. This kind of operation will succeed only as it spreads a dynamic faith.”²⁵

If Schlesinger and Nabokov could boast about the success of the cultural line they had advocated, it is probably not a coincidence that Nabokov sent his apologetic remarks about the intellectual climate in France to Burnham and Hook. As a matter of fact, the two NYU philosophers were among the most pessimistic about the situation in Europe, and France in particular. Burnham’s perplexities had as much to do with the CCF’s political line as with the French situation *per se*, and contributed to his quick disillusionment with the organization. The increasing tendency of the Paris Secretariat, with the assent of the CIA in Washington, was to rely on the non-Communist left rather than on right-wing anti-Communists.²⁶ Burnham, on the other hand, advocated for a united front of anti-totalitarian forces, which would include groups like the French

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ See Warner, “Origins of the Congress for Cultural Freedom,” 90-91.

Gaullists positioning themselves clearly on the right of the political spectrum. In the summer of 1951, before growing increasingly disillusioned with the CCF, he pointed out to Nabokov that the primary deficiencies of the organization in France were the lack of prestigious individuals associating with its activities and the tendency to make the Congress an “office operation” rather than a public one.²⁷ In response, Nabokov stressed that the challenge for the Congress was to prove to European intellectuals that the CCF was not “an American secret service agency” or “an organization in which intellectuals are being asked to accomplish tasks which to most of them are distasteful (public speeches, press conferences, public meetings etc.).” The effort to win the confidence of publicly distinguished intellectuals would be slow and gradual: “I think our friends in America should be aware of the fundamental paradox of the situation here: we may have little time left, but we must work as if we had all the time in the world.”²⁸

Hook’s views on Western Europe and France did not change much in the years after the end of World War II. Fundamentally pessimistic about Europeans’ resolve and ability to counter Communism, he expressed his skepticism on the effectiveness of the CCF’s emphasis on cultural activities inside and outside the organization. Already in 1948, following a visit to Berlin and talks with U.S. military forces in Europe, he had sounded hopeless: “I have come to the conclusion that we may as well write France off as far as any effective resistance to the march of totalitarianism is concerned.”²⁹ As he discussed with Burnham – both men were OPC consultants at the time – he estimated that “Europe may well be lost,” but something could be done to prevent its total loss. The only salvageable areas were England and, under certain conditions, West Germany: “I am

²⁷ James Burnham to Nicolas Nabokov, 1 June 1951, s. II, b. 90, f. 12, IACF Records.

²⁸ Nicolas Nabokov to James Burnham, 6 June 1951, s. II, b. 90, f. 12, IACF Records.

²⁹ Sidney Hook to James Burnham, 15 September 1948, b. 8, f. 5, Hook Papers.

convinced that Italy, France, and Belgium will not lift a finger to withstand Russian aggression, and that any policy in relation to France on any other assumption is suicidal.”³⁰

Seen in this context, Hook’s article on the International Day of Resistance to Dictatorship and War, published in *Partisan Review* in the summer of 1949, almost looks hopeful.³¹ The belief in the possibility to produce a revolution in the French attitude toward America simply by communicating the sober facts about its life was crucial to Hook and other U.S. intellectuals – around the same time he wrote to Burnham of the need for an “educational campaign” in Europe.³² The disappointment was therefore commensurate when Europeans stubbornly refused to be educated. In 1952 Hook expressed to Henry Kissinger, in relation to the publication of an article by the latter in *Preuves*, the belief that “today in Europe the neutralists are the trusted, willing, and mischievous collaborators of the Stalinist movement and that were the strength of European neutralism known in the United States there would be a tremendous resurgence of isolationism.”³³ Hook’s mood did not improve in the mid-1950s, as he observed the situation from New York: “Since 1948 when I learned of the conditions of France first hand,” he confessed to Michael Josselson, “I have been convinced that it was a disastrous mistake to bank on them for any kind of firm defense of their own freedom. The only reason I did not publicly agitate for a demonstrative about face was that France geographically was considered by experts to be the key to any defense of Europe. I no

³⁰ Sidney Hook to James Burnham, 20 September 1948, b. 8, f. 5, Hook Papers.

³¹ See chapter 1.

³² Sidney Hook to James Burnham, 17 March 1950, b. 6, f. 38, Burnham Papers.

³³ Sidney Hook to Henry Kissinger, 5 August 1952, s. VII, b. 8, f. 7, IACF Records.

longer believe that.”³⁴ In response to Nabokov’s request to hide his disappointment over the political developments “in this tragically myopic part of the globe,” he claimed that the internal situation in France was “rotten” and concluded: “You don’t have to worry about American isolationism - the real worry is that the U.S. is being isolated.”³⁵

At the CCF Executive Committee of January 1955, his pessimism had only increased. In disagreement with virtually all the other members, he warned that “the free world is weaker than it was when we started, our tasks greater, and our forces less commensurate with our tasks.”³⁶ Western European intellectuals, in particular, seemed to be “prepared to quench their desire for freedom to gratify a desire for survival on any terms,” even to pursue professional careers under totalitarian forms of government. As far as the Congress was concerned, it should recognize that the will to freedom was on the defensive in Europe, as six years of visits and discussions confirmed to the NYU philosopher.³⁷

It would be easy to dismiss Hook’s predictions as apocalyptic, and one must wonder how an already non-existent willingness to defend freedom could grow even weaker. Other intellectuals, including Americans like Lasky and Josselson, did not share his negative views on the situation in Western Europe and on the ability of the Congress to advance its agenda. Nonetheless, Hook was far from out of touch with a significant part of the U.S. intellectuals who associated with the CCF or its American Committee. If anything, he played the role of mediator between the two organizations, given his

³⁴ Sidney Hook to Michael Josselson, undated (but fall 1954), s. II, b. 135, f. 4, IACF Records.

³⁵ Nicolas Nabokov to Sidney Hook, 8 September 1954, s. II, b. 135, f. 4, IACF Records; Sidney Hook to Nicolas Nabokov, 17 September 1954, s. II, b. 135, f. 4, IACF Records. The reason for the exchange was the refusal of the French National Assembly to ratify the treaty creating the European Defence Community (EDC), although Hook denied the event had any particular influence on his negative outlook.

³⁶ Minutes of the CCF Executive Committee, 24-25 January 1955, 31, b. 1, f. 6, ACCF Records.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 35. See also chapter 2.

presence on both executive committees. His perspective is therefore important to provide a sense of how the Congress and its activities were viewed from across the Atlantic, and what image of America they wanted to convey.

“The Soreheads and Their Inbred Toenails”: The American Committee for Cultural Freedom

The ACCF dated back to the 1930s, and was rooted in the history of the controversies and splits within the U.S. Left. Hook and his mentor John Dewey had founded a Committee for Cultural Freedom in 1939 after the Nazi-Soviet pact, to denounce the Soviet Union and present a stark opposition between democracy and totalitarianism. The Committee provided the inspiration for other groups in the following years, including the Americans for Intellectual Freedom, and was later reorganized into the American Committee for Cultural Freedom. As later events showed, the interest of the CIA in incorporating an American branch into the CCF was mostly to have it operate as a “backstop” for its European operations. Hugh Wilford has pointed out, however, that its members asserted a high degree of independence in running it, almost claiming “ownership rights to anti-Stalinism.”³⁸ The fact that it was formally subordinated to the Congress did not contribute to the relationships between the two organizations, as Americans had to rely on – or even compete with – the Paris Secretariat for funds. In addition to the resentment for the hierarchical relegation, U.S. intellectuals did not easily accept having to follow the Europeans’ lead on how to fight Communism, and even

³⁸ Wilford, *The Mighty Wurlitzer*, 97.

suspected that the atmosphere in Paris was beginning to rub off the American officers of the Congress.³⁹

One of the first steps the ACCF took was to set up a sub-committee to aid European committees, which included Schlesinger, Nabokov, and *Partisan Review* editor William Phillips. Its report singled out as one of the main tasks of American intellectuals *vis-à-vis* Europeans to attempt to establish a better understanding of the U.S. The means suggested were personal contacts, distribution of books and pamphlets, and exchange of ideas through the CCF. In addition to the distribution of American books and subscriptions to magazines such as *Commentary*, *The New Leader*, *Partisan Review* and *Foreign Affairs* – an idea that American intellectuals continued to propose over the years, with scarce success – the sub-committee also recommended addressing directly the concerns widespread in Europe. It envisioned a series of pamphlets written by CCF members well known in Europe (Dos Passos, Faulkner, Sinclair and Farrell) to explain their attitudes toward America, accompanied by social comment on the U.S., to counteract their “misuse” by Communists.⁴⁰

The fundamental disagreement between the American Committee and the Congress mirrored the one that observers had already noted at the Berlin Congress. Most Americans insisted on a more directly political activity and in “taking the fight to the enemy,” especially in places where the strength of Communist and neutralist forces seemed greatest, like France and Italy. The Secretariat in Paris, on the other hand, stressed the need to establish the credibility of the organization through cultural undertakings that would not strike Europeans as thinly disguised propaganda, at the risk

³⁹ Ibid., 87-88; Wilford, *The New York Intellectuals*, 206-09; Coleman, *The Liberal Conspiracy*, 159-65.

⁴⁰ Report of the Sub-Committee to Aid European Committees, undated (but summer 1951), s. II, b. 29, f. 8, IACF Records.

of being ineffective. Wilford has argued that the American Committee and the Congress were the embodiment of, respectively, the American and the European non-Communist Left.⁴¹ While the argument provides a useful angle to assess the conflicts between the two organizations, it bears noting that too rigid a distinction obfuscates the variety of positions within the U.S. group – or the European leftist traditions, for that matter. The fact that Americans like Schlesinger, Josselson and Nabokov, as well as the CIA officers who followed the CCF, also agreed on a cultural approach complicates a dichotomy between Europeans and Americans on the issue of the political character of CCF activities. In fact, Nabokov and Schlesinger were scornful, in private conversations, of the American Committee for Cultural Freedom for its relentless anti-Communism. “Let the Lord bless the soreheads,” a merciful Nabokov wrote to his friend in 1955, “forgive them all their iniquities, their inbred toenails, and cover their ungenerous, thoroughly embittered souls with a heavy coat of molasses.”⁴²

Giles Scott-Smith has also convincingly demonstrated that the alleged “apolitical” nature of the Congress was in fact functional to the establishment of a hegemonic consensus across the Atlantic, which served more or less directly American interests. The U.S. government “institutionalized” the idea of an apolitical culture, and supported the notion of a common heritage across the Atlantic. Such a position fit naturally with the demands of the Cold War, aligning the elites to the principle of American involvement in Europe to defend this heritage.⁴³ Nonetheless, the view from America of the CCF and its European affiliates, with few exceptions, was remarkably consistent, and spoke to a basic tension between the two sides of the Atlantic. To be sure, Americans did not ignore the

⁴¹ Wilford, *The New York Intellectuals*, 207.

⁴² Nicolas Nabokov to Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., 7 February 1955, s. II, b. 288, f. 2, IACF Records.

⁴³ Scott-Smith, *The Politics of Apolitical Culture*, 1-6.

fact that the situation in Europe was not favorable to an all-out anti-Communist message, and accepted the principle of cultural undertakings.⁴⁴ One of the most powerful arguments on the side of the “cultural” front was the need to hone the work of the CCF to its audiences in Europe. A memorandum circulated among CCF members with the tentative plan for what would become the 1952 Paris Festival – on which Nabokov’s input, therefore, was probably central – explicitly stated this. As the first collaboration between Americans and Europeans on equal footing, the memorandum read, the festival would destroy the myth cultivated by Stalinists in Europe, and chiefly in France, that Americans were barbarians and their culture inferior. It would be a source of courage for intellectuals, especially in Paris, and the best expression of American goodwill toward Europe.⁴⁵ Nabokov insisted on the need to bring the cultural aspects to the fore in private correspondence with ACCF members as well, always bringing up the situation in France (and sometimes Italy) as a reason.⁴⁶

The members of the American Committee accepted such a rationale on principle, although they usually expressed some reservations. Ironically, given his own misgivings about the CCF and the European scene, the task of defending this line frequently fell on Hook. In the fall of 1951, Elliot Cohen, editor of *Commentary* and proponent of a hard anti-Communist line, expressed to him the belief that the task of the American Committee should be to “crystallize out the basic issues on which there are important differences between ourselves and European intellectuals,” and engage them in a fruitful

⁴⁴ Still in 1955, Hook lamented at an ACCF Executive Committee meeting, the Congress was regarded in many quarters in Europe as a merely anti-Communist organization not genuinely concerned with culture. Minutes of the ACCF Executive Committee, 12 October 1955, b. 7, f. 3, ACCF Records.

⁴⁵ Memorandum “The Masterpieces of Our Century,” undated (but probably 1951), s. II, b. 29, f. 7, IACF Records.

⁴⁶ Nicolas Nabokov to Pearl Kluger, 20 December 1951, s. II, b. 29, f. 9, IACF Records. Irving Brown, too, justified holding an international Congress in Paris with the need to “crystallize opinion in shifting French circles.” Minutes of the ACCF Executive Committee, 28 February 1951, b. 7, f. 3, ACCF Records.

debate. To concentrate on cultural activities such as the planned Paris festival was absurd for him and other American intellectuals, scandalized “that we permit ourselves to get involved in this kind of hoopla.”⁴⁷ Cohen’s concern to inform Hook about the dissatisfaction of his colleagues was hardly necessary, since on that same week the NYU philosopher had already received letters from two other members of the Committee for similar reasons. Writer Norbert Muhlen had criticized the plans for the Paris festival as a cultural enterprise with no political benefit, and feared it might actually damage the Congress: “If its greatest action in two years after the Berlin Congress will be a festival appealing to snobs and esthetes, I fear it will have lost its reputation.” The CCF, according to Muhlen, seemed to be holding arts festivals “while Europe burned.”⁴⁸ Philosopher and historian Hans Kohn, finally, had also questioned the desirability of the cultural approach, and urged Hook to do more to establish a dialogue with Western European intellectuals.⁴⁹ In his reply, Hook defended the need to take an “oblique approach” which linked political and cultural aspects, and expressed his worries about the “phenomenal growth” of neutralism and anti-Americanism in Europe.

Oddly enough, the European intellectuals shy away from what is narrowly or overtly political. They see in it only some governmental or official view. They speak in large abstractions about culture and civilization and in a way to suggest that America is as foreign to free culture as the Soviet Union. That is why a festival of the free arts in which American music, painting, literature, etc. is represented as an integral part of the Western tradition, [...] in which these things and others are packaged properly-has political implications. In such a context it is possible to hold several important political meetings of the kind we had in West Berlin and strengthen the Congress in Western countries, France particularly. Outside of such a context, political meetings would be a flop or be damned unjustly as a purely American affair. In a sense,

⁴⁷ Elliot E. Cohen to Sidney Hook, 5 October 1951, b. 8, f. 3, Burnham Papers.

⁴⁸ Norbert Muhlen to Sidney Hook, 3 October 1951, b. 8, f. 3, Burnham Papers; Quoted in Wilford, *The New York Intellectuals*, 208.

⁴⁹ Hans Kohn to Sidney Hook, 27 September 1951, b. 8, f. 3, Burnham Papers.

the whole of West Europe is in the same position as West Berlin. But few people in West Europe believe it.⁵⁰

Hook's role, then, was particularly important for the relationship between American and European intellectuals, and similar in this to that of Irving Brown. Both men, with the authority coming from their visits to Europe and their contacts there, tried to remind the members of the ACCF that the people in Paris had a better sense of what themes and activities were timely in Europe, where the kind of political activity they hoped for was almost impossible.⁵¹

Although the differences on the issue remained stark, the positive reception of the Paris Festival of May 1952 temporarily quelled the objections of disgruntled ACCF members. Nabokov and others defended the Festival as a success, first and foremost a psychological one, and the only possible action in Europe. The CCF Secretary General stressed to Hook the positive effects that the event would have: "I sincerely believe that now the Congress is not only well-known, but is respected by many intellectuals who don't agree with us. And it is a fact that many other intellectuals who were afraid of us before have come to us now as friends and colleagues."⁵² Given the importance of Western Europe in the mission of the CCF, and the support from the CIA for this policy, the argument was enough to strengthen the hand of those in favor of a "soft" approach. The contrast, however, would continue to emerge throughout the existence of the American Committee.

⁵⁰ Sidney Hook to Hans Kohn, 23 October 1951, b. 8, f. 3, Burnham Papers.

⁵¹ Minutes of the ACCF Executive Committee, 6 June 1951, s. II, b. 29, f. 7, IACF Records; Minutes of the ACCF Executive Committee, 12 March 1952, b. 7, f. 3, ACCF Records.

⁵² Sidney Hook to Nicolas Nabokov, 12 June 1952, b. 7, f. 13, ACCF Records; Nicolas Nabokov to Sidney Hook, 3 July 1952, s. II, b. 30, f. 1, IACF Records.

The issue of anti-Americanism was particularly egregious to American intellectuals, as they continued to be incensed by its resilience in Europe. Hook, as already discussed, was particularly concerned about it, fearing the United States would find itself isolated on the world stage. Burnham edited in the early 1950s a volume with prominent European contributors (including Raymond Aron) on the subject of “What Europe Thinks of America.”⁵³ Virtually at the opposite end of the political spectrum, Macdonald described the growing anti-Americanism as “frightening”: “People are not FOR Soviet Russia, but they just fear and dislike USA - and think Senator McCarthy runs the country and there is reign of terror here,” he wrote Chiaromonte. Macdonald feared that Europeans were coming to think of America as “a homogenous mass of atom-bomb-makers and ‘red-baiters’ and dollar-imperialists.” That seemed to him an illustration of the need to revive *politics*: “to communicate directly, in a human voice, with European intellectuals, to express the considerable amount of disaffection, among American intellectuals, with official policies; and to show that the McCarthys and McCarrans don’t by any means have it all their own way.”⁵⁴ While the project never came to life, it suggested the awareness among American intellectuals that Europeans were part of a transatlantic community of discourse. If few could disagree with such a proposition, however, the nature and contents of that community were open to contestation among different tendencies. In fact, although he never revived *politics*, Macdonald found a way of addressing European intellectuals through Chiaromonte and his magazine *Tempo Presente*, edited by the Italian Committee. The personal and ideological affinities within

⁵³ James Burnham, ed., *What Europe Thinks of America* (New York: The John Day Company, 1953).

⁵⁴ Dwight Macdonald to Nicola Chiaromonte, 7 November 1951, b. 10, f. 242, Macdonald Papers. U.S. Senator Pat McCarran had sponsored legislation that, among other things, severely restricted entrance to the United States to current or former members of totalitarian groups, a law harshly criticized even by anti-Communist intellectuals. See chapter 4.

the CCF, then, also influenced the way in which Americans projected themselves and their country to the rest of the world.

The ACCF addressed directly the issue of anti-Americanism in the fall of 1953, since, as its Executive Secretary Sol Stein explained to Josselson, it was “uppermost in the concerns of Americans now returning from abroad.”⁵⁵ The planned conference on anti-Americanism proposed to investigate the reasons for the phenomenon, at a time when it seemed like a serious split between American and European intellectuals was inevitable. The American Committee also intended to discuss the extent to which European anti-Americanism was a part of the overall Soviet strategy, and how to counter it. Some members, especially the more conservative ones, were aware of the delicacy of the issue for the American Committee. Poet and political thinker Peter Viereck, for instance, suggested inviting Irving Brown as a speaker for his impeccable credentials: “He’d be terrific; he can AFFORD to make strong criticism of Eur. liberal neutralists (he being a labor union man, hence safely and respectably “leftist”) which you and I & the Committee cannot make in our talks, for fear of being labeled as “too reactionary” or “capitalistic”.” Although he agreed with Viereck, Stein responded that Brown would attend the CCF Executive Committee in Rome, where “he would do us more good”: “we need some voices to speak for us there.”⁵⁶

Eventually the speakers at the conference included Viereck himself, Lionel Trilling, critic Leslie Fiedler, Yale professor Henri Peyre, and others from both sides of the Atlantic. Among the topics discussed were the need to rediscover a common cultural heritage, the problem of cultural jealousy, and the increasing trend toward the union of

⁵⁵ Sol Stein to Michael Josselson, 2 September 1953, s. II, b. 30, f. 4, IACF Records.

⁵⁶ Peter Viereck to Sol Stein, 17 October 1953, b. 5, f. 5, ACCF Records; Sol Stein to Peter Viereck, 26 October 1953, b. 5, f. 5, ACCF Records.

politics and culture. Peyre, in particular, spoke of anti-Americanism in France, suggesting that it was due to the “putative fear of intellect, intelligence” in America and to the fact that France did not attribute to the United States religious or spiritual qualities.⁵⁷ Another point that came up in the preparatory work was the idea, proposed by Fiedler, of anti-Americanism as self-criticism or self-hatred, which he called “endemic” in particular to a certain kind of Italian and French intellectuals. Thus, recalling conversations he had had, he explained it:

But why if you are at least neutral do you spend so much time in your magazine criticizing the US and so little attacking the visible crimes of Russia?-- Ah but you don't understand, Russia is something else, another world; but when we criticize America we are criticizing ourselves-- the future of the world we live in and have chosen--- But why do you call it America and not Italy?-- In America you represent the dangers of our own kind of culture more clearly-- at an advanced stage-- in which everything is visible etc.⁵⁸

One could wonder, Fiedler concluded, whether this approach was honest at all, and whether it was not in fact the opposite of what it seemed, i.e. a way not to criticize themselves. Peyre, too, agreed with this notion, but doubted that reminding Europeans that Russia was more dangerous would be of any help. They were well aware of it, he assured Stein, but expected from America a kind of intellectual and spiritual leadership that it had not been able to provide.⁵⁹

As Richard Pells had suggested, the identification of America with an often vague notion of modernity, and with an inescapable future, was by no means unique to the 1950s. European writers had long described America as “an indicator of direction,” “an

⁵⁷ “Unity of Cultural Resources Held Major Issue,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, 12 December 1953.

⁵⁸ Leslie Fiedler to Sol Stein, 21 October 1953, b. 9, f. 12, ACCF Records.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*; Henri Peyre to Sol Stein, 9 November 1953, b. 9, f. 12, ACCF Records. A dissenting voice was that of physical chemist Harold Urey, who blamed primarily the U.S. for European anti-Americanism, and pointed to the recent violations of civil rights during the McCarthy era as legitimate causes for the distrust of European allies. See Harold C. Urey to Sol Stein, 12 October 1953, b. 9, f. 12, ACCF Records.

exemplification of economic and cultural trends certain to happen everywhere, and an unwelcome harbinger of Europe's own destiny.” That future appeared to be characterized by “efficiency, advanced technology and industrial dynamism, the worship of machines and assembly lines, “streamlined” and standardized products, commercialism, mass consumption, and the emergence of a mass society.”⁶⁰ Europeans disliked Americans for the very traits that they disliked in themselves, according to Pells:

The United States was both a temptation and a threat because it represented what Europe could all too easily become---might even wish to become, though such an ambition was rarely admitted. Rather than confront their own distasteful impulses, the Europeans could project their anxieties about who they were and what they wanted onto the Americans. Anti-Americanism was thus a form of denial, a way for Europeans to publicly repudiate the United States while secretly adopting its culture and values.⁶¹

Whatever the explanation, the idea of anti-Americanism as self-criticism would continue to interest American and European intellectuals, especially as the economic recovery of Europe brought levels of well-being and mass consumption that had been exclusive to the U.S. for years.

Beside the critical attitude toward the Paris Secretariat, the American Committee also tried to find its own role within an international organization like the Congress. Once again, the issue of the representation of America abroad, and the need to dispel false impressions about its society, was at the forefront of U.S. intellectuals’ activity. At the most basic level, the American Committee could simply recommend to its European counterparts articles and books that served this purpose. Thus, for example, Sol Stein suggested to François Bondy James Baldwin’s “Strangers in the Village,” appeared in

⁶⁰ Pells, *Not Like Us*, 11.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 163. Tony Judt has also remarked on this explanation of anti-Americanism as “sublimated self-hatred” in postwar France: the dislike for American culture and its technological character offered a way to criticize the “productivity obsession” that seemed to be turning France away from its traditions, habits, and true self. See Judt, *Past Imperfect*, 195-96.

Harper's, as especially suited for *Preuves*: it “is undoubtedly one of the finest pieces I have seen on European-American problems and takes up the whole question of Negro problem in America in a way that would seem to me to be advantageous to the purposes of the Congress.”⁶² In addition to its conferences and press releases, the ACCF also tried to undertake a more active role in advancing its goals. Constantly plagued with financial problems, its officers reached out to some American foundations sympathetic to its activities for specific projects. In doing so, they showed how they envisioned these activities to fit into the larger work of the CCF, and how U.S. intellectuals could contribute to a transatlantic community of discourse. A grant proposal to the Ford Foundation detailed the importance of a national conference of editors of serious opinion magazine, and its impact overseas. The memorandum expressed the concern of American intellectuals for the “lack of understanding” of the realities of U.S. society, particularly among opinion leaders and journalists in Europe. It therefore advocated for the need to “stimulate a more effective transatlantic discourse,” and emphasize the common Atlantic cultural tradition. Such a conference would at the same time dispel the trend toward isolationism in America, and reduce the mutual hostility between Europe and the U.S.⁶³ Another proposal, this time to the Rockefeller Foundation, suggested the setup of a sort of clearing house for research and transatlantic placement of articles in U.S. and European magazines. Its goal was to overcome the lack of financial resources available, especially in Europe, and to contribute to the understanding of cultural trends on the opposite side of the ocean. As an example, the ACCF cited the collaboration with

⁶² Sol Stein to François Bondy, 15 September 1954, b. 7, f. 19, ACCF Records.

⁶³ American Committee for Cultural Freedom to Fund for Adult Education of the Ford Foundation Carnegie Corporation of New York, “Request for a grant for the first national conference of the editors of serious opinion magazines of the United States,” 21 April 1954, b. 3, f. 10, ACCF Records.

Preuves to respond to an article on the U.S. appeared on the French magazine *Les Temps Modernes*. Such a partnership would, the memorandum argued, help counter “the harm done in Europe by magazines that serve only the disruptive cause of the Soviet Union.”⁶⁴

Sometimes the thought of the potential reaction from European intellectuals could even influence what Americans wrote or published. In October 1952, critic Lionel Trilling expressed to Irving Kristol his hesitation to make an article of his on American literature available for *Preuves*. The reason was its potential reception in Europe: “The first part of the essay--that is, the interesting, non-review part--says in effect that American literature has no sense of society, that it rejects the social idea. Now this, as I realized in the course of work, is no thing to be saying to the French at this moment; it is, indeed, a very bad thing to say to them, and it is likely to be taken up and used in a hostile way.”⁶⁵ Kristol’s response, while a defense of culture *per se* independently from its political repercussions, also offered a glimpse of the debates and contrasting viewpoints on what should be the role of American intellectuals, and what their obligations toward their society:

As a matter of fact, it is considerations such as you and he raise which warp all efforts to talk about America to Europe, particularly to European intellectuals. I don’t believe it is possible to write a really good essay about American culture which cannot be used in a hostile way; and unless an essay can be used in this hostile way, there is no chance whatsoever of its being used in a friendly way. [...] Moreover, I think it futile to try to weigh the propaganda effects of literary truth. Faulkner’s novels are hardly flattering to America, yet their existence is something to be proud of, and even the French intellectuals see this.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Sol Stein to Charles B. Fahs, 18 March 1954, b. 4, f. 13, ACCF Records.

⁶⁵ Lionel Trilling to Irving Kristol, 22 October 1952, b. 4, f. 21, ACCF Records.

⁶⁶ Irving Kristol to Lionel Trilling, 23 October 1952, b. 4, f. 21, ACCF Records.

“The American Committee Could Have Helped Us Immensely”: Racism Seen from Europe

Despite their best efforts, however, U.S. intellectuals could not always control the kind of image and narrative about America that Europeans privileged. Some issues in particular kept coming up as stumbling blocks for the activities of the American Committee, forcing its members to deal with them. In the first half of the 1950s, the main controversial topics were the lingering racism that plagued American society and the anti-Communist hysteria unleashed and embodied by Republican senator Joseph McCarthy. While the Soviet Union and its allies in the West abundantly exploited these issues to question the democratic credentials of the United States, these phenomena raised concerns and questions among American allies and CCF affiliates as well. That made it harder for Americans to dismiss the controversies as Communist propaganda, and rather forced them to respond to “friendly” criticism and try to reframe the issues in a more favorable light.

The message that Americans tried to convey was that the country was not perfect in dealing with race relations, but the situation was improving. At the founding Berlin Congress, George Schuyler, the black conservative editor of the *Pittsburgh Courier*, attacked the “prostitute press and radio of the Communist camorra” for presenting an image of the life of African Americans in the U.S. so distorted as to make it unrecognizable. On the contrary, he argued, the progressive improvement of interracial relations was the most flattering example of the superiority of American democracy over totalitarian regimes. Listing the social and economic fields in which the plight of African Americans had dramatically improved over time, Schuyler constantly compared it to the

systematic oppression of minorities in the Soviet bloc. Even lynching, the most heinous racial crime, had significantly decreased since the beginning of the century. In short, Schuyler argued that the condition of African Americans was constantly improving thanks to the democratic institutions of a free society, which proved its superiority over totalitarianism. The continued loyalty of blacks to the American system was evidence of the hope they placed in it, contrary to what Soviet propaganda said.⁶⁷ With some variations, Americans emphasized this line of response to the allegations of racism in U.S. society, trying to turn it into an element of superiority over the Communist world.

CCF officers showed an awareness of the possibility to turn the racial issue into an asset in their activities as well. In discussing the plans for the Paris Festival, a memorandum probably written by Nabokov argued in favor of an all-black performance of the opera “Four Saints in Three Acts,” by American composer Virgil Thompson. The event would have psychological and political implications: “It would contradict unanswerably Communist propaganda which claims that the American Negro is a suppressed and persecuted race. A performance by foreign Negroes, on the other hand, would lead immediately to derision from the Communist camp, e.g. to the effect that the U. S. would not let its Negroes “out.””⁶⁸

When dramatic episodes came to the fore and captured the attention of the world, however, the other members of the Congress did not consider this approach sufficient.

The first case to highlight the different views on American racism within the CCF was

⁶⁷ George Schuyler, “The Negro Question Without Propaganda,” Congress Paper n. 23, Berlin Congress for Cultural Freedom, June 1950, s. III, b. 390, f. 6, IACF Records. See also Grémion, *Intelligence de l’anticommunisme*, 33. On Schuyler, see Oscar R. Williams, *George S. Schuyler: Portrait of a Black Conservative* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2007).

⁶⁸ Memorandum to Julius Fleischmann, undated (but probably 1951), box 1, folder 5, Nicolas Nabokov Papers, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas (hereafter Nabokov Papers).

that of the “Martinsville seven.” Seven colored men, accused of raping a white woman in Virginia, were sentenced to death and executed in early 1951. The event drew the attention of the nation as the largest death sentence for the crime of rape in America, and in particular for its racial overtones. What set it apart from other cases, however, was also the visible role, among the defendants’ legal counsel, of the Civil Rights Congress (CRC), an organization that many suspected of Communist ties and saw as “subversive.” When the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) refused to work with the CRC, the latter focused on outside campaigns, including international appeals to raise awareness of the case. The “Martinsville seven” became a valuable propaganda tool for America’s adversaries, as the Virginia governor received messages from Moscow and Peking deploring the “act of infamy and brutality” and blaming it on racial hatred.⁶⁹

The CCF Secretariat asked the American Committee to produce a statement, perceiving the need to counter anti-American propaganda in Europe and over the world. Patricia Blake urged François Bondy not to be “impatient” with the New York office “for not seeing the utility of a statement”: “of course, we are all outraged by it (the case) – but our organization is not set up to duplicate the work of the Civil Rights Commission or the Assoc. for the Advancement of Colored People – hence, a statement from us on the Martinsville case is not in order – unless, it is in political context.”⁷⁰ The ACCF’s Executive Committee, in fact, responded with a cable separating the issue of the guilt of the accused from that of racial discrimination, and blamed Communists for using the case

⁶⁹ Eric W. Rise, “Race, Rape and Radicalism: The Case of the Martinsville Seven, 1949-1951,” *The Journal of Southern History* 58 n. 3 (August 1992): 485-86. See the article for an in-depth treatment of the legal, political and international implications of the case.

⁷⁰ Patricia Blake to François Bondy, 10 February 1951, b. 1, f. 4, Nabokov Papers.

for their own purposes. Executive Secretary Pearl Kluger privately reported that there had been “much consultation” among its ranks, and that even its black members had agreed that the men were tried according to the law and were undoubtedly guilty. They added that “involved is the whole sociological question of the treatment of Negroes in the South” and complained that “the Communists were making a good deal of political capital out of it in Europe.”⁷¹ If the American Committee hoped that such moves would be enough to assuage the pressure to take a position on the issue, Bondy reminded them that America, and the way the country and its intellectuals behaved, was at the forefront of Europeans’ minds:

You cannot imagine how much - quite apart from any communist agitation - the execution of these 7 negroes has affected the entire public opinion in France. No argument comparing such isolated facts with the millions of lawless executions in the Soviet Empire will carry any weight, unless we are able to take quickly a strong stand on such events and can prove that we are linked [sic] with the type of Americans who fight most strongly against this kind of justice. The coincidence of these 7 negroes with the release of German war criminals has been more damaging in France and England than you probably realize. If we should speak only where communists are concerned, our moral authority as a voice of free human conscience would certainly be nullified. I know that I don’t have to convince you of this, but I want to point out that the American committee could have helped us immensely and could help us even now by giving us some statement.⁷²

A similar situation came up a few months later, with the execution of Willie McGee in Mississippi in May 1951. McGee had been sentenced to death for the rape of a white housewife, but several celebrities – among them William Faulkner, Albert Einstein, and Paul Robeson – insisted that the prosecution had failed to provide satisfactory evidence. The case became another lightning rod, especially abroad, raising the image of

⁷¹ Minutes of the ACCF Executive Committee, 28 February 1951, b. 7, f. 3, ACCF Records; Pearl Kluger to François Bondy, undated (but February 1951), s. II, b. 29, f. 8, IACF Records.

⁷² François Bondy to Nicolas Nabokov, 6 February 1951, s. II, b. 88, f. 1, IACF Records.

an unfair judicial system punishing black people disproportionately and summarily. Even the CCF's French affiliate, Les Amis de la Liberté, joined the international movement asking Truman to grant McGee a pardon: they wrote to Supreme Court Justice Robert H. Jackson that racism was almost as big a threat to freedom as totalitarianism, and hoped that he would continue to fight against racial prejudice in the case of McGee and other black men.⁷³

The response of the American Committee was, in the eyes of many Europeans, underwhelming. A short article that its bulletin published after the execution addressed the fact that, "understandably," many people thought McGee innocent: Americans were accustomed to the accusation of rape against black men, and foreigners were "conditioned to believe that in America the Negro is *always* victimized." The article acknowledged that the capital punishment was administered out of racial prejudice, and was a "judicial crime" that no decent-thinking person could countenance. However, it quickly turned to the denunciation of Communism – racism's "familiar handmaiden" – and the Soviet strategy to exploit the case. Communists, the bulletin claimed, were not interested in the life of the accused, but merely used him to gain sympathy among black Americans and funds for the Party, and to convince foreigners that America was a land of "fascist" persecution. The truth was that the American judicial system had granted McGee several trials and stays of execution, and that he was actually guilty. Sadly, the article concluded, "the Communists have hoodwinked the world and it will take years before the truth becomes known and accepted."⁷⁴

⁷³ Les Amis de la Liberté to Robert H. Jackson, 15 April 1951, s. II, b. 77, f. 7, IACF Records.

⁷⁴ Bulletin of the American Committee for Cultural Freedom, Summer 1951, 2, s. II, b. 29, f. 7, IACF Records.

At least on the last point, the article was quite accurate: CCF officers, in fact, would continue to struggle to address the issue of racism in America well into the 1960s. In a memorandum for Josselson and others, Lasky outlined the need for a more convincing response by the organization. He tried to present the problem as not just a national one: “This is clearly not merely a national American concern, but a broadly Western problem,” he wrote, “because the vicious anti-Americanism based on the twisted attitudes on this subject are damaging to the whole cause.” The efforts of the official U.S. propaganda channels (USIA, State Department) to whitewash the reality of race relations had been more harmful than helpful, according to Lasky. The CCF should instead take a different course, which would earn it more credibility among intellectuals: the pamphlet that he proposed should be “hard-hitting” and written “by an American Negro of independent standing and some international reputation.” At the same time, “in discussing the whole Negro struggle in the U.S.A. it will highlight first the progress that has been made in the light of the immense tasks that still have to be undertaken, and secondly the nature of an open society in which militant political and moral methods of struggle have a chance.” Lasky suggested James Baldwin for the “literary-moral” half, and “some political-journalistic person” for the other.⁷⁵ Despite the best efforts of the CCF members, however, the issue of racism – much like racism itself – simply refused to go away.

However damaging the controversies over racial discrimination were for the U.S., the Rosenberg case had an even greater impact on the public opinion outside America. Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were sentenced to death in 1952 for participating in a

⁷⁵ Melvin J. Lasky to Michael Josselson, John Hunt, François Bondy, et al., 11 April 1961, s. VII, b. 15, f. 2, IACF Records.

conspiracy to pass secret information concerning atomic weapons to the Soviet Union. Communists all over the world mounted a campaign casting doubts on the evidence and the proceedings, pointing to the case as evidence of American anti-Communist hysteria. Painter Pablo Picasso called the sentence “a crime against humanity,” Jean-Paul Sartre “a legal lynching which smears with blood a whole nation”:

Decidedly there is something rotten in America. [...] You are collectively responsible for the death of the Rosenbergs, some for having provoked this murder, others for having let it be carried out; you have allowed the United States to be the cradle of a new fascism. [...] One day, maybe, all this goodwill will heal you of your fear; we hope so because we have loved you. Meanwhile, don't be surprised if, from one end of Europe to the other, we scream: Watch out, America has rabies! We must cut all ties with it or else we shall be bitten and infected next.⁷⁶

Non-Communist observers were also shocked by the harsh punishment, and even Pope Pius XII appealed for clemency to no avail. The CCF Secretariat, witnessing first-hand the negative effect the case had abroad, urged the American Committee to issue a call for clemency, but the ACCF refused to do so until the Rosenbergs' guilt was openly acknowledged. Josselson sent a cable to Hook a week before the execution, lamenting that the friends of the Congress in Europe were “disturbed” by the absence of a public statement. The CCF's Executive Committee had to eventually bypass the American Committee and appeal to Eisenhower for clemency on humanitarian grounds, claiming that such an act would serve the cause of freedom all over the world. After all the efforts had failed, Josselson ruefully observed that the execution would live to haunt the Congress.⁷⁷

“American intellectuals have not become a gang of hysterics”: McCarthyism

⁷⁶ Quoted in Kuisel, *Seducing the French*, 50.

⁷⁷ Coleman, *The Liberal Conspiracy*, 163-64.

In the early 1950s, the other big thorn in the side of Americans and their allies, when it came to “winning over” European intellectuals, was McCarthyism. The issue had a devastating effect on the American Committee, split between the outright opponents of the Wisconsin senator and those who, while disagreeing with his methods, continued to see his critics as more or less willingly abetting the Communist cause. The tensions erupted after a controversial public meeting at the Waldorf-Astoria in March 1952, when Max Eastman, a writer close to Burnham’s positions, took the stage. He defended McCarthy – whose only faults were “his delicate sense of fair play and his excessive honesty” – and accused of “divided loyalty” liberals who considered him a greater threat to cultural freedom than Communism.⁷⁸ The crisis prompted the CIA to watch more closely the activities of the American Committee, which could threaten its activities abroad by publicly feuding over such a delicate issue.

Europe was present in more than one way in the debates among American intellectuals concerning the attitude of the liberal community toward McCarthy and his methods. First, it provided a term of comparison that critics could use to condemn American responses as too weak or ambiguous. An article by socialist Michael Harrington, appeared in the March 1955 issue of *Dissent*, provided an example of how the European operations of the CCF could be a weapon for criticism of the ACCF from the left. Despite the sincere commitment to cultural freedom in many members of the American Committee, according to Harrington, the ACCF had “steadily drifted to the right, toward the position of conforming to and apologizing for the intellectual atmosphere in the United States.”⁷⁹ Its leadership was “too jaded, too imbued with the

⁷⁸ Wilford, *The Mighty Wurlitzer*, 88; Coleman, *The Liberal Conspiracy*, 164.

⁷⁹ Michael Harrington, “The Committee for Cultural Freedom,” *Dissent* 2 n. 2 (Spring 1955), 115.

sourness of indiscriminate anti-Stalinism” to dedicate itself to anything other than the fight against fellow-travelers. As a result, its members were forced to “qualify, weaken and sometimes even negate” the defense of cultural freedom in the U.S. itself. By pointing to the CCF national committees in Europe, however, Harrington claimed that the anti-Stalinism of the ACCF – “crude, promiscuous and often without positive content” – was not the only option. He noted that “the European committees have been more concerned with a living day-to-day defense of intellectual freedom and have retained a greater degree of political independence *vis a vis* [sic] their own governments.” Harrington compared them to the ACCF, which had “laid itself open to the pressures and shaping influences of State Department policies and rationales; so often it has been less an organization devoted to the defense of cultural freedom than an agency propagandizing the American party line.”⁸⁰ Through their activities, therefore, Europeans could contribute to challenging the *status quo* in America as much as to buttressing U.S. Cold War policies.

European members of the CCF influenced not only American intellectuals to the left of the liberal consensus, but also those within the ACCF itself. As both the anti-McCarthyists and the anti-anti-McCarthyists tried to prevail within the American Committee, one of the strongest arguments for the former was the effect that the witch-hunt – and the Committee’s failure to condemn it thoroughly – could have on their European partners. Dwight Macdonald expressed clearly this combination of conviction and utilitarianism in writing to author and fellow ACCF member Mary McCarthy about the divisions within the American Committee: “Perhaps our strongest tactical argument is that the best and only way to gain the confidence of European intellectuals, including

⁸⁰ Ibid., 114.

those affiliated with the Committee, is to vigorously attack McCarthyism over here. This so obvious hardly needs documentation.”⁸¹ It is reasonable to suppose that a direct experience of the Europeans’ dismay at the ambiguous stance of the ACCF came from his contacts with Chiaromonte and other correspondents, inside and outside the old *politics* circle. In this sense, he had a more direct access than most American intellectuals to the feelings in those parts of Europe where McCarthyism was a significant liability for the U.S., especially Italy and France. The transatlantic networks on which the CCF relied thus also came into play in apparently domestic debates among U.S. intellectuals.

Macdonald expressed a similar view to Schlesinger, also opposed to the senator: “I believe that the most effective way to fight neutralist sentiment abroad -- and here, too, for that matter -- is to prove beyond a doubt that American anti-Communism is not the blind, stupid, selfish thing so many neutralists assume it to be. The only way I know of doing this is by denouncing McCarthy roundly and frequently.”⁸²

Schlesinger hardly needed such advice, as he was pushing Hook along similar lines to condemn Senator McCarthy unequivocally. He, too, presented the activities of the CCF in Europe as one of the main reasons to take a stand: “our failure to denounce McCarthyism in unequivocal terms would be a fatal blow to the whole conception of the Congress for Cultural Freedom. I am sure you know how strongly Nicolas Nabokov feels about just this point, and how a repetition of the Waldorf episode would cripple his operations. I do not think it is going too far to say that our failure to come out clearly on this issue would pretty much destroy the usefulness of the entire project.”⁸³ A few weeks later he insisted on the “vital importance” of holding together the group “on the principles

⁸¹ Dwight Macdonald to Mary McCarthy, 18 March 1952, b. 31, f. 779, Macdonald Papers.

⁸² Dwight Macdonald to Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., 30 March 1952, b. 45, f. 1109, Macdonald Papers.

⁸³ Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. to Sidney Hook, 1 April 1952, b. 383, f. 4, Schlesinger Papers.

of the Berlin Manifesto,” and expressed his confidence that they could work out something to “reassure our friends in Europe that American intellectuals have not become a gang of hysterics.”⁸⁴

Schlesinger’s position was especially important because he had unique access to the inner circles of American intelligence, having been in the Office of Strategic Services during World War II and a CIA consultant since the late 1940s. In addition to writing reports about the CCF upon his visits to Europe, he informed the CIA about the American Committee, and discussed the most acute phases of the McCarthy crisis with OPC director Frank Wisner and Deputy Chief of the International Organizations Division Cord Meyer. With most of the CIA archives still not accessible, Schlesinger’s correspondence offers one of the few insights into the approach that the agency had toward the CCF and its usefulness. Frances Stonor Saunders has remarked that, even half a century later, he continued to be particularly reticent about his own involvement with the CIA:

“Sometimes I would meet Frank Wisner at [journalist] Joe Alsop’s house,” he apparently recalled, “and he would ask me in a kind of social way what was happening at the American Committee, and I would tell him.”⁸⁵ The correspondence between Schlesinger and Wisner suggests that this was, at best, a remarkable understatement. In reference to the defense of McCarthy by Max Eastman at the ACCF meeting at the Waldorf, it was Schlesinger who urged the CIA to pay close attention to its tensions, warning Wisner about the possible repercussions: “The crucial issue here is the effect on the whole work of the Congress in Europe of the failure of the American Committee to take a clearcut stand on McCarthyism. I can think of nothing better calculated to confirm the worst fears

⁸⁴ Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. to Sidney Hook, 17 April 1952, b. 383, f. 4, Schlesinger Papers.

⁸⁵ Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*, 201.

of European intellectuals about the Congress.” He added that when news of “the Waldorf performance” would reach Europe it would gravely prejudice the position of the Congress as a whole, unless the American Committee took some swift actions in denouncing McCarthyism.⁸⁶

In response to the letter, Wisner drafted an internal memorandum about the “rather alarming picture” in the ACCF, arguing that from the agency’s standpoint the position of neither the pro-McCarthyites nor the anti-McCarthyites was the correct one. The impulse by the members of the American Committee to take a stand on the issue was understandable, but mistaken: “that is not the nature of the American Committee for Cultural Freedom which, according to my recollection, was inspired if not put together by this Agency for the purpose of providing cover and backstopping for the European effort.” To raise the subject of McCarthyism dragged instead the CIA and its assets into a hot domestic issue, at the risk that the whole effort be shot down. Wisner therefore recommended that the whole debate on the subject be expunged from the records, if at all possible, or that at least an appeal to unity be made.⁸⁷ A couple of weeks later Schlesinger reassured Wisner about a general resolution approved by the ACCF: even if not very strong, it would be sufficient to “strengthen the hands of the Committee in Europe and to counter the propaganda about American “hysteria.””⁸⁸ A few months later, Schlesinger would use virtually the same words in recommending his contacts in Washington to curb the activities of the American Committee. The rationale was mainly practical, in order to avoid unwanted attention from McCarthy and others, but the recent tensions were

⁸⁶ Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. to Frank Wisner, 4 April 1952, b. 375, f. 2, Schlesinger Papers.

⁸⁷ Frank Wisner to Deputy Assistant Director for Policy Coordination, “Reported Crisis in the American Committee for Cultural Freedom,” 7 April 1952, in *The CIA under Harry Truman*, ed. Michael Warner (Washington, D.C.: Center for the Study of Intelligence, 1994), 455.

⁸⁸ Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. to Frank Wisner, 17 April 1952, b. 375, f. 2, Schlesinger Papers.

probably in Schlesinger's mind when he wrote the memorandum following his visit to Paris:

In general, I would warn against the notion of trying to make the American Committee into too powerful an outfit. Its main function, it seems to me, should be to backstop the European and Asian operations, to guide and entertain visiting intellectuals from foreign countries, and to serve as a cover for fund-raising. If an American Committee on [sic] Cultural Freedom should really become active, its members are going to demand that it pay some attention to problems of cultural freedom in the United States -- which would immediately commit it to attacks on McCarthy, McCarran, the passport and visa policy of the State Department, etc. I personally doubt whether McCarthy is going to demand an investigation of every organization which attacks him; but those in the agency who fear that attacks will incite such investigation must recognize that they must then forego the thought of a high-pressure committee in this country."⁸⁹

In his estimate of the controversy and its effects, Schlesinger was closely aligned with Nabokov, with whom he shared a fundamental outlook on the relationship between American and European intellectuals within the CCF. The two men discussed how to address the issue of McCarthyism in light of its implications. According to Nabokov, "both in the United States and in Europe, we must not permit our genuine concern about the preservation of civil liberties to lead us into error about the real state of affairs in America. It should be made clear to Europeans that McCarthy is a man, not a movement [...]. Europeans are only too ready to draw from our individual weaknesses the most general and damaging consequences." To attack McCarthyism, he argued, would imply to Europeans that it represented an authentic popular movement in the U.S. As far as the European and global operations of the CCF were concerned, Nabokov concluded, the priority was to avoid at all costs a split within the American Committee: "I cannot put my conviction strongly enough that such a rupture would virtually represent a death blow to our work here, where Gaullists, Socialists, and non-Communists of every political party

⁸⁹ Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. to Kenneth Giniger, 9 June 1952, b. 375, f. 2, Schlesinger Papers.

are working so well together for one common aim; the preservation of our cultural liberties from all forms of totalitarianism, wherever they exist.”⁹⁰

A couple of years later, Schlesinger discussed once again the problem of the American Committee with a CIA officer, this time Cord Meyer. Reporting on his conversations with Nabokov, he shared his belief that in its present form the ACCF was no help at all to the European operations of the Congress. Any American Committee with ambitious plans, according to the two men, was bound to get involved in internal fights and schisms; from the viewpoint of the European work of the CCF, it would be better to have just a letterhead committee in New York. “The prospect of the American committee devoting itself to a study of Communist infiltration in the intellectual community and thus acting as bird-dogs for McCarthy,” he wrote Meyer, “would be particularly hard to explain in Europe.” Schlesinger also reassured his contact about the correspondence between the CIA’s interest and this proposed course: “It seems to me that both the European Congress and yourself might be spared embarrassment if the American Committee were to be reduced to a minimum operation. (I need not say that this last consideration -- I mean your interest -- did not enter into our conversation.)”⁹¹ The exchange suggests that, at least as far as some of the intellectuals were concerned, the image of an agency maneuvering its assets at will fails to capture the complexity of the relations involved. Schlesinger’s remarks expressed, rather than subordination, an active participation in the covert operations linked to the CCF. If Meyer and others occasionally intervened to recommend a certain course, Schlesinger and his peers still enjoyed a certain agency in their activities. In fact, these intellectuals – whether they be of

⁹⁰ Nicolas Nabokov to Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., 21 April 1952, b. 7, f. 13, ACCF Records.

⁹¹ Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., to Cord Meyer, 10 March 1954, b. 4, f. 3, Schlesinger Papers.

conservative of liberal leanings – projected into the CCF their political positions, and used the organization and their connections with intelligence members to advocate for their own positions in domestic and foreign policy. The same holds true, to an even greater extent, for those CCF members who were further removed from Washington and the United States, and worked with the Congress to advance their own goals.

“A Divorce of Feeling”: Transatlantic Misunderstandings

Despite the fact that Europe seemed to be everyone’s primary concern, these discussions could sometimes forget the perspective of their European counterparts. Nicola Chiaromonte had tried to communicate this paradox to Dwight Macdonald, reflecting on a meeting with novelist Saul Bellow in Rome. Bellow was “a nice man,” Chiaromonte conceded,

but look[ed] at Europe in the peculiar and ominous way of postwar Americans, a way which is not extremely far off from the British way of looking at the “natives” after all, only induced by a feeling not of racial, but rather of “practical” superiority, discounting a priori that the “natives” belong to the world of serious business. It’s curious that intellectuals should take such an attitude, but I have noticed it often, both in oldtime Americans and in freshly naturalized Europeans.⁹²

When Europeans intervened, in fact, they often expressed different viewpoints and priorities from the ones of American intellectuals. No one stated this disagreement as clearly as Bondy, who in the summer of 1953 wrote to sociologist Daniel Bell – at the time an officer of the American Committee – to express the discomfort of many fellow Europeans toward the American intellectuals associated with the CCF. As a central figure in the Congress since its foundation, it is likely that Bondy’s letter was not merely a

⁹² Nicola Chiaromonte to Dwight Macdonald, 28 January 1949, b. 10, f. 242, Macdonald Papers.

private initiative but reflected the concerns of the Paris office and others in Europe. “We would have felt happy,” Bondy complained, “if on many issues, not directly connected with the anti-communist fight but with justice, humanity and freedom in general and specifically with cultural freedom the American Committee could have taken more initiatives.” The *Preuves* editor then listed the instances where European members of the CCF had felt almost let down by their American counterparts: the silence on the elimination of books from American libraries,⁹³ or the appeals for clemency in the case of the Rosenbergs – which “has shocked non-Communist European opinion, including myself and all my friends here to an extent you can hardly imagine.”⁹⁴

The list went on: the statement the CCF had requested on the McGee case was “so burdened with considerations about the horrible character of the crime of rape and with polemics against the communists that it was not very valuable as a moral act.” The one on the Einstein case almost sanctioned the proscription-like techniques of congressional committees.⁹⁵ Finally, the American Committee had failed to speak out against McCarthy to denounce the fact that his attacks against the intellectual community were “destroying any American claim of moral leadership and gravely damaging the relations between American and non-communist European opinion.”⁹⁶ The distance between Americans and Europeans on these issues seemed to amount almost to a “divorce of feeling,” Bondy wrote. “It may all be a question of “nuances” of style and emphasis,” he doubtfully

⁹³ In the spring of 1953, two McCarthy aides visited USIA libraries in several countries and denounced the presence of thousands of “pro-Communist” works on their shelves. To the dismay of foreign observers, the State Department ordered its outposts to remove the books of authors such as Sartre, Howard Fast, Langston Hughes, John Reed, and Thomas Mann. See Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*, 192-93.

⁹⁴ François Bondy to Daniel Bell, 25 June 1953, s. VII, b. 4, f. 9, IACF Records.

⁹⁵ In expressing his support for a New York City schoolteacher who had refused to testify in front of a congressional committee, Nobel Prize-winner scientist Albert Einstein praised his decision and urged all intellectuals to do the same in defense of cultural freedom from reactionaries. The ACCF strongly criticized Einstein for playing into the Communists’ attempts to infiltrate U.S. society.

⁹⁶ François Bondy to Daniel Bell, 25 June 1953, s. VII, b. 4, f. 9, IACF Records.

conceded. “But unsophisticated, old fashioned American liberals like Judge Learned Hand and Judge Douglas seem able to find a strong simple language in defence of freedom which radiates an immediate sense of generosity, assurance and faith, such as we would be happy to feel in the resolutions of the American Committee.”⁹⁷

Bondy assured Bell that European friends of the CCF were fully aware of their own shortcomings, but were saddened by what appeared as the constant deterioration of the climate of cultural freedom in the U.S., while “neutralists and European chauvinists” were only too happy with the developments. As many of its critics had already pointed out, he noted that the ACCF had failed to speak out against the removal of controversial books from USIA libraries overseas – when even the Amis de la Liberté in France included in their libraries Communist publications – but had quickly condemned Einstein’s statement. “I wish I could be convinced,” Bondy concluded his long letter, “that this criticism is unfair, that it reflects insufficient information and that it is not indicative of a separation between Americans and Europeans opinion inside our own association. [...] Even in that case it may not have been entirely useless to express in the name of many of your best friends in Europe my anxiety about the growing differences of opinion and emphasis on crucial problems of freedom which are our common concern.”⁹⁸

Bell’s reply came within a few days, and he thanked Bondy admitting that “I didn’t have a clear notion of the political feelings of the people in Paris on some of these issues.” He tried to provide the Swiss editor with the ideological and organizational background of the American Committee and its controversies. The original weakness of the American Committee, according to Bell, lay in the fact that the membership was

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

roughly drawn from the circles around *Partisan Review*, *Commentary*, and *The New Leader*. This had led to the “cliquish” character of the committee and the re-litigation of old feuds from the 1930s, while failing to establish itself fully in the American liberal milieu. Moreover, the Committee had immediately split in three parts (“like Gaul”) between the left, the right, and a central group trying to keep the organization together.⁹⁹

Bell then moved on to discuss the cases mentioned by Bondy, acknowledging that McCarthyism had been a divisive issue until the senator turned his investigations to the Voice of America, which convinced everyone in the ACCF that he was a danger. He was more willing to justify the American Committee on the McGee, Rosenberg and Einstein cases, on the grounds that the Communists had used them as propaganda weapons. Faced with the problem of creating an “independent vantage point” to avoid getting sucked into the Communist campaigns, Bell argued, the American Committee had privileged action through private channels, particularly Eisenhower’s special assistant on psychological warfare, C.D. Jackson. “Perhaps we were wrong in simply not taking the case in its elemental human terms,” he conceded, “but we also operate in an area of frustration whereby such cases can be whipped up by the liberals into almost hysterical frenzy, yet when such instances as the execution of Willi Goettling in East Berlin is raised, one finds political rationalizations why such acts may have been necessary, since, after all, they had to maintain order.”¹⁰⁰

Bell’s explanations did not fully convince Bondy, who responded that the problem of the American Committee was moral and intellectual rather than just an organizational one. He reiterated the belief that the removal of the so-called controversial

⁹⁹ Daniel Bell to François Bondy, 29 June 1953, s. VII, b. 4, f. 9, IACF Records.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. Willi Götting was a West Berlin resident executed by the Soviet authorities as an American agent following the East Berlin uprising of June 1953.

books had done more harm to the United States “than the presence of the complete works of Joseph Stalin in every American library overseas could possibly do.”¹⁰¹ The exchange between the two men was significant for its ability to flesh out the fundamental disagreements and misunderstandings between the two sides of the Atlantic, and to integrate the Europeans’ perspective into the history of the ACCF. Bondy and Bell seemed at times to talk past each other, as their accounts of the same events were radically different.

Another example of the different perceptions across the Atlantic was the correspondence between Hook and Bondy about the publication in *Preuves* of an abridged version of the former’s article on McCarthyism. The misunderstandings between the two reflected in part the different perceptions of the phenomenon of McCarthyism in France and the United States – a “fundamental asymmetry,” as Pierre Grémion characterized it. Hook himself wrote extensively on the consequences of the Red Scare on American colleges and universities, formulating a distinction between the crucial right to advocate unorthodox positions in a free society (“heresy”) and the attempts to overthrow a democratic regime through covert infiltration (“conspiracy”).¹⁰² He was instead less concerned with the witch-hunt that took place in the artistic and literary world, with discrimination against screenwriters, actors, musicians, and writers for their alleged political beliefs.¹⁰³ In France, according to Grémion, the order of priorities was reversed: the impact of McCarthyism on literature, cinema, and the arts was more intensely resented by intellectuals, and more intelligently exploited by

¹⁰¹ François Bondy to Daniel Bell, 8 July 1953, s. VII, b. 4, f. 9, IACF Records.

¹⁰² See in particular Sidney Hook, *Heresy, Yes-Conspiracy, No* (New York: The John Day Company, 1953). The American Committee for Cultural Freedom was also involved in promoting Hook’s views as an attempt to provide a “reasonable” anti-Communist alternative to McCarthy-style techniques.

¹⁰³ See Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes*.

Communists. Hook's arguments about cultural freedom in the universities, resting on the balance between characteristically American notions like "faculty" and "board of trustees," were "completely foreign, if not incomprehensible, to French society at the time."¹⁰⁴

In fact, according to Grémion, Hook's interactions with French intellectuals pointed to the fundamental ambiguity intrinsic to the transnational nature of the CCF, i.e. the different degree of filo-Communism among intellectuals belonging to the non-Communist Left. The notion of "anti-anti-Communist" that the president of the ACCF emphasized in his writings was part of the intellectual discourse in the United States, but in the French context it confused the debate more than it helped clarify the different positions. In its activities in Europe, the CCF made a much more moderate use of the notion, avoiding the anti-Communist excesses that had worried even the most sympathetic circles. Aron used it only once, but generally refrained from labeling as anti-anti-Communists those intellectuals with whom he disagreed philosophically or politically. Hook's definition, Grémion concluded, made it impossible to distinguish crypto-Communists from those figures on the Left who were trying to build the premises for peaceful coexistence in Europe outside the Third Force camp.¹⁰⁵

Hook's article, "Security and Freedom," appeared in the June 1954 issue of *Confluence*. The article did not attempt a defense of the Wisconsin senator, but rather tried to explain to the rest of the world how the concern with security could have found such fertile ground in a relatively liberal public opinion like the American one. According to Hook, the tenets of liberalism were perfectly compatible with security measures aimed

¹⁰⁴ Grémion, *Intelligence de l'anticommunisme*, 141-42.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 310.

at protecting institutions from the infiltration of ideologically-driven Communist agents into government areas of strategic importance. European countries like France and Italy were not equally preoccupied with Communist infiltration because they were too weak to act on it, and therefore pretended there was no need for action. They could also afford to live with the Communist menace as long as the United States was free and strong. The conclusion was unambiguously in defense of American policies: “Only those who are ignorant of the stupendous extent of Soviet infiltration and espionage over the years, the complexity of its patterns and its potential for harm, can sneer at the problem of security in the free world.”¹⁰⁶

In writing to Bondy, Hook recommended that the article not be cut too much, since France and Italy were penetrated much more than the U.S. was in the early 1950s. Bondy, however, had a different take. “All the French co-editors of Preuves unanimously have told me that in France the issue of McCarthyism has completely ceased to be discussed,” he wrote, and that the attention had moved to other issues. An apparently piqued Hook replied that the article would have been topical if published earlier, at a time “when so many people in France believed that McCarthy was taking over America,” and suggested it could still be relevant to the average French intellectual.¹⁰⁷ The episode represented the difficulties for Americans in setting the message to send abroad. While Hook, echoing the debates that had been taking place in the U.S. for years, emphasized certain aspects of the McCarthy controversy (the Communist penetration into the

¹⁰⁶ Sidney Hook, “Security and Freedom,” *Confluence* 3 (1954), 171.

¹⁰⁷ Sidney Hook to François Bondy, 8 October 1954, s. VII, b. 7, f. 8, IACF Records; François Bondy to Sidney Hook, 13 November 1954, s. VII, b. 7, f. 8, IACF Records; Sidney Hook to François Bondy, 16 November 1954, s. VII, b. 7, f. 8, IACF Records.

bureaucracy), Bondy and *Preuves* picked and chose what they deemed relevant for the intellectual and cultural climate in France.

Ironically, it was an American who expressed the feelings of many Europeans involved with the problem of communicating to and about America. Melvin Lasky, at a CCF Executive Committee meeting a couple of months after the Bondy-Hook exchange, spoke of the common problem of “interpreting and presenting the United States and American problems to Europe (and Asia).” It consisted in the impossibility of getting the right kind of material for CCF journals from members of the American Committee, despite the presence of many distinguished writers. As Lasky put it, he repeatedly had to explain to them that their submissions were very fascinating for people brought up in America or well versed in its complex controversies. Translated for the German or French public, however, they would have little or no significance. Lasky admitted that part of the problem could simply be a lack of acquaintanceship with European controversies, but denied that it could be only a matter of “naiveté.” He seemed to imply, in other words, a reluctance on the part of American intellectuals to acknowledge and take into account the differences in the cultural and intellectual contexts, almost a trace of arrogance on their part.¹⁰⁸ The editor of *Der Monat* thus expressed a feeling that others, and not just Bondy, shared: their desire for more “American” voices in CCF magazines or activities was not indiscriminate, and did not follow the expectations of U.S. intellectuals. Europeans’ experience and interaction with U.S. culture was mediated and driven as much by their own demands as by the intention to win them over to the “American preposition.”

¹⁰⁸ Minutes of the CCF Executive Committee, 24-25 January 1955, 176-77, b. 1, f. 6, ACCF Records.

The End of the American Committee

The tense relationship between the CCF and its American affiliate came to a head only in the mid-1950s, although neither the reasons for the conflict nor the way it played out were particularly new. The growing discontent on the part of American intellectuals produced a strong statement criticizing the policy of the Congress and its rationale. The American Committee accused the CCF of not opposing Communism forcefully enough, and of concentrating on conferences and other events that had little effect on Europeans' minds. It also protested against the decision process within the organization, calling it a "democratic centralism" that left little voice to the national committees. In a detailed critique of its international program, the memorandum claimed that the atmosphere in Europe and Asia was not as antagonistic to a forthright anti-Communist program as assumed by the Paris Secretariat. Even if it were, however, "nothing could be gained by equivocating on crucial issue and pendering [sic] to neutralist, anti-American, third-force or "co-existence" sentiment."¹⁰⁹

As far as the old debate about cultural versus political activities was concerned, the memorandum accused the CCF in no uncertain terms of losing all effectiveness in the political struggle by hiding behind cultural undertakings. "Careful diplomacy and considered indirection may be useful at times, candor and forthrightness at other times," it conceded in theory, "but when the indirect approach becomes a habit, sight is often lost of the true purpose of the action." Its recent activities, including its magazine and the Paris festival, proved that the CCF had indeed lost sight of these facts, and that it should abstain from certain undertakings merely because it could obtain money for them. The authors conceded the principle that the anti-Communist struggle could impose different

¹⁰⁹ Memorandum to ACCF Executive Committee members, 6 January 1955, s. II, b. 31, f. 3, IACF Records.

approaches outside the U.S.: “We realize that in Europe and Asia intellectuals tend to view political life through cultural glasses, and we know that the demonstration of a high regard for and active interest in cultural life is as important as their actuality.”

Nonetheless, they concluded, “we believe it to be a fallacy [...] to be satisfied with endeavors of a cultural sort...”¹¹⁰

The memorandum was drawn by a sub-committee and discussed at the following Executive Committee meeting of the ACCF, where Hook tried to play a moderating role. He warned that some of the criticism was too strong, and its hostile tone ill-advised. Bell also jumped into the discussion to call it a “hasty, strident document,” arguing that most of the members of the American Committee were insufficiently acquainted with the work of the Congress to be qualified to express such severe reproach. In addition, he said, the draft document reflected a specific attitude toward American foreign policy problems, rather than an attitude toward problems of cultural freedom. Bell therefore urged that a distinction be made between problems of basic principle, strategy, and tactics. Other members shared the criticism of the memorandum as too strong, suggesting that the Committee was split on how to view the problem of activities in Europe and how to deal with its intellectuals.¹¹¹

It was in this context of tensions and competing pushes that Hook traveled to Paris for the Executive Committee of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, held a few weeks later. The NYU professor, ironically, advocated for the positions of his American colleagues that he had recently questioned, demanding a greater attention to political activities and challenging the idea of culture as a separate arena. He conceded that many

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Minutes of the ACCF Executive Committee, 13 January 1955, b. 7, f. 3, ACCF Records.

in the United States did not appreciate the European scene and its political context, but defended the general principle of their criticism as fundamentally sound. The CCF had failed to dedicate most of its attention to Communism, the main threat to freedom, had engaged in cultural activities that were not vital to the cause, and had refrained from undertaking certain actions for fear of appearing as an American organization. Hook also responded to the perplexities coming from Europe about Americans' overwhelming concern with Communism over other issues (religious freedom, censorship): they believed that, should the United States become weakened or immobilized, the rest of the world would fall within the Soviet orbit. He stressed the importance that ACCF members attributed to the struggle over the world's – and intellectuals' – sympathies: "Every articulate and conscious person interested in political affairs is aware that the United States is confronted by an enemy which is concentrating its forces everywhere to picturing it as the enemy of mankind."¹¹²

Despite his efforts to defend the activities of the ACCF and argue for its positions, Hook faced the resolute opposition of other members of the Executive Committee to adopt a more militant anti-Communism along the lines American intellectuals wished. Silone and Chiaromonte for Italy, and Aron and Bondy for France, claimed for themselves an almost exclusive say on the kind of activities suitable for their countries. They offered an alternative view of what anti-Communism and cultural freedom could mean elsewhere, and restated their independence from any attempt to interfere with them.¹¹³ Back in New York, Hook had to report to the ACCF Executive Committee that the reaction from Europeans had been to argue that the Congress' cultural activities also

¹¹² Minutes of the CCF Executive Committee, 24-25 January 1955, 31-36, 171, b. 1, f. 6, ACCF Records.

¹¹³ See chapter 2.

had political aspects and effects, and that the cultural emphasis was necessary to lure European intellectuals into some contact with the Congress. Finally, he had to admit that Europeans had found Americans' criticism "incomprehensible," and that they could act only on specific suggestions. ACCF members were disappointed with the outcome of the discussions, but recognized that Hook had pushed for a stronger line so much that he had been considered the "aggressive" American.¹¹⁴

Ultimately, the militant character of the American Committee was too much for the Paris Secretariat and its sponsors in Washington, who came to see the "aggressive" Americans as a liability more than an asset. As Schlesinger's correspondence with Meyer and Nabokov attests, the decision had been years in the making. Josselson and other officers had repeatedly complained about the damage coming to the activities in Europe and the rest of the world from the militant anti-Communism of the American Committee. He had written to Hook that the "natural death" of the ACCF would be the best thing for all those concerned, since all the group could do was to get involved in petty quarrels.¹¹⁵ Accordingly, in the fall of 1954 he suspended the transfer of funds that the American Committee received from the Paris Secretariat, all but dooming it to bankruptcy. The ACCF members, however, solicited the help of private donors to ensure its survival, and ultimately turned to the CIA itself asking for a special grant at a time when they lacked the money even for the next month's rent. The agency unexpectedly granted such a request, to the irritation of Schlesinger, who wrote to Meyer to complain about the decision. The reply reassured him that the grant was an exceptional measure to allow the

¹¹⁴ Minutes of the ACCF Executive Committee, 15 February 1955, b. 7, f. 3, ACCF Records.

¹¹⁵ Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*, 229-30.

“sensible” members like Hook and Schlesinger himself to reconstitute the Executive Committee on a different basis.¹¹⁶

The American Committee, however, soon dispelled Meyer’s illusions by resuming its aggressive line. The final straw for the Paris Secretariat was the controversy that opposed the American Committee and Bertrand Russell, one of the honorary presidents of the Congress. In a letter to the *Manchester Guardian*, the British philosopher had protested the imprisonment of Morton Sobell, the suspected accomplice of the Rosenbergs. According to Russell, the decision was a gross miscarriage of justice, akin to the atrocities perpetrated by “other police states such as Nazi Germany and Stalin’s Russia.”¹¹⁷ The response of the ACCF, not discussed in advance with the Paris office, was a letter accusing Russell of an “extraordinary lapse from standards of objectivity and justice,” and chiding him for the impropriety of making such false statements in his role as officer of the Congress for Cultural Freedom. Evidently agreeing on nothing but the last point, Russell quickly resigned from the organization. Unlike in previous instances, Nabokov was unable to convince him to withdraw his resignation, and the CCF’s image suffered a significant damage.¹¹⁸

A few months later James Farrell, the chairman of the American Committee, abruptly resigned after publicly criticizing the U.S. foreign aid policy on the pages of the isolationist *Chicago Tribune*. In the letter explaining his resignation, he chided the American Committee for its lack of understanding of the situation abroad, its obsession with anti-Communism and its tendency to privilege the political over the cultural angle.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 230-31; Wilford, *The Mighty Wurlitzer*, 92-93.

¹¹⁷ Wilford, *The Mighty Wurlitzer*, 94; Bertrand Russell, Letter to the editor, *Manchester Guardian*, 26 March 1956.

¹¹⁸ Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*, 231-32.

Josselson was infuriated with the rest of the ACCF leadership for not acting swiftly to contain the damage of Farrell's statements, although Wilford speculates that he might have played a part in the episode to finally get rid of the unwieldy Committee.¹¹⁹

Whatever the back-room machinations that led to it, the ACCF eventually suspended its activities in early 1957, no longer able to find the support of its previous sponsors. Hook would continue to attend the CCF Executive Committee for a few years, but by the end of the 1950s he had largely withdrawn from direct involvement with it. He later remarked that his inactivity was not unwelcomed, since he was seen in Paris as the representative of the "obnoxious American Committee for Cultural Freedom." In return, he dedicated a scathing portrayal of the CCF in his autobiography. According to him, the Congress had become "a lost cause" and "had outlived its usefulness and promise": its permanent officers and bureaucracy were guilty of the ultimate crime of being more interested in acquiring respectability in the eyes of European intellectuals – even neutralists – than in "effective militant opposition to Communist cultural influences." After all, Hook noted regretfully, members of the Executive Committee like Silone or Chiaromonte, "although exemplary in their devotion to cultural and intellectual freedom, did not have their heart in the anticommunist fight, even when it could not be avoided."¹²⁰

Conclusion: "Anybody, everywhere, who ever wants to attack the Congress..."

At the end of the 1960s, after having resigned as Administrative Secretary of the CCF, Michael Josselson wrote to Shepard Stone, the president of the reorganized

¹¹⁹ Wilford, *The Mighty Wurlitzer*, 96.

¹²⁰ Hook, *Out of Step*, 445, 448-50.

International Association for Cultural Freedom. At a time when the organization was under attack for the revelation of its ties with the CIA, he warned Stone that the ACCF could be the source of further embarrassment: “Anybody, everywhere, who ever wants to attack the Congress can always find supporting material in the history of the American Committee.”¹²¹ Clearly, the relationship between the Congress and U.S. intellectuals still left a bad taste in the disgraced Josselson’s mouth. Throughout its existence, tensions had in fact constantly been seething between “the gun-slingers in New York and the sophisticates of the Paris office,” as Saunders characterized them.¹²² Yet, for all the problems that the ACCF created for the officers and sponsors of the Congress, they could not afford to ignore it. The American component of the CCF was a vital element of the organization, which had to reckon with the Cold War realities of a bipolar world. To be anti-Communist, as the Congress unmistakably presented itself, also meant that one was forced to deal with the issue of America’s record according to both its supporters and critics. Shortcomings of U.S. democracy such as racial discrimination or the Red Scare raised concerns abroad even among friendly observers, and made the issue unavoidable.

If intellectuals in the CCF had to deal with this aspect of the relationship between Europe and America, however, they were far from unanimous on how to do it. Europeans showed different responses to the perceived “American character” of the CCF, some maintaining a critical attitude and others viewing it more favorably. U.S. intellectuals themselves, though, disagreed on what their society should look like and how it should project its image abroad. Liberals insisted on the need to right some of the wrongs of American society, not lastly for the impact that they would have on European audiences

¹²¹ Michael Josselson to Shepard Stone, 12 January 1968, s. II, b. 31, f. 4, IACF Records.

¹²² Saunder, *The Cultural Cold War*, 231.

and intellectual elites. Conservatives stressed the primacy of the anti-Communist struggle, and urged the International Secretariat to concentrate on the most imminent threat to cultural freedom rather than “pander” to European neutralists. All sides, in other words, projected into the Congress for Cultural Freedom their own political positions rather than receive guidelines from above. Within the CCF, therefore the domestic debates of the early Cold War assumed an immediate transatlantic – and later global – character, as its members were well aware. The network of magazines, seminars and activities bound together these different personal and national backgrounds, and forced them to try to understand and define the “other” more clearly. At the same time, the affiliation to a common organization and the need to coordinate at least in part their activities highlighted the differences between them on several issues.

This mixture of mutual interest and misunderstanding was a central element of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, and defined the relationship between the intellectual classes of America and Western Europe. Its record is nuanced and contradictory, as the two sides sometimes showed fundamental disagreements on how they viewed themselves and the other. European intellectuals continued to be ambivalent about the merits of American society, and to question its record frequently and thoroughly. Before it could “win over” European intellectuals to the “American proposition,” therefore, the CCF had to confront competing views of what exactly such a proposition was, and what it meant in different places. This chapter has described in particular the issue from the point of view of Italy and France, especially delicate for the strength of anti-Americanism there. The next chapters expand on this relationship dealing more in detail with the operations of the CCF in the two countries. They focus on the different ways that the organization had to

engage with local intellectuals: personal contacts with prominent figures, the work of the national committees, and the publication of monthly magazines.

CHAPTER 4

NOT ANTI-COMMUNIST “IN OUR SENSE OF THE TERM”: THE AMBIVALENT RELATIONSHIP WITH FRENCH AND ITALIAN INTELLECTUALS

At the January 1955 meeting of the Executive Committee of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, Irving Brown sounded cautiously optimistic in assessing the prospects for the organization. The European representative of the American Federation of Labor could take comfort from recent geopolitical developments, as well as from the progress of the organization itself. The death of Stalin, in March 1953, had reduced the international tensions from their peak in the early years of the Cold War, and the contours of a tentative thaw were taking shape. The CCF, for its part, had gained greater legitimacy among Western intellectuals, and was preparing a massive event such as the Milan Congress. Brown made an exception, however, for two countries that continued to be particularly concerning: “I think that aside from France and Italy there are very few real serious problems: there are many serious problems, of course, there are very few life-and-death questions, so to speak, in Western Europe and in the United States.”¹ This and the following chapters will examine the political and intellectual conditions in the two countries, and the reasons why Americans continued to be so concerned about them well into the mid-1950s.

From its foundation in June 1950, the creators of the Congress for Cultural Freedom conceived it as an international organization not exclusively identified with any nation or region. Its central principles, anti-Communism and defense of free culture, allowed it to transition smoothly from an almost exclusive concern with Western Europe

¹ Minutes of the CCF Executive Committee, 24-25 January 1955, 164, b. 1, f. 6, ACCF Records.

in the early 1950s to a broader range of initiatives and national branches. By the following decade, in fact, CCF activities encompassed all continents, and were much more focused on the developing world. Nonetheless, two countries emerged from the beginning as especially delicate not only for their own political and intellectual significance, but for the larger implications on the work of the Congress. France and Italy were central to the work of the organization for the better part of the 1950s, and continued to play a significant role even after the hot fronts of the Cold War had moved away.

In the first years of the conflict, their centrality was warranted by the fear that Communism could come to power, democratically or by force, in the heart of Western Europe. Even when such an outcome appeared less and less likely, Italian and French Communists continued to have by far the largest mass following in the Western bloc. A large part of the two countries' public opinion and intellectual classes expressed sympathy, if not open support, for Communist and neutralist positions. Analysts in Washington as well as intellectuals in New York worried that a failure to oppose those feelings, and the Communist propaganda that spurred them, could ultimately undermine the support for democratic parties and institutions, and pave the way for a Communist takeover in the midst of Western Europe. Cultural warfare thus touched directly on the geopolitical and military concerns of the early Cold War. The Communists' influence on the two countries' political and intellectual life seemed to embody the reason for setting up an organization like the Congress. To wrest their intellectuals away from neutralism and fellow-traveling was a task that required years, money, and credible figures who could lend their prestige to the newly-formed organization. The ideal profile was clear: as

Richard Pells summarized it, they had to be intellectuals “sufficiently left wing that they could not be ignored by their fellow intellectuals, yet they rejected both Communism and neutralism.”²

This chapter and the following ones offer an analysis of the activities that the CCF directly promoted or sponsored to counter Communist propaganda in France and Italy, focusing on three different – albeit related – dimensions. An important part of the Congress initiatives in the two countries was conducted through the national committees, the Amis de la Liberté and the Associazione italiana per la libertà della cultura (AILC). Operating directly or relying on local groups and associations, the two committees were mostly oriented toward the capillary task of mobilizing and informing a large number of citizens about issues touching on the defense of cultural freedom. Their activities included the publication of bulletins and pamphlets, the organization of conferences and debates on international or national issues, and public protests or demonstrations against the Soviet Union or its satellites. This “pedagogic” function, which will be the subject of the next chapter, was only one of the tasks that the CCF and its promoters had in mind for its affiliates in the two countries.

A significant part of the work of the CCF in France and Italy also revolved around its magazines, *Preuves* and *Tempo Presente*. The former, originally intended as a Congress bulletin and later turned into a full-fledged magazine, faced considerable hostility in Paris due to its defense of an Atlanticist foreign policy – its critics dubbed it the “American magazine”³ – and its vigorous anti-Communism. It was also characterized by the strong support for the idea of European integration and the attention to Eastern

² Pells, *Not Like Us*, 69.

³ See Kuisel, *Seducing the French*, 46-47.

European intellectuals, especially after the thaw in Cold War tensions during the mid-1950s. *Tempo Presente*, edited by writer Ignazio Silone and journalist and critic Nicola Chiaromonte, began its publications in April 1956, and it reflected both the changed international landscape and the independence of its editors. The two magazines provided an important instrument for the CCF to reach out to intellectuals who hesitated to join the activities of the national committees, which they saw as too overtly political, but belonged to those leftist or neutralist circles that the Congress aimed to engage. *Preuves* and *Tempo Presente*, which will be the subject of chapters 6 and 7, thus represented one of the main achievements of the CCF and a significant contribution to the two countries' intellectual life.

Finally, the Congress attempted to establish a relationship with prestigious intellectuals, especially those undecided between sympathy for certain aspects of the Communist message and rejection of Soviet policies. This aspect was crucial in order to play a role in the national discourse, and to counter the perceived dominance of Communists and fellow-travelers. It was based on personal contacts rather than on the more structured and day-to-day work of the national committees, but was equally important to increase the prestige and effectiveness of the CCF. Michael Hochgeschwender has highlighted the centrality of these personal networks, often dating back to the interwar period, throughout the history of the Congress. Not only did they help create “a specific atmosphere of genuine personal friendship and mutual help” that made cooperation easier, but they also had a more practical and ideological purpose. The networks “provided the people involved with a firm, substantial ideological basis that

made them independent of the traditionalist Socialist International, while guaranteeing them an efficient international background.”⁴

Depending on the nature of these activities and on the circumstances, thus, the French and Italian members of the CCF could decide to privilege either the national committees or the personal, high-profile engagement with artists and thinkers. In certain cases, the latter could be more effective, relying on the prestige of people like Silone or sociologist and philosopher Raymond Aron. More than American intellectuals or lesser-known figures, their record of anti-fascist militancy and their intellectual stature made it harder for local Communists to dismiss them simply as agents of U.S. imperialism, allowing them to speak more effectively to the leftist and independent milieux. This chapter analyzes more closely this specific aspect, highlighting its successes and the considerable challenges that the Congress faced.

It would be a mistake to present the three sides of CCF activities in one country as entirely separated from each other. In the first place, the people involved were often the same, especially in the case of Italy. Also, the work of persuading and “courting” the most influential opinion makers was helped by the activities of the magazines and those of the committees – publications, meetings – that could attest the intellectual level and credibility of the organization. In other words, it was not always clear where the border between more popular and more high-profile elements of each committee lay. Nonetheless, it makes sense to treat each as a distinctive part of the history of the CCF in Italy and France. This chapter deals with the efforts to establish the credibility of the Congress in the two countries, the specific difficulties that it faced, and the ways in which

⁴ Michael Hochgeschwender, “A Battle of Ideas: The Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF) in Britain, Italy, France, and West Germany,” in *The Postwar Challenge: Cultural, Social, and Political Change in Western Europe, 1945-58*, ed. Dominik Geppert (London: Oxford University Press, 2003), 325.

the national realities colored and influenced the nature of its cultural Cold War. At stake were fundamental questions about the nature and legitimacy of anti-Communism, which appeared very different across the Atlantic, but also within Western Europe.

The chapter also highlights the complicated and at times conflicting relationship between the International Secretariat in Paris – and, indirectly, the Americans who looked at the CCF from the United States – and the local actors they financed. In several instances, the former had to realize that their allies felt no obligation to defer to its advice on strategies and tactics, and that its influence was far from undisputed. Their role as public faces of the CCF at home and worldwide, far from making them puppets to be maneuvered, increased the agency and independence of its members. To be sure, the Congress tolerated and even encouraged a certain “culture of dissent” within its ranks, and in fact considered it an asset. The coexistence of different and unorthodox political positions would prove the superiority of free societies over totalitarian systems. Many CCF members, for their part, would have refused to join or to remain in the organization if they had been required to conform to an official line. Such an agreement in principle, however, had to be continually tested in specific cases. Italian and French intellectuals repeatedly tried to redefine and negotiate the practical boundaries of acceptable disagreements, highlighting their contested nature. In the end, correspondence between the intentions in Washington or Paris and the outcomes on the ground could be far from absolute. Italian and French intellectuals were as active in setting the terms of this relationship as Americans.

In order to understand the delicate interplay of personal and political considerations that the contacts with these intellectuals required, it is necessary to

examine more in detail the political and intellectual landscapes of France and Italy at the time when the Congress tried to establish itself. Some elements were common to the two countries, like the strength of the Communist Parties and their appeal among intellectuals, or the suspicion toward the American superpower. Others depended on each country's political and cultural traditions, and could differ significantly or change over time. The strategies and tactics employed reflected the unique French and Italian contexts of the early 1950s, and sometimes resulted difficult to understand from New York or Washington. As Giles Scott-Smith has effectively summed up, "with the Congress, historical context is everything."⁵

“The Confused and Apathetic People behind the Lines”: The Intellectual Landscape in France and Italy after World War II

A fundamental paradox of the post-World War II international scene was that, despite the high degree of institutional and cultural assimilability between Europe and the United States, European intellectuals were largely diffident about, or even hostile toward, America.⁶ These suspicions lay in part in the fear of a militaristic and imperialistic power that was the sole owner of nuclear capability, an image that Communist propaganda contributed to fostering. Their deeper roots, however, were in the representation of America that had gradually taken hold in Europe, especially among its elites: a consumerist and technologically enslaving society, in which individuals would inevitably lose their identity and disappear into a uniform mass of material wealth and spiritual

⁵ Scott-Smith, *The Politics of Apolitical Culture*, 166.

⁶ Eugenio Capozzi, "L'opposizione all'antiamericanismo: il Congress for Cultural Freedom e l'Associazione italiana per la libertà della cultura," in *L'antiamericanismo in Italia e in Europa nel secondo dopoguerra*, eds. Piero Craveri and Gaetano Quagliariello (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2004), 326-27.

poverty. Acceptance of the “American way of life” seemed to imply the decadence of Western civilization and its intellectual accomplishments. The double challenge for American policymakers and intellectuals was to denounce the totalitarian nature of Communist rule while at the same time dispelling this image of a shallow and unsophisticated society.

European intellectuals, in fact, had had an ambiguous relationship with U.S. culture for decades. In the 1930s and 1940s, opponents of the Fascist regime in Italy admired American literature for its energy, informality, and youthfulness. Like many of their French counterparts, they saw it as a reaction to rigid and elitist bourgeois culture and to fascist authoritarianism. Europeans continued to worry about the technological and social aspects of modernity, but the positive elements prevailed. As writer Italo Calvino noted, this literary America appeared as a picture, however inchoate, of all the things that Fascism tried to deny and suppress.⁷ Before and during the war, as a matter of fact, U.S. literature had become a symbol of resistance.⁸ The emergence of the Cold War, in 1946-47, erased the fascination of many leftist intellectuals for the “enemy.” In their eyes, America’s new status as a superpower also meant a loss of the aura of discovery and rebelliousness: according to Alessandro Brogi, the “greatest American sin for many intellectuals was losing its originality.” The Partito Comunista Italiano (PCI) and the Parti Communiste Français (PCF) promoted a more radical anti-Americanism than that of the Soviet Union, in part because of their relative powerlessness on the world stage, but also because they recognized the need to counter this enduring fascination with an

⁷ Quoted in Alessandro Portelli, “«A Place of Brightness»: la controcultura americana nella geremiade transatlantica,” in Chiarenza and Vance, *Immaginari a confronto*, 113.

⁸ Brogi, *Confronting America*, 42; Pells, *Not Like Us*, 243-52.

imagined America.⁹ In subsequent years, Brogi concluded, their efforts were largely successful:

The debate would be increasingly settled in favor of the two parties, primarily because progressive intellectuals of every political shade gave priority to holding the ground against the attacks on communism. At the peak of the Cold War, even those leftists who, such as [philosopher Jean-Paul] Sartre, declared neutrality, gradually conformed to the most strident and polarizing forms of anti-Americanism.¹⁰

The paradox of this strident anti-Americanism was that European intellectuals continued to find deep connections with America's radical thought, and that they were often disenchanted with America rather than prejudicially opposed to its civilization.¹¹ Opposition to mass culture, on the other hand, was largely popular and reinforced by the image of America as "a civilization of bathtubs and Frigidaires," as Communist poet Louis Aragon put it.¹² On the other hand of the political spectrum, writer André Malraux wrote for de Gaulle's Rassemblement du Peuple Français (RPF) that "America exists only in mass arts—the movies, the detective story—and in the novels of William Faulkner—that is, in folklore, lowlife, and the South."¹³ To many European intellectuals, even those unsympathetic to Communism, the American model thus implied the acceptance of a way of life that threatened the basis of their society and their very role as cultural leaders. Even some Americans were aware that mass culture was potentially a liability and a source of concern: as Dwight Macdonald wrote to Chiaromonte,

If the United States doesn't or cannot change its mass culture (movies, radio, sports cult, comics, television, slick magazines) it will lose the war against the U.S.S.R. Americans have been made into permanent adolescents by advertising, mass culture — uncritical, herd-minded, pleasure-loving, concerned about trivia of materialistic living, scared of death, sex, old age — friendship

⁹ Brogi, *Confronting America*, 6-9, 46-47, 388.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 50.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 51, 388. See also Portelli, "«A Place of Brightness»," 113-14.

¹² Quoted in Kuisel, *Seducing the French*, 38.

¹³ Quoted in Nora, "America and the French Intellectuals," 326.

is sending Xmas cards, sex is the wet dreams of those chromium-plated Hollywood glamour girls, death — is not.¹⁴

Communist propaganda in Western Europe was especially effective when it played on these fears, which had a much larger reach than a merely political anti-Americanism. As Brogi has pointed out, the PCI and the PCF soon linked the cultural and political aspects of Atlanticism – the idea, promoted by Western governments and certain political forces, that America and Western Europe should establish a close cooperation and strengthen their common values and interests. Communists presented resistance to American leadership as a defense of the national identity and cultural heritage: “Turning America into a metaphor for all the worst vices that could beset Western civilization, they conjured an image of a new superpower that was both tough and stupid, a combination of greed, aggressiveness, naiveté, and irresponsibility. American dominion, in their view, posed a twin threat to Europe’s independence and intelligence.”¹⁵ Soviet writer Ilya Ehrenburg had struck precisely this note at the World Congress of Intellectuals in Defense of Peace, a Communist-sponsored event gathered in the Polish city of Wrocław in August 1948. He had attempted to counteract the fascination for American culture and literature that continued to exist among European intellectuals – especially for its individualism and its tradition of rebel figures – by juxtaposing it to the negative stereotypes of mass culture: “By seizing the countries of Western Europe,” Ehrenburg said, “the Yankees bring along not Einstein, Faulkner, Fast, Chaplin, but the standardized thriller novels, the standardized gangster movies, all sorts of opium, that is. They want to

¹⁴ Quoted in Brogi, *Confronting America*, 159.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 383.

narcotize Europe to tie it up and shackle it more easily. It's an attempt against each people's national traits, against their originality, against their diversity."¹⁶

If the equation of resistance to American capitalism and defense of national traditions assured an emotional response in the two countries, Communist propaganda courted intellectuals with additional arguments. Many saw in the Soviet Union a more coherent choice with a perspective of liberty and progress than American capitalism. The image of a consensual consumerist society was especially concerning to those intellectuals in Europe who, according to Sartre, prized their anti-conformism over the success ethic and pressure to fit in dominant in the United States. Even those who were not officially or unambiguously in favor of the Communist system were sensitive to these conceptions, and to the continuing value of Marxism as an interpretative tool of society.¹⁷ Those who subscribed to the notion that the working class was the main agent of change, and that the latter could only come from the Soviet Union, despite all its flaws, were naturally inclined to view the U.S. more as a counterrevolutionary force than as a positive agent. Journalist Guido Piovene encapsulated this mindset in 1962 – but his words would have resonated with many intellectuals a decade earlier. The only thing that mattered, according to Piovene, was the fundamental choice of one's side: “the world goes toward socialism, and America is inevitably condemned to subordinate man's reasons to the defense of profit, the ethic of consumerism, the advertisements, the fake foods, all the symbols of the repugnant civilization of free enterprise.”¹⁸ Anti-Americanism, according

¹⁶ Ibid., 135.

¹⁷ Sartre called Marxism “the impassable horizon of our time,” while French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty wrote that “Marxism is not a philosophy of history, it is *the* philosophy of history and to renounce it is to dig the grave of Reason in history. After that there can only be dreams or adventures.” Quoted in Nora, “America and the French Intellectuals,” 332, and Judt, *Reappraisals*, 137.

¹⁸ Quoted in Enzo Forcella, “Il mito di Kennedy,” *Tempo Presente* IX n. 5 (May 1964), 13. My translation.

to Brogi, helped the two parties discipline intellectuals by encouraging them to take sides. Moreover, it made many on the left feel that their own mission as cultural molders, and not only their country's cultural and political independence, was at stake.¹⁹

Soviet propaganda and cultural policy were based on the recognition of two realities. On the one hand, a change in the geopolitical balance in Western Europe would be unlikely in the short term, especially with the consolidation of the Marshall Plan and NATO. In both France and Italy, the pace of the Cold War accelerated rapidly in the spring of 1947, following the developments on the international scene. In February, President Truman had enunciated the Truman Doctrine, laying the premises for worldwide containment of the Soviet Union. The U.S. administration had at the same time encouraged Italy and France to abandon the national unity governments that, since the end of World War II, had included all the forces that had participated in the Resistance movements. In May, within a few weeks of each other, the PCF and the PCI were expelled from the Ramadier and De Gasperi governments. A multi-faceted strategy with overt and covert support from Washington – which included the creation of non-Communist unions and government propaganda against Communists – reinforced a stark polarization in the following months.²⁰ In devising an effective strategy for psychological warfare in France and Italy, American authorities considered the two Communist Parties different but equally threatening. The PCF – which French politician Léon Blum had dubbed a “foreign nationalist party”²¹ – was more relevant internationally and could rely on a more widespread anti-Americanism, while the PCI presented a higher risk of internal

¹⁹ Brogi, *Confronting America*, 186, 160; Capozzi, “L’opposizione all’antiamericanismo,” 326-27.

²⁰ On the U.S. government’s activities in Italy see Mistry, *The United States, Italy and the Origins of Cold War*.

²¹ Furet, *The Passing of an Illusion*, 415.

subversion.²² A significant difference was also in the attitude of the main socialist parties: the Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière (SFIO) broke with the PCF, while the Partito Socialista Italiano (PSI) joined the PCI in a Popular Front opposed to the centrist Christian Democracy. Both the French elections of October 1947 and, more dramatically, the Italian elections of April 1948, however, recorded a decisive affirmation of the anti-Communist front.

The outcome in Italy was especially significant since, in the eyes of American observers, it had assumed a relevance well beyond the country itself. Journalist Walter Lippman, one of the most influential voices in Washington, put the issue in very simple terms to his readers on the eve of the election: "The question is," he wrote, "whether the Communists can rule any European nation without the support of the Red Army." Italy would be the "proving ground" to test Communism's ability to penetrate even nations that had a solid democratic tradition, spelling doom for its containment.²³ As historian Wendy Wall has put it, for U.S. government leaders the 1948 election was "an apocalyptic test of strength between communism and democracy – a test that might well determine the fate of democracy on the Continent."²⁴ When the results showed a triumph for the U.S.-backed Christian Democracy (DC), therefore, American officials saw it as a vindication of their strategy, and a blueprint for successfully containing Communism elsewhere – a "perception of success," as Kaeten Mistry defined it, which would lead them to overestimate their effectiveness, with lasting consequences on U.S. foreign

²² Brogi, *Confronting America*, 142.

²³ Walter Lippmann, "Can Communism Win Without Red Army?," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 6 April 1948, 6.

²⁴ Wendy L. Wall, "America's 'Best Propagandists': Italian Americans and the 1948 'Letters to Italy' Campaign," in *Cold War Constructions: The Political Culture of United States Imperialism, 1945-1966*, ed. Christian G. Appy (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000), 89.

policy.²⁵ For the moment, though, the prospect of Communists coming to power through the polls in either country, while not entirely warded off, seemed to recede by the end of the 1940s.

At the same time, however, a large segment of the public opinion in France and Italy continued to have an at best ambivalent view of the dominant power in the Western hemisphere. Communist initiatives pointed, rather than to the establishment of a Communist regime, to the weakening of the ties with the United States, and the growth of a “grey area” of neutralist feelings. It is in the context of this strategy that the PCF and the PCI joined enthusiastically in the Communist peace campaign of the late 1940s, centered on the basic opposition between an imperialist and warmongering Western bloc, and a peace-loving Communist world. By appropriating the issue and rearticulating the debate on Americanization around peace and cultural resistance, Brogi notes, Italian and French Communists were able to break their political isolation, and move beyond a purely economic discourse of opposition to capitalism that was losing traction in the wake of Europe’s rapid reconstruction.²⁶

In order to accomplish these results, the two Communist Parties had to rely not only on militants and party members, but even more crucially on neutralist or undecided intellectuals. As David Caute has argued, the characteristic of the fellow-travelers was “commitment at a distance”: they supported the dreams of positivistic experimentation and moral regeneration that the Soviet Union embodied, but their disillusionment with Western society was not total and uncompromising. At times, such a position translated into a sort of moral double standard that justified undemocratic methods, but only outside

²⁵ Mistry, *The United States, Italy and the Origins of Cold War*, 127-52, 200-08.

²⁶ Brogi, *Confronting America*, 123. On the Partisans for Peace in Italy see also Sondra Cerrai, *I partigiani della pace in Italia. Tra utopia e sogno egemonico* (Padua: libreriauniversitaria.it, 2011).

the industrialized West – as former U.S. vice president and presidential candidate Henry Wallace put it, “I wouldn’t want communism over here, but it makes more sense in Russia.”²⁷ At bottom, fellow-travelers did not subscribe to the central tenet of the anti-Communism of many CCF members, that Communism was incompatible with freedom and democracy. For many of them, Communism maintained the powerful appeal and promise of, as Stephen Spender put it, “something right which had gone wrong.”²⁸ Despite these inconsistencies, fellow-travelers could significantly influence their country’s cultural scene through political journalism, membership of Communist front organization, or simply by lending their prestige to Communist causes and contributing to the de-legitimization of their opponents.²⁹ In France and Italy, therefore, the most important confrontation was not so much the direct one between Communists and anti-Communists, however heated. The fate of the battle for the hearts and minds of Europe rested instead on the indirect competition for what the *New Leader* defined in those years as the “Commibut” – the “vast penumbra” of those individuals and organizations sympathetic to the Communist line without officially joining it (“I’m not a Communist, but...”).³⁰ The members of the CCF that carried out its activities in France and Italy were constantly concerned about the kind of personal relationships and direct dialogue that their national organizations – more bureaucratic in nature and aimed at a different audience – were not ideally suited to perform.

“Find Out Who This Sartre Is”: The Polarization of French Intellectuals

²⁷ David Caute, *The Fellow-Travellers: Intellectual Friends of Communism*, second edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 4-5, 285-88.

²⁸ Wilford, *The New York Intellectuals*, 223.

²⁹ Caute, *The Fellow-Travellers*, 8.

³⁰ See Wilford, “Playing the CIA’s Tune?,” 25.

The centrality of the French intellectual scene for the work of the Congress for Cultural Freedom made it a primary concern of the Secretariat and the Executive Committee. If the French capital epitomized the battlefield for the original mission of the Congress to counter Communist propaganda and neutralism, the war had to be conducted from the Paris office itself. Historians have offered different explanations about the predominance of left-wing and radical positions in France from the end of World War II until the 1970s. Sunil Khilnani has argued that intellectuals used the language of the Jacobin revolutionary tradition because it was *the* tradition of the Left, and were attracted to the PCF because the Party had appropriated it for its political project. The inability to conceive of an alternative could explain the continuing fascination with this strand of thought, given the “absence of a well-founded tradition of rights discourse.”³¹ Tony Judt has moved from similar premises to explain the singularity of French intellectual discourse: the lack of a liberal political tradition prevented French intellectuals from grounding their theories on Kantian ethics. Such an inclination went well beyond the ranks of Communist and Marxist sympathizers, and even included some of the most prestigious figure associated with the CCF itself. According to Judt, the origins of the dominant climate of the 1950s were in the distaste for the liberalism of the interwar period, and so widely shared

that independent thinkers like [Aron] and Silone were sometimes reluctant to think of themselves as “liberals,” with all that implied of empiricism, philosophical naiveté, positivist optimism, and political failure. As early as 1947 Silone was to speak of his regret at having been too willing to place on the shelf certain principles of liberty and human dignity, conceding terrain to the claims of history and realism, a confession later echoed by a small army of conscience-ridden intellectuals [Camus, Morin, Merleau-Ponty, Emmanuel]. But at the time,

³¹ Sunil Khilnani, *Arguing Revolution: The Intellectual Left in Postwar France* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

even for individuals whose whole public identity would later be shaped by a commitment to the most liberal of moral stances, liberalism was at best a troublesome friend.³²

The move away from Communism, thus, begun in the second half of the 1950s, only resulted in the embrace of third-world revolutionary movements. Michael Scott Christofferson has criticized this approach for reducing post-Liberation France to the history of the absence of liberalism, downplaying the “extra-liberal evolution” of French intellectual politics after 1956.³³ What they agree on, however, is the description of postwar Paris as especially receptive to the message of the PCF.

World War II and the Liberation marked a profound transformation on the French political and intellectual scene, a realignment whose effects would be visible for decades. At the international level, the conflict had questioned the country’s status as a major power, given the humiliating defeat by the German army and the emergence of new superpowers in the West and in the East. A major power and vast colonial empire in 1939, in the aftermath of the conflict France suddenly found itself to be nothing but “a small hexagonal country.” While it initially managed to reclaim control over part of its colonial possessions, the rapid onset of decolonization only compounded the shock. French culture reacted with a “compensatory self-defense reflex,” according to Pierre Nora, which aimed at reconquering on the cultural level the leadership that it had lost on the political one.³⁴ Richard Pells has described this “Athenian complex,” as journalist André Visson dubbed it, as the tendency – especially noticeable in France – to identify one’s country with the ideals of Western civilization:

In the eyes of many Europeans, the loss of autonomy did not have to result in a surrender of cultural sovereignty, or mean that Europe needed to abandon its special cultural mission. On the

³² Judt, *Past Imperfect*, 245.

³³ Christofferson, *French Intellectuals Against the Left*, 2-3.

³⁴ Nora, “America and the French Intellectuals,” 325.

contrary, the Europeans, like the ancient Greeks, believed they could compensate for their diminished political clout by recalling their long history of artistic and literary supremacy, and by proclaiming themselves still to be the guardians of high culture. [...] For all its money, machines, and atomic bombs, the argument ran, the United States did not possess the cultural heritage and sophistication that was uniquely and eternally European. Thus, while the Europeans could not elude America's raw power, they could resist its vulgarity and thereby uphold the French, British, Dutch, Norwegian, or Italian way of life.³⁵

Other elements further increased the appeal of the Soviet Union and Communism *vis-à-vis* the United States. As historian François Furet – himself a member of the PCF until 1956 – has argued, French intellectuals were attracted to Communism by the possibility to obscure the national decline through the “right of collective ownership of the revolutionary reference.”³⁶ America, on the other hand, paradoxically suffered from its role in World War II and its conspicuous presence in war-ravaged Europe, which provided French intellectuals with a constant reminder of their humiliation. According to Nora, the trauma of the Liberation was settled “by a major excommunication of the liberators”: “The United States,” he concluded, “was not a country, but a sin.”³⁷

French intellectual life was also significantly marked by the purges that followed the Liberation, mainly directed at those who had collaborated with or supported the Vichy Republic. Intellectuals were especially singled out for their responsibilities, and because an unambiguous record of their collaboration existed in their wartime writings. What made the purge of intellectuals contentious, however, was that the decision about a person’s guilt was left to their peers, and often distinguished poorly between active collaborators and those who had failed to make a clear break with the Vichy regime. The most high-profile case was that of writer Robert Brasillach, an avowed collaborator and

³⁵ Pells, *Not Like Us*, 160-61.

³⁶ Furet, *The Passing of an Illusion*, 420.

³⁷ Nora, “America and the French Intellectuals,” 326.

outspoken anti-Semite, but also a widely recognized first-class mind. After he was sentenced to death for “intelligence with the enemy,” a petition signed by many intellectuals was circulated to demand clemency, but to no avail. Brasillach was the last to be executed for what some considered a crime of opinion, but other writers would be condemned to prison or ostracized by the intellectual community and the publishing industry. More broadly, the legacy of the Vichy regime continued to discredit right-wing intellectuals for more than a decade, removing a significant counterweight to Communism’s popularity in postwar France.³⁸

All these factors contributed to the centrality of Communism on the French intellectual scene in the late 1940s and early 1950s that historians have described. According to Ory and Sirinelli, Communism was “at the heart of the intellectual society,” having achieved ideological legitimacy and intellectual hegemony: the whole clerical class defined itself in relation to it, even those who belonged to the opposite camp.³⁹ Judt has argued that a whole generation of French intellectuals and writers was “swept into the vortex of Communism”:

The issue of communism—its practice, its meaning, its claims upon the future—dominated political and philosophical conversation in postwar France. The terms of the public discussion were shaped by the position one adopted on the behavior of foreign and domestic Communists, and most of the problems of contemporary France were analyzed in terms of a political or ethical position taken with half an eye towards that of the Communists and their ideology.⁴⁰

According to Richard Kuisel, in 1964 F.B.I. director J. Edgar Hoover was informed that French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre, one of the most influential European intellectuals of the twentieth century, had joined an anti-American organization. The

³⁸ On the Brasillach trial and the postwar purges see Judt, *Past Imperfect*, 57-67; Ory and Sirinelli, *Les intellectuels en France*, 143-46, 190.

³⁹ Ory and Sirinelli, *Les intellectuels en France*, 153-54.

⁴⁰ Judt, *Past Imperfect*, 1.

information made little impression on Hoover, who allegedly scribbled on a memorandum “Find out who this Sartre is.”⁴¹ Whether the episode actually happened or not, it is a useful reminder that many Americans, even those in positions of power, did not pay particular attention to the intricacies of the Parisian intellectual scene. For one thing, it was often hard to follow the developments of these highly litigious and volatile individuals. As Kuisel quipped, “the closed preserve of St-Germain-des-Prés [the neighborhood of the intellectuals] was so subtly, yet sharply, fragmented into circles, hierarchies, rivalries, and influences that a comprehensive and accurate map may elude even the most experienced native cartographer.”⁴² Many Americans, however, were also skeptical about the relevance of these sometimes esoteric debates. At a hearing of the House Un-American Activities Committee in March 1947, Director of Motion Pictures Association Eric Johnston had urged the U.S. government to concentrate on the material causes of poverty that created a fertile ground for Communism. “Revolutions plotted by frustrated intellectuals at cocktail parties,” he explained, “won’t get anywhere if we wipe out the potential causes of Communism.”⁴³

To those with a better knowledge of postwar Europe, however, Sartre’s name would not have been unfamiliar at all. In fact, it is hard to overstate the concern that Americans expressed over the situation in France, and especially Paris, at the beginning of the Cold War. U.S. policymakers believed, as Johnston had suggested, that the poverty and devastation that plagued much of Western Europe after World War II could be a much better ally of the Soviet Union than the formulations of academics and writers. Although they initially concentrated on economic and military assistance to Europe

⁴¹ Kuisel, *Seducing the French*, 29.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 105.

⁴³ Quoted in Brogi, *Confronting America*, 28.

through the Marshall Plan and NATO, however, Americans could not afford to ignore the impact that the intellectual scene in Paris – which Silone would characterize as the world’s “spiritual superpower” long after it had lost its political centrality – had on a global network of influential artists and thinkers. Diplomats and intellectuals were highly skeptical about the possibility to intervene effectively in the “atmosphere of intellectual arrogance” of the French capital, and especially to work with the “fuzzy and unrealistic” neutralist intellectuals.⁴⁴ In fact, they found the refusal by the Western European intelligentsia to distinguish between the two superpowers particularly mystifying, and hard to understand at a time when the Soviet myth had died in America. As assistant secretary of State for public affairs Edward Barrett complained, “the Europeans focused on America’s materialism and its lack of high culture, its “movie queens” and “gangsters” rather than its “universities, libraries, museums, and symphony orchestras.”⁴⁵ The relevance of intellectuals in European public life made this a pressing problem for U.S. cultural diplomacy. The prominence and legitimacy that the two Communist Parties acquired in the years after World War II was, paradoxically, more threatening to the U.S. than their strong opposition to Atlanticist policies later on. “In the final analysis,” Brogi has observed, “from the American point of view, it did not matter how many intellectuals actually joined the PCF or the PCI; the problem was the emergence of a cultural milieu dominated by the Marxist or pro-Marxist Left.”⁴⁶

⁴⁴ U.S. Embassy counselor Robert P. Joyce, as quoted in *Ibid.*, 179. To be sure, the problem was not exclusive to France: U.S. Ambassador to Rome Clare Booth Luce complained in those years that Italian intellectuals were “spiritually and politically [...] the descendants of the Jacobins and the 19th-Century Socialists,” staple of progressive or Marxist thought.

⁴⁵ Pells, *Not Like Us*, 68; Brogi, *Confronting America*, 28.

⁴⁶ Brogi, *Confronting America*, 30, 13.

In fact, Christofferson has estimated that, even at the peak of its popularity, a majority of French intellectuals never joined the Communist Party. Rather, they saw it as a difficult but indispensable ally in the goal of transforming French society. The PCF's most effective influence was in the creation of a pro-Marxist climate that drew on its wartime credentials, and on the widely shared aspirations of many intellectuals to radical social transformations that the party tried to channel for its purposes. In post-Liberation Paris, the expectation of justice and a desire for change were a consequence of the suffering of the war, and common to the population and the intelligentsia. There was a widespread belief that those goals could not be accomplished without the PCF. This imperative contributed to a "Manichean climate," in which the refusal to take sides came to be perceived as a choice in itself, in favor of the status quo.⁴⁷

The Parti Communiste Français was especially suited to exploit this situation. It could rely, first of all, on its role in the Resistance and on its emotional appeal as the "party of 75,000 Resistance martyrs (*fusillés*)." It also benefited from its virtuous appearance, in contrast with the discredited and corrupted Third Republic that had collapsed under the German invasion. More prosaically, its centrality in French postwar politics made it a force to be reckoned with on the Left. According to Christofferson, "with about one-quarter of the vote, control over the labor movement, and an important media presence after the Liberation purge [of people compromised with the Vichy regime] and reorganization of the press, the PCF was an enormous force in French politics. Programs of progressive reform or revolutionary change could not be

⁴⁷ Christofferson, *French Intellectuals Against the Left*, 27-30. Pascal Ory and Jean-François Sirinelli make a similar point, claiming that the notion that a majority of the French intelligentsia joined or was sympathetic to the PCF after World War II was a myth that was circulated later. See Ory and Sirinelli, *Les intellectuels en France*, 150-52.

accomplished without its cooperation.”⁴⁸ In a letter to Chiaromonte, Sartre himself stressed the fact that the existence of a “governmental” Stalinist party posed new and different problems: “Do not forget, dear Chiaromonte, that the French point of view is very different from the American one.”⁴⁹ Finally, Communists benefited from their association with the Soviet Union, which after World War II continued to enjoy a positive reputation among many Frenchmen for its role in the defeat of Nazi Germany.

These political and structural conditions allowed the PCF to exert a strong attraction toward intellectuals, even those who were ambivalent about the USSR or the party, and to present itself as the “*parti de l’intelligence*.”⁵⁰ A prominent role was played by the progressive intellectuals who, while stopping short of formally joining the party, generally sympathized with its initiatives and showed deep suspicion for the U.S. and the Atlantic alliance. Philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre was the most widely known and influential of these fellow-travelers, and one of the favorite targets for the intellectuals associated with the CCF. At the peak of the Cold War tensions, in the early 1950s, he declared that “an anti-Communist is a rat,” and publicly “swore to the bourgeoisie a hatred that would only die with me.”⁵¹ Brogi argues that he had become the “model fellow-traveler,” contributing to credit the image of the USSR as a peaceful and egalitarian society. In addition to defending the Soviet economic and social system and its foreign policy, in 1954 he visited the Soviet Union and was appointed vice president of the France-U.S.S.R. association. Sartre was also the leader of the existentialist movement, which throughout the postwar period remained benevolent toward

⁴⁸ Christofferson, *French Intellectuals Against the Left*, 29.

⁴⁹ Jean-Paul Sartre to Nicola Chiaromonte, 19 April 1946, b. 3, f. 74, Chiaromonte Papers.

⁵⁰ See Kuisel, *Seducing the French*, 40-41.

⁵¹ Quoted in David Drake, *Sartre* (London: Haus, 2005), 84-85.

Communism and the Soviet Union. His moral weight, according to Michael Hochgeschwender, had given existentialism a central position in French intellectual life and considerable influence abroad – which the CCF “long tried at least to minimize [...], yet with very limited success.”⁵² Finally, for many intellectuals hostility to the Western bloc and a more or less open support for the Soviet Union was the consequence of deeper cultural factors, as already noted. The model of American mass society, privileging wealth over anything else, spurred fears of a similar trend in Europe, with a consequent decline of its intellectual tradition.

The choice was more difficult for those who harbored strong reservations about Communism *per se*, but were immersed in an environment that tended to pose the question of political and intellectual allegiances in stark terms. Tony Judt has thus summarized the dilemma that this “Manichean mood” posed for the French progressive milieu: “For the *bien pensant* left-wing intelligentsia, anyone who wasn’t sympathetic to the French Communists and the Soviet Union, who was unwilling to give them the benefit of every doubt, to ascribe to them every good intention, must be a conscious agent of the United States, an active advocate of confrontation and even war.”⁵³ As Nora put it, the identification of progress with the Communist Party and the Soviet Union left to all *gauche* intellectuals “no other role but that of valet, traitor, or aggressor. As for America, it had no place at all.”⁵⁴

Novelist and journalist Albert Camus offered a clear example of this conundrum in the late 1940s and early 1950s, when he was one of the most influential voices in

⁵² Hochgeschwender, “A Battle of Ideas,” 333; Brogi, *Confronting America*, 134-35; Judt, *Past Imperfect*, 87, 169, 264.

⁵³ Tony Judt, *The Burden of Responsibility: Blum, Camus, Aron, and the French Twentieth Century* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 157.

⁵⁴ Nora, “America and the French Intellectuals,” 332.

France following his role in the Resistance. According to Judt, Camus was hesitant about denouncing the Soviet Union for years, and was careful to balance his critical remarks about the Eastern bloc with the condemnation of American racism, French colonialism, and Western-backed regimes like Franco's Spain. This was in part due to his own ambivalent feelings about Western freedom, which for Camus was never unproblematic. It also had to do, however, with the milieu in which French intellectuals moved, and with the cultural and intellectual climate of the 1950s: to break definitively with Communism and the tenets of Marxism might threaten his own public legitimacy as a radical intellectual, given the close identification between the PCF and radical politics. Such a choice, concludes Judt, was especially difficult for those who retained "a certain nostalgia for the sympathetic embrace of the Left."⁵⁵ Camus's own involvement with the short-lived *Rassemblement Démocratique Révolutionnaire* (RDR)⁵⁶ seemed to confirm to him and others that there was little alternative to the increasing polarization of the domestic and international scene.

Italy and the Competing Principles of Legitimacy

The *Associazione italiana per la libertà della cultura* faced a similar task and addressed itself to a similar audience: not so much Communist Party members, but intellectuals who, while not decisively in either camp, gravitated toward the Communist one – those whom AILC members called "useful idiots" for their alleged inability to realize that, by signing petitions and manifestos, they were being used by Communists

⁵⁵ Judt, *The Burden of Responsibility*, 115.

⁵⁶ The RDR, active in 1948 and 1949, was an attempt to create a viable force on the left independent from the U.S.S.R., which also included among others Sartre and David Rousset, writer and critic of the Soviet concentration camps and later CCF member. See also chapter 1.

for their own purposes. As in France, the remarkable prestige that the PCI enjoyed among the population and the intellectual classes alike made the task more arduous. Its difficulties were compounded by the political realities in Italy, where democrats and liberals constituted a minority of the anti-Communist front, dominated by the Catholic Democrazia Cristiana. The alliance between Socialists and Communists also made it unrealistic for the Congress and the AILC, as Capozzi has argued, a strategy of all-out opposition to fellow-traveling intellectuals.⁵⁷

At the political level, the Italian Communist Party reaped the fruits of its participation in the Resistance movement during World War II, which gave it legitimacy as a popular and national force. As Mario Del Pero has noted, “the Cold War entailed a clash between two different principles of legitimacy that defined inclusion and exclusion within the international alliance of which Italy was a member and in the Italian political system itself.” The Italian political system was founded on the constitutional compromise of 1948, when the major parties that had opposed the Fascist regime and fought in the Resistance approved a new republican constitution. Rather than the Cold War “antinomic pair” of Communism and anti-Communism, Italian politicians and intellectuals – including the Christian Democrats, staunch U.S. allies – privileged the one of Fascist and anti-Fascist. From this fundamental dissonance came the greater degree of tolerance toward the Communist Party, a legitimate enemy to defeat rather than an irreconcilable one to eliminate. Americans did not always fully grasp this difference, and sent to Rome veiled accusations of not being “sufficiently Atlantic.”⁵⁸ As Brogi noted, such

⁵⁷ Capozzi, “L’opposizione all’antiamericanismo,” 341-42.

⁵⁸ Mario Del Pero, “The United States and “Psychological Warfare” in Italy, 1948-1955,” *The Journal of American History* 87 n. 4 (March 2001): 1333. See also Mario Del Pero, *L’alleato scomodo. Gli USA e la DC negli anni del centrismo (1948-1955)* (Rome: Carocci, 2001).

disagreements pointed to a “Manichean perspective” that prevailed in Washington regarding Western Europe, “the determination to *eradicate* rather than *cope with* communism.”⁵⁹

Italian Communists also pursued a distinctive line at the cultural and intellectual level, which aimed at giving the Party a national identity and a more reassuring aura to neutral observers. PCI Secretary Palmiro Togliatti tried to link the Party to a national tradition that began with eighteenth-century philosopher Giambattista Vico and reached the liberalism of Benedetto Croce, to find its culmination in Communist theoretician and martyr Antonio Gramsci. Not coincidentally, the multi-volume anthology of Gramsci’s works, edited by Togliatti himself, would be released during the peak of the Communists’ nationalist propaganda in the late 1940s and early 1950s.⁶⁰ The attempt to transcend and absorb Croce’s idealistic school was also functional to the larger strategy of creating a dichotomy between Communists, the true heirs of an Italian tradition, and reactionary anti-Communism. The PCI wanted to appeal to undecided intellectuals by convincing them that a reformist and innovative policy was impossible outside the party itself, the only credible opposition to American imperialism abroad and clerical and reactionary right-wingers at home.⁶¹ The centrality of this self-representation explains why Togliatti was especially critical of Silone’s AILC, and other attempts to create a third-force camp. By denouncing Communism without entirely subscribing to the line of the United States or the Catholic Church, according to Massimo Teodori, these groups belied the

⁵⁹ Brogi, *Confronting America*, 86.

⁶⁰ On the PCI’s use of Gramsci, both as a symbol and a thinker, see Stephen Gundle, “The Legacy of the Prison Notebooks: Gramsci, the PCI and Italian Culture in the Cold War Period,” in *Italy in the Cold War: Politics, Culture and Society 1948-58*, eds. Christopher Duggan and Christopher Wagstaff (Oxford and Washington, DC: Berg, 1995), 131-47; Albertina Vittoria, *Togliatti e gli intellettuali. Storia dell’Istituto Gramsci negli anni cinquanta e sessanta* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1992); Albertina Vittoria, *Togliatti e gli intellettuali. La politica culturale dei comunisti italiani (1944-1964)* (Rome: Carocci, 2014).

⁶¹ Teodori, *Storia dei laici*, 95-97.

Communist axioms that anti-Fascists could not also be anti-Communists, and that anti-Communism could not but come from the right.⁶²

Ultimately, the relationship between the Communist Party and many intellectuals in postwar Italy became close and mutually beneficial. The former proved to be especially effective in the mobilization and coordination of different cultural environments – university, cinema, and the scientific and artistic worlds – into formally independent frontist organizations attracting independent thinkers. The success of the Peace Campaign in 1950 provided the best example of Communists’ ability to reach well beyond the ranks of militants and sympathizers with allegedly non-political initiatives. A petition against the use of the atomic bomb, launched in March 1950, collected 17 million signatures in Italy, more than double the votes for the alliance between Socialists and Communists in the watershed elections of April 1948. Commenting on the Partisans for Peace movement and the Communists’ success in this kind of propaganda activities, Raymond Aron noted that the PCI had managed to maintain a “reassuring semi-bourgeois mask” that, unlike other Communist Parties in Western Europe, made it more successful in its efforts to discredit U.S. foreign policy and question the Atlantic alliance.⁶³

The PCI thus found in the intellectual class precious allies and consensus builders, who helped legitimize its culturally nationalistic claims and construct a negative image of the enemy. On the other hand, intellectuals gained from an association with the PCI, and from the notion of their public role in support of progress, a sense of prestige and self-importance in contributing to a larger and noble cause. More prosaically, as Brogi notes,

⁶² Ibid., 145.

⁶³ Ibid., 113-18. On the political use of pacifism by the PCI, see also Andrea Guiso, *La colomba e la spada. “Lotta per la pace” e antiamericanismo nella politica del Partito comunista italiano (1949-1954)* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubettino, 2006). The Stockholm Appeal was equally popular in France, collecting 15 million signatures.

they could exploit the “informal networks for professional advancement” that the Italian – and French – Communist Party could provide.⁶⁴ Decades later, writer Italo Calvino tried to sum up the ambivalent relationship that many Communists, and intellectuals in particular, had with the party:

We Italian Communists were schizophrenic. Yes, I really believe that is the exact term. Part of us wanted to be witnesses of the truth, avengers of the wrongs suffered by the weak and oppressed, defenders of justice against any oppression. Another part of us justified the wrongdoings, the oppression, the tyranny of the Party, Stalin, for the sake of the Cause. Schizophrenic. Dissociated. I remember very well that when I happened to travel to some socialist country, I would feel profoundly uneasy, an outsider, hostile. But when the train took me back to Italy, when I crossed the border, I would wonder: but here, in Italy, in this Italy, what else could I be but a Communist?⁶⁵

Adding to the complexity of the work of the Congress for Cultural Freedom in Italy, and related to the efforts by the PCI to enlist the support of intellectuals as opinion-makers, was a hostility toward the United States more widespread than elsewhere. Although open anti-Americanism was mostly from the left of the political spectrum, no sizable political force expressed unambiguous support for U.S. policies and, at a deeper level, its way of life. The Christian Democrats and their patron, the Catholic Church, had long expressed reservations about the materialistic and hedonistic model that American capitalism seemed to embody. The logic of the Cold War soon brought the two sides to find common ground in their opposition to Communist expansion, as the overwhelming concern of Pope Pius XII was the fear of the “Cossack horses drinking at St. Peter’s fountain.” The cultural and philosophical suspicion remained, however, and contributed to the colder attitude of many Italians toward the allied superpower. At the same time, it

⁶⁴ Brogi, *Confronting America*, 31-33; Teodori, *Storia dei laici*, 95-97.

⁶⁵ Italo Calvino, “Quel giorno i carri uccisero le nostre speranze” (“On that day the tanks killed our hopes”), interview with Eugenio Scalfari, *la Repubblica*, 13 December, 1980. My translation.

should be noted that Italians harbored at least mixed feeling about the United States: two separate surveys in 1953 recorded that two-thirds of Italians believed that Americans wanted to dominate the world, but 60 percent of them still ranked America as their favorite foreign nation.⁶⁶ Such contradictions demonstrated both the penetration of the Communist message helped by party members and fellow-traveling intellectuals, and the lingering fascination for the “other” America that maintained its hold on many Europeans.

The Paris Festival of 1952: The CCF’s Arrival on the French Scene

When the Congress began its activities in France, in late 1950, it had to confront this complicated political and intellectual environment. Not only the PCF enjoyed a considerable prestige among the intelligentsia, but even those who did not openly support it opted for some form of equidistance from the two blocs and neutralism – though, as Judt put it, “in intellectual Paris, in 1950, to be “neutral” was to be quite distinctly on one side and not the other.”⁶⁷ In addition to the work of the Amis de la Liberté and *Preuves*, everyone also agreed that a crucial step for the success of the CCF was to establish itself as a legitimate actor on the French intellectual scene. The Congress was thus interested from the beginning in engaging the most famous thinkers and artists, either to take issue with them or to draw them into seminars, publications, etc. The high-profile activities were also the ones that non-French members of the Executive Committee and the Secretariat could better grasp, intervene on and follow. Often the preferred path was the personal one, relying on the prestige of some of the members to establish relations and

⁶⁶ Quoted in Brogi, *Confronting America*, 145.

⁶⁷ Judt, *The Burden of Responsibility*, 115.

generate interest in the Congress. The presence of people like Aron or Silone did much to counter the doubts about the rumors of U.S. financing and the one-sided definition of “cultural freedom,” i.e. an almost exclusive criticism of the Soviet bloc. On the one hand this helped the CCF penetrate into French (and Italian) circles with more credibility than if Americans had been the only promoters. On the other hand, it meant that the organization could not ignore the intricacies of this sort of personal diplomacy, but was influenced by dynamics that went beyond its control.

One of the earliest decisions that the Secretariat and the Executive Committee had to make was on how the Congress would operate publicly. An important step in that direction was the “Masterpieces of the Twentieth Century” Festival, held in Paris in May 1952.⁶⁸ Scott-Smith in particular has detailed the significance of the event, and how the process that led to it had as much to do with the logic of the CCF’s covert sponsorship by the CIA as with the opinion of its members. The question was debated in Washington and New York among the covert sponsors of the organization, who were interested in the CCF as an effective tool to further a closer cooperation between American and Europe. The turn from more directly political activities to the celebration of a common Western culture was closely linked to the choice of Nicolas Nabokov – a composer who was neither an American (by birth) nor an ex-Communist – and to the influence of his supporters in the U.S. foreign policy establishment. Not everyone in Washington and in Paris, however, agreed on the importance of emphasizing the common heritage of Western civilization, and at the same time legitimating American culture as an equal partner within that tradition. Michael Josselson and Melvin J. Lasky, two of the agency

⁶⁸ For a detailed account of the Paris Festival see among others Grémion, *Intelligence de l’anticommunisme*, 68-82; and Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*, 113-28.

operatives who had helped set up the Congress for Cultural Freedom and continued to be involved in it, expressed doubts about the Festival, while greater support came from the CIA's Allen Dulles and Thomas Braden. The plan was allegedly approved in Washington in April 1951, a month before Nabokov's arrival in Paris to begin his tenure as CCF Secretary General.⁶⁹ If disagreements among American sponsors complicated the considerations behind the scenes, the official rationale and the primary audience of the Festival were clearer. In a speech at the Anglo-American Press Club in February 1952, Nabokov painted a pessimistic picture of Western intellectuals who had "lost faith in the West in terms of its creative force": "Particularly in France and Italy there are many who proclaim bitterly that our culture is dead, that Western civilization is sterile and that our culture lacks meaning in today's world." Those intellectuals, according to Nabokov, had concluded that the United States was the most belligerent and least cultured of the two imperialistic powers facing off, and had therefore chosen the other.⁷⁰

The decision about the nature of the event also depended directly, however, on the French context in which it was located. Thus, intellectuals who had joined the organization after the founding Congress in Berlin, in June 1950, and later claimed they had no knowledge of the CIA's role, were involved in the discussion. Some of them argued that a massive congress along the lines of the Berlin one was necessary to stir intellectuals, and provide an increased visibility for the Congress for Cultural Freedom in France. CCF director of publications François Bondy, for instance, wrote to Nabokov that the idea of the congress was one of the few aims that seemed worthwhile to French

⁶⁹ Scott-Smith, "The Masterpieces of the Twentieth Century Festival and the Congress for Cultural Freedom," 131-34. At the time, according to Scott-Smith, competing views on the nature of the CCF were tied to the larger conflict among CIA groups and offices during the agency's reorganization. Dulles and Braden's enthusiasm thus was matched by Frank Wisner's caution about the prospects of the Paris Festival.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 134.

intellectuals and by which the Congress could get their interest. Most of all, what the new organization had to stress as its main attraction was to make these individuals feel like they were part of a wider international movement, an element which recurred as a valuable asset in other countries as well.⁷¹

The discussion around the project of a Paris congress lasted from the end of 1950 until the second half of 1951. While most of the American members of the CCF (both in the Executive Committee and in the American committee) were in favor of such a large-scale event with clear political connotations, Europeans were more divided. In fact, according to Grémion, the most evident divide did not follow national lines, but was that between writers and intellectuals on one side, and organizers of the national committees on the other.⁷² David Rousset was in favor, claiming that the congress could be a big boost for the action in France by bringing to Paris a large number of European and extra-European intellectuals. He added that, if the organization declined to stage events of this kind, it would amount to little more than a PEN Club,⁷³ and that it was necessary to crystallize public opinion with a large event. On the other side of the issue were Aron, whose opinion already carried considerable weight, and both the Italians in the Executive Committee, Silone and Nicola Chiaromonte. Their objections were first of all in principle to the idea of a large public congress, which they considered to be less effective than a continuous work with smaller groups. Even worse, it could be counterproductive, as it would absorb much of the budget and energies of the organization at a time when both

⁷¹ François Bondy to Nicolas Nabokov, 6 February 1951, s. II, b. 88, f. 1, IACF Records.

⁷² Grémion, *Intelligence de l'anticommunisme*, 71. The exception would be Silone, who was the president of the Italian committee but still opposed the idea.

⁷³ The PEN Club is a worldwide association of writers, whose mission is to promote mutual understanding and cooperation and to defend persecuted authors. During the 1950s, some members of the CCF considered it too sympathetic to the Soviet Union and too focused on a narrow cultural definition of its activities.

were much needed. However, they also brought as an argument their knowledge of the French scene: they questioned the propriety of the demonstration in an election year, with growing political tensions among Gaullists and non-Gaullists, and in light of the “*effet nul*” that the Berlin Congress had had in France according to Aron. Eventually the opposition to the project carried the day, and the congress was first postponed and then replaced by what would become the Paris Festival of May 1952. There is no evidence that any single individual’s opinion was decisive, but neither is there anything to suggest that those involved in the decision reflected pressures from outsiders or from the American members of the Congress.⁷⁴ In fact, it is easy to imagine that a large demonstration that could not count on the support of Silone and Aron, among the others, looked much less appealing to the CIA officers debating the issue in the U.S.

The Arts Festival was a significant success for the Congress for Cultural Freedom, although it elicited mixed responses from the French intellectuals and press. As Richard Kuisel has recounted, most Parisians were impressed by the display of the West’s artistic brilliance, but the event also provoked “nasty nationalist sniping.” *Combat* dubbed it “NATO’s Festival” and criticized American society for its provincialism, racism, and anti-Communist hysteria. The Communist daily denounced it as an attempt to spread fascist ideas and enroll French intellectuals in a “cultural army.” Perhaps not surprisingly, the only aspect on which both sides agreed was in seeing the Festival as a general vindication of the superiority of French culture, and of the role of Paris as the only creative center in the world.⁷⁵ Saunders also noted that critics remarked on the

⁷⁴ Minutes of the CCF Executive Committee, 9-11 February 1951, s. II, b. 2, f. 10, IACF Records; Minutes of the CCF Executive Committee, 10 February 1951, s. II, b. 2, f. 10, IACF Records.

⁷⁵ Kuisel, *Seducing the French*, 28; See also Scott-Smith, “The Masterpieces of the Twentieth Century Festival and the Congress for Cultural Freedom,” 136-37.

disparity between first-rate writers and mediocre ones, and remained suspicious of the concealed propagandistic intent of “cette fête américaine.”⁷⁶ According to Scott-Smith, the Festival marked the transformation of the organization “from a diversity of proposals to a body run by the Paris headquarters with the support and guidance of Braden’s IOD.” The definite commitment to the organization from the covert power structure assured that, while Hook, Burnham, and other New York intellectuals would provide the inspiration, it was no longer their organization.⁷⁷ Finally, the Festival galvanized CCF members, largely vindicated Nabokov’s (and many Europeans’) emphasis on the cultural aspect and lent greater respectability to the organization, even among its critics in France. Nonetheless, some members of the Executive Committee pointed out that the lack of participation of many French writers and artists in the proceedings and debates remained a major weakness in the work done so far. Silone, in particular, raised this point at the meeting following the Festival, claiming that the work of the Amis could not exhaust the main task that the Congress was set up to perform. The failure to draw to the conferences people like Albert Camus or André Breton was extremely worrisome, and had repercussions not only on the work in France but in other countries as well.⁷⁸

As his record as president of the Italian Association showed, Silone reflected in his criticism a conception of CCF activity that was much more elite-centered, preferring to limit the mass participation aspect in favor of a smaller and more prestigious circle of members. It is therefore possible that he overstated the importance of some absences that could also be explained with reasons that had nothing to do with inadequacies of the

⁷⁶ Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*, 120-24.

⁷⁷ Scott-Smith, “The Masterpieces of the Twentieth Century Festival and the Congress for Cultural Freedom,” 137.

⁷⁸ Minutes of the CCF Executive Committee, 31 May 1952, 10-13, s. II, b. 3, f. 1, IACF Records.

Congress. The larger point remains, however, that in the first years of its existence the CCF had to solve the problem of speaking to – let alone influencing – those French intellectuals who remained reluctant to associate themselves with the organization. Even the formal procedure to join the CCF in France for those who had not been among its original sponsors remained unclear well into the mid-1950s, as Bondy and others complained to the Secretariat.⁷⁹

“I Am Afraid Americans Cannot Understand”: Italian Intellectuals and the CCF

The greatest obstacle for the Italian Committee to overcome was to convince Italian intellectuals that the Communist Party was not animated by an authentic concern for the defense of cultural freedom, and at the same time that the CCF was an independent organization and not an agent of the U.S. State Department. Its members tried to do that through the establishment of personal relationships and of a credible record of activities that could show the independence of the committee from outside pressures. These efforts met with widespread suspicions, and for years the national and international organizations had to respond to the accusation of being an exclusively anti-Communist organization by pointing at other initiatives, such as the campaign against Franco’s dictatorship in Spain.

The socialist-leaning philosopher Norberto Bobbio, for example, publicly expressed his hesitations about the militant anti-Communist line that the Associazione

⁷⁹ François Bondy and Jacques Carat to Nicolas Nabokov and Michael Josselson, 22 November 1955, s. II, b. 187, f. 2, IACF Records.

italiana per la libertà della cultura had advocated in its December 1951 manifesto.⁸⁰ Comparing it to other cultural organizations like the Société Européenne de Culture (SEC), Bobbio criticized the AILC's apparent "anti-Communist crusade," judging it incompatible with an authentic desire for dialogue. The choice to exclude from its ranks Communists but not members of other political "churches," he said, seemed to belie the organization's call for the defense of intellectuals' independence from all political pressures. "One suspects therefore," Bobbio concluded, "that the criterion of independence has been replaced, or might surreptitiously be replaced, by another criterion: that of truth and error. The ones are accepted because they are in the truth; the others are rejected because they are in the error. But in doing so the action runs the risk of transforming from an action in defense of truth (and thus of all sincerely professed truths) into an action in defense of a certain conception of truth."⁸¹ In other words, Bobbio suggested that, while ostensibly less political, the approach chosen by the AILC – and by extension the Congress for Cultural Freedom – turned out to involve the man of letters in a political fight against Communism.

Nabokov privately responded to Bobbio's criticism of the unilateral orientation of the organization by pointing out the protests against other forms of totalitarianism and visa restrictions in the U.S., the opposition to fascist resurgence in Germany and book

⁸⁰ The manifesto of the Associazione italiana per la libertà della cultura, published in December 1951, expressed the goals and the guiding philosophy of the organization. It reprised the manifesto approved at the end of the Berlin Congress for Cultural Freedom in June 1950, proclaiming the freedom of conscience and expression a fundamental human right. At the same time, it differed from the CCF's manifesto in its tone, less militant and more influenced by the distinctly Silonian themes of the individual's personal responsibility and the solidarity among intellectuals. For a more detailed analysis of the AILC manifesto, see Muraca, "L'Associazione italiana per la libertà della cultura," 139-60.

⁸¹ Norberto Bobbio, "Politica culturale e politica della cultura," in Norberto Bobbio, *Politica e cultura* (Turin: Einaudi, 1955), 45. My translation.

ensorship in Italy.⁸² His efforts were unsuccessful, however, and indicative of the difficulties for the Congress to break through the suspicions even in the circles that represented a natural constituency for its work. Like Bobbio, other intellectuals refused to join the AILC or its demonstrations for reasons that reflected their own personal hostilities or the prominence of domestic battles and considerations.⁸³

Silone himself had to respond to one of the members of AILC, journalist and member of the European federalist movement Ernesto Rossi, who had criticized the unilateral anti-Soviet line of the organization. Silone forcefully denied that the organization's activity "followed the line of American foreign policy," and stressed how the majority of its initiatives had been on the domestic front, fighting censorships in the press and elsewhere. He pointed out that alongside the condemnation of Soviet interventions, the AILC had protested against Franco's Spain, U.S. policy in Latin America, and the ostracism against American nuclear physicist Robert Oppenheimer and diplomat George Kennan. The leader of the CCF in Italy thus showed the necessity to emphasize to its own members a "healthy" distance from the international organization, and to dispel the suspicion of external pressures even among those intellectuals who had expressed their support for the AILC.⁸⁴

Others, even while not sympathizing with Communism *per se*, still found it unwise to associate with the Congress and its Italian outfit due to the implicit political

⁸² Nicolas Nabokov to Norberto Bobbio, 13 November 1952, s. II, b. 247, f. 4, IACF Records.

⁸³ It was the case for example of the refusal by two influential members of the AILC, Ernesto Rossi and Gaetano Salvemini, to support the protest against the Soviet interventions in Poland and Hungary in 1956. The former suspected that the United States could be behind the unrest and benefit from it, the latter could not overcome his hostility toward the Catholic Church to denounce its persecution in Hungary. See Ernesto Rossi to Nicola Chiaromonte, 30 August 1956, b. 3, f. 64, Chiaromonte Papers; Gaetano Salvemini to Nicola Chiaromonte, 2 November 1956, b. 3, f. 71, Chiaromonte Papers.

⁸⁴ Ignazio Silone, *Romanzi e Saggi*, vol. II, ed. Bruno Falchetto (Milan: Mondadori, 1998), LXXVI; Teodori, *Storia dei laici*, 159.

character of its activity – a perception that Silone and others, nationally and internationally, tried to deny to little avail. When the Congress magazine *Preuves* asked Italo Calvino to publish one of his stories, which had assumed an anti-Communist connotation, the writer hesitated because he did not want his figure to assume a political dimension. His concern was to avoid an exclusively polemical anti-Communism, and he later accused the magazine and the CCF of exploiting his piece politically.⁸⁵

If one single intellectual embodied the challenge for the Congress in Italy, that person was novelist and journalist Alberto Moravia. He had first gained literary recognition with the novel *Gli indifferenti* in 1929, and had denounced the Fascist regime in his writings. His popularity and prestige had increased with the end of the war, and the Congress hoped to associate him to its activities to boost its credibility. Moravia's profile was common to other Italian intellectuals of his time: while not officially a member of the Communist Party, he was not hostile to it and joined in some of its campaigns and appeals. This ambiguity and refusal to burn bridges with the Communist milieu represented one of the greatest frustrations for the Congress, which was never able to claim him as one of its members. More than that, it symbolized a distinctive characteristic of Italian intellectual life, and its reliance on categories that transcended the "Communist versus anti-Communist" opposition on which some Americans based their understanding of cultural diplomacy. The battle for the "soul" of Moravia assumed, therefore, a larger significance, to suggest two competing worldviews and interpretations of the meaning and mission of the Congress for Cultural Freedom.

⁸⁵ Italo Calvino to Pierre Bonuzzi, 8 November 1957, s. VII, b. 4, f. 20, IACF Records; Italo Calvino to François Bondy, 21 January 1958 and 21 February 1958, s. VII, b. 4, f. 20, IACF Records.

Moravia himself seemed to understand this complexity, as he showed in a series of letters to Nicola Chiaromonte written around 1946. Both men had opposed Fascism – Chiaromonte had been an anti-fascist exile and, although he had lived in New York for years, he was critical of several aspects of American society and foreign policy. They found themselves increasingly divided, however, in the new Cold War climate:

Chiaromonte later joined the CCF, while Moravia remained sympathetic to, though not affiliated with, the Italian Communist Party. Their views on anti-Communism anticipated the different positions that intellectuals in Italy would assume toward the CCF. “Anti-Stalinism,” Moravia wrote, “is easier in America than in Italy, where the anti-Communist campaign is directed and caused by truly impossible people.” He blamed the Italian bourgeoisie for its immobility and reactionary positions, which abetted the rise of Fascism and might do so again.⁸⁶ Later, he explained why he had decided to turn down an offer to collaborate with the New York magazine *Partisan Review*:

The main reason is my attitude toward Communism. I am not a Communist, and I disagree with Stalinist Communism on many fundamental questions, but I do not feel I can be an anti-Communist today, in Italy, for the simple reason that this country has created Fascism and is ready to create it again. I am afraid Americans cannot understand what it means to live in a country that has been fascist. I would like to know how an American intellectual would behave toward the American bourgeoisie and consequently Communism if that bourgeoisie had sent to power Huey Long, had worshipped him for twenty years, and had applauded without as much as a blink all the concentration camps, special tribunals, propaganda ministries, secret police, etc. etc., and had eventually abandoned the dictatorship only after it had been forced to do so by a horrible and shameful military defeat. I believe that intellectual would look at his bourgeoisie with suspicion, and would refrain from defending it when in danger, or from siding with it against Communism. Which is totalitarian, too, but compared to Fascism has the advantage, if nothing else, of not having come to power yet, and therefore of being at least for now a political force like the others. [...] What I say, then, is that for now Communism is not a danger to

⁸⁶ Alberto Moravia to Nicola Chiaromonte, undated (but 1946), b. 2, f. 60, Chiaromonte Papers. My translation.

freedom in Italy, at least not to the same extent of right-wing neo-Fascist parties and especially the despicable groups that hide behind these parties, the same groups that thirty years ago financed Fascism.⁸⁷

In a final letter to Chiaromonte, Moravia noted the danger that both Communists and anti-Communists could claim him as one of theirs if he took a position publicly on an issue; but, he said, “I belong to no one but myself.” “Communism and anti-Communism,” Moravia added, “are not interesting because they have now moved from the realm of pure and free values to the impure and bound terrain of the practical. These two movements are now tied to national interests, and whoever believes he is serving them actually serves also the people and things that more or less deliberately have to do with them.”⁸⁸ These positions were expressed years before the Congress for Cultural Freedom came into existence, and do not exhaust Moravia’s political evolution or his approach to specific issues over the years. They provide nonetheless an important window into the thinking of Italian intellectuals who had just emerged from the trauma of Fascism, the reason why they lent a more sympathetic ear to Communist messages, and the difference from Americans – and even other Europeans – on the matter. As far as the CCF was concerned, this exchange helps explain why the Paris Secretariat, which was so eager to have Moravia collaborate with its activities, was also so ready to be disappointed or just puzzled by him.

In the early months of the AILC, in fact, the Rome office reported that Moravia had signed the manifesto, and expressed optimism about the possibility that he would

⁸⁷ Alberto Moravia to Nicola Chiaromonte, undated (but 1946), b. 2, f. 60, Chiaromonte Papers. My translation.

⁸⁸ Alberto Moravia to Nicola Chiaromonte, undated (but 1946), b. 2, f. 60, Chiaromonte Papers. My translation.

publicly join the committee.⁸⁹ That turned out not to be the case, however, and Moravia's positions continued to preoccupy the national and international offices of the Congress. In 1952, the writer was denied a visa by the U.S. government to visit the country, according to the McCarran Act of 1950. The law allowed federal authorities to investigate people suspected of subversive activities, and to deny entrance into the country to members of totalitarian groups, either fascist or communist, and to those closely associated with them. Passed in the anti-Communist climate of the Red Scare and McCarthyism, it left many – not only liberals and civil liberties advocates – perplexed about its propriety and implementation. Members of the American Committee for Cultural Freedom (ACCF) were concerned that an indiscriminate policy of visa denials, left to the discretion of bureaucrats unaware of the political complexities in other countries, would ultimately damage the reputation of the United States. Such was the case with Moravia, prevented from visiting the country for his alleged ineligibility under the new security laws. The ACCF issued a protest signed by prominent writers (among them James Farrell, Robert Penn Warren, Allen Tate, and John Dos Passos) who called the decision “incomprehensible,” and warned about the propaganda victory for the Communists in Europe and Italy.⁹⁰

Before that, however, the ACCF requested some information from the Italian committee about Moravia and his political positions, and especially his relationship with Communists. The Rome office warned them that Moravia was not a Communist himself, but was opposed to the policy of isolating them and in some cases ready to collaborate with them; that was why he refused to join the AILC, which was unequivocally anti-

⁸⁹ Alice Ceresa to Nicolas Nabokov, 17 July 1951, s. II, b. 171, f. 5, IACF Records.

⁹⁰ American Committee for Cultural Freedom Press Release, undated (but 1952), b. 11, f. 4, ACCF Records.

totalitarian. When Irving Kristol, then Executive Secretary of the ACCF, wrote to CCF Secretary General Nicolas Nabokov to discuss whether the committee should make a public protest, he wrote somewhat ambiguously that “Moravia is not a Communist, but [...] neither is he an anti-Communist in our sense of the term.”⁹¹ Such a formulation reflected the uneasiness of applying categories that made sense as intellectual positions in the U.S., but were less clear-cut in European countries where Communism had a much broader appeal among the public and the intellectual class. Americans looking for “their” kind of anti-Communism were often frustrated – or ignored – in places where the only effective struggle against Communists, at least from the left, had to reflect the peculiarities of place.

The ACCF protested Moravia’s visa denial, and the members of the Italian committee continued to have a frank dialogue with the novelist, who remained sympathetic to the Communist Party. However, ultimately the Congress abandoned its attempts to associate Moravia to its activities on a stable basis. Josselson and Nabokov even entertained the possibility of organizing a public debate on Socialist Realism in art – which Moravia had allegedly endorsed – to “unmask his hypocrisy.” They opted against it, concluding that the only effective way would be a denunciation by “a man like Camus” whose judgment they respected.⁹² Gradually, the Italian novelist moved from the role of a potential ally to that of an adversary, however respected.

⁹¹ Irving Kristol to Nicolas Nabokov, 21 July 1952, s. II, b. 30, f. 1, IACF Records. On a similar note, the following year the Rome office had to explain to Josselson that Moravia’s position could hardly be described by the terms “Communism” and “anti-Communism.” Like him, other Italian intellectuals were adamant about preserving absolute independence and no pressure could bring results. See Alice Ceresa to Michael Josselson, 13 March 1953, s. II, b. 171, f. 7, IACF Records.

⁹² Michael Josselson to Nicolas Nabokov, 22 January 1954, s. II, b. 243, f. 13, IACF Records; Nicolas Nabokov to Michael Josselson, 27 January 1954 s. II, b. 243, f. 13, IACF Records.

Paradoxically, Moravia did eventually visit the U.S. a few years later, in 1955, on a trip funded by the United States Information Service (USIS). As Simona Tobia has detailed, USIS officers were eager to remedy the propaganda backlash of the visa denial case, but also interested in Moravia's anti-bourgeois and anti-capitalist positions: they believed that the Italian intelligentsia and the public could take more seriously a more critical perspective, which official USIS publications lacked. In the reportages that he wrote during the trip, Moravia in fact highlighted elements of U.S. society that did not appear in the official propaganda – consumerism, standardization and mechanization of life, McCarthyism – but, overall, he came away with a favorable impression of American democracy.⁹³ Before his arrival, Chiaromonte wrote to Macdonald suggesting what elements of American society might require elucidation for a European intellectual visiting the country for the first time:

It would be interesting for him if you gave him a few facts on mass culture: Europeans just don't understand the subject, always reduce it to their own provincial - or humanistic proportions - speaking of it in terms of vice and virtues, qualities and faults: as if, for example, one could speak of Time mag. in terms of good or bad journalism, and of the indifference of the individual in the crowd in terms of hard-heartedness.⁹⁴

A few weeks later, however, Macdonald wrote that Moravia had left him with the impression of being “tough,” and not very interested in changing his opinion about America: “He made me feel, as many Europeans do (not you, though) somehow soft and too young, too idealistic and ‘open’.”⁹⁵

The failure of the CCF to secure Moravia's participation, in sum, was not exclusively due to the novelist's pro-Communist sympathies, although they contributed

⁹³ Tobia, *Advertising America*, 261-67.

⁹⁴ Nicola Chiaromonte to Dwight Macdonald, 22 March 1955, b. 10, f. 242, Macdonald Papers.

⁹⁵ Dwight Macdonald to Nicola Chiaromonte, 20 April 1955, b. 10, f. 242, Macdonald Papers.

to his unwillingness to join the AILC. The complex relationship between the novelist and the organization encapsulated the difficulty for the CCF to reach some intellectual circles and milieux abroad. For those groups, deeply influenced by national dynamics that transcended the division between Communism and anti-Communism, the Congress was not able to find a convincing message and tone that could speak to their concerns. The priority given to anti-Communism prevented the flexibility that might have been necessary to adapt to certain contexts more successfully.

The Impact of 1956: Smashing the “Communist Mystique”?

A turning point, in France and Italy as elsewhere, was the year 1956, with a succession of international events that had deep repercussions on European intellectual life as well. The XX Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, in February, was the first to be held after Stalin’s death in March 1953. In what came as a shock for Communists all around the world, Party Secretary Nikita Khrushchev denounced Stalin’s reign as a brutal dictatorship, and the cult of personality that had developed around the late leader as harmful to the cause and against its tenets. The report was not meant to be released to the public, and the Congress delegates initially kept an uneasy silence about it. When the *New York Times* broke the news, however, the significance of the revelations for the Communist world was immediately evident. After having been portrayed for decades as a wise and peaceful fatherly figure, the undisputed leader of the Communist movement now appeared in almost opposite terms.

Equally important were two separate events in 1956 that showed the popular discontent brewing in the Soviet satellites of Eastern Europe. The first was, in June, an

uprising in the Polish city of Poznań that the Polish and Soviet forces quelled. The second was the Hungarian revolution, which broke out on October 23 and saw thousands of citizens revolt against Soviet rule. The USSR crushed the rebellion by sending tanks in the streets of Budapest, but the events made an enormous impression in the Western bloc. For the first time on such a massive scale – the East Berlin crisis in June 1953 and the Poznań uprising being more limited in scope – the peoples under Communist rule showed their discontent, and the Soviet regime could no longer deny the tensions within its bloc. The propaganda victory for the West was strongly offset, however, by an equally unpopular intervention by Western powers in those same days. On October 29, French, British, and Israeli forces unsuccessfully attempted to seize control of the Suez Canal in Egypt, which the Nasser government had recently nationalized. The failed expedition was particularly appalling to newly-independent and non-aligned countries due to its colonialist overtones, and thus an embarrassment for the Western bloc. While Eisenhower condemned the French and British intervention, critics of the United States could accuse it of hypocrisy for denouncing the Soviet intervention in Hungary as an imperialistic aggression while some of its staunchest allies were pursuing similar policies.

The events of October 1956 in Budapest had a profound impact on many Western Europeans, especially Communists and sympathizers, and nowhere more so than in France.⁹⁶ CCF Administrative Secretary Michael Josselson tried to explain it to a fellow American who was not living in Europe – none other than Shepard Stone, then head of the Ford Foundation's International Division and later the president of the renamed

⁹⁶ As chapters 5 and 6 will discuss more in detail, the year 1956 was a watershed in France also for national reasons, with the victory of a left-wing coalition at the legislative elections and the escalation of the Algerian War. According to Ory and Sirinelli, the combination of the XX PCUS Congress, Hungary, and Algeria marked the end of the most acute phase of the Cold War for French intellectuals. See Ory and Sirinelli, *Les intellectuels en France*, 155.

International Association for Cultural Freedom after the CIA scandal. He said that the “Communist mystique” had been smashed, leaving many former Communists grappling to find a political home that could not be the Socialist Party due to its debacle with the Suez intervention.⁹⁷ Until that moment, the Communist cause had enjoyed a significant measure of support not only from party members, but also from intellectuals who looked with favor on it. Hungary changed all that, leaving the French Communist Party virtually isolated in defending the actions of the Soviet Union, and a large number of fellow-travelers questioning their political sympathies. The most sensational defection was that of Sartre, until then a close ally of the PCF, who publicly denounced the USSR for the repression and distanced himself from it.⁹⁸ According to Pierre Nora, the period after 1956 was also a turning point in the reassessment of the American image in France:

The great diaspora of Communist intellectuals had begun. Up until then, ever since the war and the Resistance, morality and reason, truth and justice had appeared to be on the same side. Now the revolutionary pattern had to be reinvested elsewhere: Cuba, China, Algeria—most did just that. But all the same, for some—for many—the liberation from Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy resulted in a more attentive curiosity about America, which no longer looked on as our future, but as our present.⁹⁹

The fact that Communism in France was experiencing what Tony Judt dubbed a “crisis of confidence,” however, did not mean that the anti-Communism of the CCF was suddenly popular everywhere. With the decline of the Soviet Union’s appeal, French intellectuals turned their attention to the non-European world and *tiers-mondisme*, at a

⁹⁷ Michael Josselson to Shepard Stone, 1 December 1956, s. II, b. 136, f. 9, IACF Records. At the same time, Josselson warned, anti-Americanism was on the rise again in France to levels unseen since the time of McCarthy. The Socialist Party was blamed for the failure of the Suez intervention, as the French prime minister at the time, Guy Mollet, was a member of the SFIO and the leader of a center-left coalition come to power in the 1956 elections.

⁹⁸ See Jean-François Sirinelli, *Intellectuels et passions françaises. Manifestes et pétitions au XX^e siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 1990), 167-91; Michel Winock, *Le siècle des intellectuels* (Paris: Seuil, 1997), 501-10; and Furet, *The Passing of an Illusion*, 446-60.

⁹⁹ Nora, “America and the French Intellectuals,” 329. Another important factor was de Gaulle’s anti-Americanism, which led the intellectual Left to reconsider its own.

time when decolonization was assuming a growing centrality in Paris. As Judt argues, the shift was in part due to the fact that a serious debate over the meaning of Communism after 1956 would have been difficult for many, and in part to the “seemingly straightforward moral choices” that the colonial question posed.¹⁰⁰

The consequences of the events of 1956 were visible in Italy as well. At the political level, the crisis marked the final breakup of the common front between Socialists and Communists that had been formed in 1948. The Partito Socialista Italiano had grown more and more uncomfortable with an alliance that placed it in a subordinate position and drained its consensus, and reacted to the Hungarian repression in a strongly critical way. The Socialists were slowly moving toward a sort of “détente” with the Christian Democracy, a fundamental turning point in Italian postwar politics that opened the way to the experiment of the *centro-sinistra* a few years later. The Communist Party, while refusing to condemn Soviet intervention outright, began to stress a greater autonomy from Moscow and to elaborate the notion of “national ways” to socialism, which allowed it to distance itself from the most damaging effects of the crisis.

Intellectuals were generally sympathetic to the rebels, and refused to accept the PCI’s explanation that the uprising was simply a counterrevolutionary movement backed by the United States. Some of the most critical members of the party issued a manifesto that criticized both Stalin and the lack of internal democracy within the PCI, but their appeal for reform fell for the most part on deaf ears. Some, most notably Calvino, eventually abandoned the party in dissent with its solidarity with the Soviet Union. Other fellow-travelers distanced themselves from the Communist line, including Moravia. The increasing criticism from many intellectuals was not unconditional, however: most of

¹⁰⁰ Judt, *Past Imperfect*, 117-18, 282-83. See also Grémion, *Intelligence de l’anticommunisme*, 274.

those who broke with the PCI over Hungary refused to ascribe the events in Budapest to the deeper nature of socialism, and rather denounced the distortions of the cause. Many also tried to contain the dissent within the Communist world, and held on to the conviction that Marxism still had the possibility to evolve and redeem itself in a way that capitalism lacked. Although alienated, thus, many former party members and fellow-travelers remained nonetheless in the camp of anti-anti-Communism.¹⁰¹

It seems therefore overstated to argue, as some historians have, that after 1956 the challenge between the liberal-democratic model and the Communist one appeared asymmetrical from the cultural point of view.¹⁰² At least in Italy, the hold of Communist ideology on many intellectuals continued to be remarkable, even if less direct than at its peak in the early 1950s. The AILC could certainly break out of the isolation that had characterized its early existence, and it could now exploit the signs of dissent that were beginning to emerge from the Eastern bloc. It also became one of the laboratories for experimenting with an alliance between reform socialism and progressive liberalism spurred by the optimism about the superiority of Atlantic culture, as Capozzi has suggested.¹⁰³ It continued nonetheless to confront a powerful intellectual apparatus inspired by the PCI, which granted Communists an effective penetration among the Italian intelligentsia. In many cases, moreover, disenchantment with the Soviet Union did not translate into support for the United States or the Atlantic alliance, and the AILC had to continue its work of persuasion through its magazine, bulletins, and seminars.

On balance, however, the events in Eastern Europe had a galvanizing effect for the Congress for Cultural Freedom. As Grémion noted, Hungary contributed to the

¹⁰¹ See Teodori, *Storia dei laici*, 204; Brogi, *Confronting America*, 198.

¹⁰² See for example Capozzi, "L'opposizione all'antiamericanismo," 345.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 346.

growth of the organization by vindicating its previous actions, and helped it garner the financial support of several foundations.¹⁰⁴ CCF members saw in the Hungarian revolution a momentous opportunity to denounce the oppression and brutality of the Soviet regime, and all its magazines and national committees seized the opportunity to take the offensive against Communists. In doing so, the Congress had to explain the different reaction toward the Suez intervention, which many saw as equally serious. The widespread perception in many circles that the organization was pro-American, either because a direct creation of the State Department or through indirect support, made its position more delicate. The official response of the Congress was that the intervention in Egypt, however despicable, was a matter of political and economic interests on which the CCF was not competent to take a stand. The Hungarian events, instead, directly touched on cultural freedom because intellectuals in Hungary were being persecuted or forced into exile. They confirmed that the Soviet Union, even after Stalin's death, had not abandoned its imperialistic foreign policy and its totalitarian character, as the anti-Communist front had been arguing for years. It was a unique opportunity to embarrass those who had actively supported or sympathized with the USSR, and thus make a dent in the intellectual landscape. For some members, however, the question went beyond the pure ideological struggle and touched a much deeper level.

In the immediate wake of the crisis, the Executive Committee met to discuss the possibility of releasing a statement and gathering signatures condemning the intervention from high-profile figures in France. The excitement was palpable and the discussion at times broken and overlapping. Some voices suggested that the Congress could try to approach, among the others, Sartre, stressing that it would be a propaganda victory either

¹⁰⁴ Grémion, *Intelligence de l'anticommunisme*, 320.

if he signed, or if he refused. Aron reacted indignantly, and in strong terms denounced the idea as “indecent” and “undignified,” a “provocation” that morally revolted him. He explained: “I don’t think we should treat a man like Sartre this way. If he changes his mind he must do it alone and not under our pressure. Don’t make a small political trick with Sartre. It is such a moral tragedy for him.”¹⁰⁵

The relationship between Aron and Sartre, arguably two of the most influential French intellectuals of their century, is fascinatingly complex and spans over decades. The two had studied together at the *École Normale Supérieure* in the interwar period, and developed a personal friendship. Despite their political differences, Aron was a contributor to Sartre’s magazine *Les Temps Modernes* until after World War II, and stopped only after Sartre’s shift to the left in support of the Soviet Union. The prestige of the existentialist philosopher was so great in those years that Walter Laqueur, who edited one of the CCF magazines, noted that “it was said at the time in Paris that it was better to be wrong with Sartre than to be right with Aron.”¹⁰⁶ Tony Judt has suggested that throughout his life Aron suffered from a puzzling “complex of inadequacy” *vis-à-vis* his former friend, spending an inordinate amount of time reading and replying to his publications while, in return, Sartre almost made a point of ignoring the Sorbonne professor’s output. According to Judt, what Aron mostly admired in Sartre were the qualities that he lacked, i.e. his originality and creativity and the ability to be a “maker of systems” rather than studying them. That did not prevent him, however, from remarking caustically that Sartre was especially inclined toward the habit of French thinkers to subscribe enthusiastically to the ideas of yesterday, being “always one turning point

¹⁰⁵ Minutes of the CCF Executive Committee, 27 October 1956, s. II, b. 4, f. 2, IACF Records.

¹⁰⁶ Laqueur, “You Had to Be There,” 134.

behind.”¹⁰⁷ Although Aron shared with other members of the CCF the condemnation for the Hungarian events, given this complex relationship between the two his reaction could not help but differ from those who mainly wanted to score political points. This dramatic instance, though eventually secondary in the larger discussion on the role of the Congress in France, suggests therefore the complexity of the situation facing anyone who hoped to use the CCF as a political tool against Communism.

The debate over the Hungarian events was not limited to France, suggesting the centrality of the Parisian world on the intellectual scene. Silone himself, besides pushing international organizations like the PEN Club and the Société Européenne de Culture to publicly condemn the Soviet Union, wrote an article for the French journal *L'Express* calling for a self-examination by intellectuals in light of the new developments. He singled out Sartre, who had published his condemnation of the USSR on that same journal only a month before.¹⁰⁸ Silone's piece was an indictment of those Western intellectuals who had subscribed to the Communist rhetoric about the Eastern bloc being the “camp of peace” and its peaceful and classless society:

It is you, then, dear progressive friends, who for years have preached the most absolute faith in Stalin and his dictatorship in the West. You have put at the service of Russian propaganda your prestige as writers, philosophers and dramatists. You have carried thousands of young intellectuals with you. And now all of a sudden you express surprise and disillusionment, without telling us how or why your excess of faith could have been possible.¹⁰⁹

The Hungarian revolution had shown that these “myths and ambiguities” had only propped up a totalitarian regime, against which the rebels were reaffirming the values of

¹⁰⁷ Judt, *The Burden of Responsibility*, 171-72, 180. On the relationship between the two, see also Jean-François Sirinelli, *Deux intellectuels dans le siècle, Sartre et Aron* (Paris: Fayard, 1995), and Drake, *Sartre*, 24.

¹⁰⁸ Jean-Paul Sartre, “Après Budapest, Sartre parle”, *L'Express*, 9 November 1956.

¹⁰⁹ Ignazio Silone, “Invitation à un examen de conscience,” *L'Express*, 7 December 1956. The quote is from the English translation, published in Silone, *Emergency Exit*, 131.

socialism. Silone called on all intellectuals to abandon the practice of identifying truth and progress with one party or state, and to follow only facts and their conscience. The “frontier of peace, freedom and truth” was no longer a geographical one between two blocs, but had moved within each individual county – within each individual soul, he seemed to imply without saying it.¹¹⁰ The article had a large echo especially in France, and the CCF helped its circulation through its magazine and newspapers. It signaled the profound impact that the Hungarian events had on intellectuals in Western Europe, in particular Communist sympathizers, and the new possibilities that opened up for the Congress. It also illustrated how France and Italy were closely connected at the intellectual level, as the political and cultural similarities allowed for a dialogue that set them apart from other countries. Finally, the article’s resonance shows why the Congress found it so important to keep Silone and other prestigious figures within its ranks, even when they could be very hard to satisfy: their popularity and ability to influence public discourse made them invaluable assets to the organization.

As the situation unfolded, the challenge for the Congress was paradoxically not to do too much to exploit the favorable situation, especially in France. A month after the revolt René Tavernier, writer and member of the Congress staff, reported on the international and domestic appeals that had appeared, and the position of the CCF toward them. Two in particular, by Suzanne Labin and Albert Camus, came from intellectuals who, while not officially part of the organization, had long-standing relations with several

¹¹⁰ Ibid. Years later, Silone would nonetheless affirm his admiration for Sartre, and claim that his main disagreement was with the French philosopher’s identification of progress with the fate of the Communist Party, and the rigid “geographic notion” of the peace camp. See Jean Bloch-Michel, “Les intermittences de la mémoire,” *Preuves* XIV n. 155 (January 1964), 71.

of its members and occasionally collaborated with its initiatives.¹¹¹ In this instance, the Congress chose to help gather signatures and spread the appeals, but it declined to associate itself with them. It was in part a reluctance to subscribe to positions that would have been controversial within its own ranks – Camus called for a boycott of the cultural organizations of the United Nations – and in part the sense that it would be a smarter policy to act behind the scenes rather than to become too visible. The episode brought back into the spotlight the question of the CCF in France, which continued to be somewhat ambiguous, and it was Silone who raised again the problem. It would be discussed again in a few months, without reaching a conclusive solution.¹¹²

The most pressing issue was initially to assess and absorb the seismic change in the French intellectual scene that the breakup of the Communist-progressive front represented. The task of analyzing the situation in the country fell to Aron, who blended political and intellectual insights. The reaction in France, he said, had been more violent than anywhere else, and at the same time more nuanced. The French Communist Party, having maintained an orthodox Stalinist line, was in an almost complete isolation, but the socialists were not in a position to take advantage of it. It was still early, however, to gauge the full consequences on the political scene, since much would depend on developments in North Africa (the Suez intervention and the Algerian crisis). From an intellectual point of view, Aron judged the most important phenomenon to be the split of Sartre from the Communist Party, announced in the article appeared in *L'Express*. That did not prevent him from criticizing Sartre and calling him a “buffoon” for condemning

¹¹¹ For Camus, the Hungarian events were in fact the only time that he participated in an initiative of the CCF, penning a preface to a White Book denouncing the trial of Hungarian leader Imre Nagy. Camus, however, did collaborate occasionally with *Tempo Presente*, edited by his friend Chiaromonte. Grémion, *Intelligence de l'anticommunisme*, 261-63.

¹¹² Minutes of the CCF Executive Committee, 20 November 1956, s. II, b. 4, f. 3, IACF Records.

the Soviet regime without acknowledging his support for it even at the peak of Stalin's brutality.¹¹³

At the beginning of 1957, with the rebellion suppressed and some of the emotions fading, the Executive Committee discussed the steps to take in light of the impact of Hungary all over the world. For the first time, according to the Swiss writer and CCF President Denis de Rougemont, it felt like the CCF was gaining traction in the French milieu. Writers, artists, and professors who had manifested their solidarity with the appeal sent out during the Hungarian crisis were now requesting a way to join. Josselson outlined the project to create a small group of writers and intellectuals, forty of fifty selected ones, to act as a French Association for Cultural Freedom. This group would not be in competition with the Amis de la Liberté, who spoke to different subjects and promoted larger initiatives. The proposal received enthusiastic support from Silone, who argued that the twofold avenue of interaction with the French milieu was in fact already implied in the original Berlin Congress. Citing Italy as an example, he argued that an elite of writers and intellectuals could coexist with a parallel activity of "popularization and education" aimed at the masses and centered on local circles and associations. The latter, however, was not sufficient in and of itself: it was necessary to create a French group because France continued to be a "spiritual superpower," if not a military or financial one, and it still influenced the rest of the world. Not to be mistaken, he added that the Congress should leave the greatest degree of freedom to these writers and artists, from the choice of the name to the positions to take – correcting the mistakes when necessary –

¹¹³ Ibid.

without any immediate bureaucratic dependence. Without such arrangements, the position of the Congress in certain milieux would continue to be “rather critical.”¹¹⁴

The debate broadened to address once again the nature of the CCF’s activity in France, to whom it should talk and in what ways an international organization could effectively enter the national and local discourses. The Secretary General of the Amis de la Liberté, Jacques Enock, expressed no objections to the creation of a second group alongside the Amis, but pointed out that their activity could not be described as exclusively aimed at the masses. He rather called it a “vertical” approach that included both renowned intellectuals and professionals and educators with no visibility; the Congress should therefore be careful not to create a duplicate of the Amis. To this, Silone further clarified that a fundamental function of the CCF, in France and elsewhere, should be to replicate the structure of Communist propaganda. Their effectiveness depended on talking to specific groups of “creative intellectuals” (writers, painters, musicians) about the problems and situations they faced. A general action like that of the Amis was ill-suited to counter such a capillary penetration, but a smaller group could.

David Rousset concluded the discussion by stating that a restricted group of friendly intellectuals could play an important role for the activities of the CCF, but he also addressed what was in many ways the elephant in the room when it came to assessing the progress made in France – or Italy, for that matter. One should not credit the new opportunities to work in France, he claimed, exclusively to the Hungarian crisis. Some of these people were overcoming their initial diffidence toward the Congress also due to its willingness to take positions on the international scene that marked its independence from the United States, for instance in criticizing South Africa’s apartheid

¹¹⁴ Minutes of the CCF Executive Committee, 12-13 January 1957, s. II, b. 4, f. 4, IACF Records.

regime. Only once the “legend” that the CCF was an instrument of the State Department lost its widespread circulation could the organization realistically attempt to influence the French scene.¹¹⁵

The Executive Committee did not reach a conclusion on the question of a French association. Its members agreed to leave the matter for the Secretariat to explore, having set the parameters within which they recommended its setup. Eventually, such a group was never created even after the Amis de la Liberté ceased to exist in 1960. This suggested that the initial enthusiasm for the gains in the aftermath of the Hungarian revolution had probably overestimated the lasting impact of the shift in neutralist and pro-Communist intellectuals. It also reflected both the difficulty in bringing together the politically diverse French members of the Congress, and the organization’s increasing reliance on magazines rather than on national committees in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The rapid evolution of the political and intellectual situation in France might have also contributed to the decision not to set up such an organization. In May 1958, a failed coup in Algiers prompted the fall of the Fourth Republic, which had been established only a decade earlier, and the return to power of General Charles de Gaulle. Among his first measures was a constitutional reform that introduced a semi-presidential system, shifting a significant amount of power from an ineffective parliament to the executive. At the legislative elections of November 1958, the Parti Communist Français obtained less than twenty percent of the votes for the first time since the end of the war, and its deputies in the National Assembly fell from 150 to 10 due to the abolition of proportional representation. As the Communists were declining politically, they were also losing their

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 98-100.

hegemony over French intellectuals due to the events in Hungary and Algeria.¹¹⁶ The Congress, therefore, found itself operating in a radically different context at the end of the 1950s, in which opposing the PCF and the Soviet Union was no longer enough to make it relevant to the prevailing intellectual discourses in France.

The path that the CCF took was one that Tavernier had hinted at during the previous Executive Committee discussion, which involved a different mode of intervention into the intellectual scene. Following the Hungarian revolt, some French writers had decided to create a group whose general goals and spirit were close to those of the Congress itself, the Union des Écrivains pour la Vérité (Union of Writers for the Truth). The Union, according to Tavernier, had the potential to talk to a wide audience that the CCF had unsuccessfully tried to reach for years, and it would therefore be counterproductive to set up a competing initiative.¹¹⁷ The policy that he suggested was to rely on what Josselson would a few years later describe as “*actions parallèles*” to the CCF: magazines, national and international organizations that were not officially connected in any way, but inside which operated members of the Congress who could obtain positive results without overexposing the organization.¹¹⁸ In other words, to accomplish the goals for which the Congress had been created it had to deploy a variety of methods and interact with individuals and organizations that followed their own logic

¹¹⁶ Brogi, *Confronting America*, 232. See also chapter 6.

¹¹⁷ Minutes of the CCF Executive Committee, 12-13 January 1957, 92-93.

¹¹⁸ Minutes of the CCF Executive Committee, 18-19 January 1958, s. II, b. 5, f. 1, IACF Records. Beside the Union des Écrivains pour la Vérité, another example of this policy was the relationship between the CCF and the International PEN Club, which included writers from both blocs and thus was frequently highly controversial. Relying on members of both organizations such as Silone, Jelenski, Emmanuel and others, the Congress occasionally used it as a platform to fight Communists. Josselson even went as far as to suggest André Malraux, then de Gaulle’s minister of cultural affairs, to intervene to improve the level of the French delegation to the PEN Club to preserve French prestige. Michel Josselson to Manès Sperber, 26 October 1964 and 24 November 1964, box 32, folder 3, Michael Josselson Papers, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas (hereafter Josselson Papers).

and went beyond its control. It certainly was not helpless, as the prestige of some of its members and the connections that it established with other organizations proved. But neither was it free to influence the public discourse and the intellectual scene at its will in the way that some authors have suggested.

In fact, at least one observer expressed a much more pessimistic view of the inroads that the Congress had made in the French milieu only a few months after these discussions, in December 1957. John Marshall, Associate Director of the Humanities Division of the Rockefeller Foundation – which, being among the foundations to which the CCF applied for grants, had every interest in assessing the situation as objectively as possible – reported on a meeting that Tavernier had arranged for him with sociologist Bertrand de Jouvenel. He remarked that Jouvenel seemed to try to impress him with the fact that “Americans might well overvalue the position of the Congress for Cultural Freedom. Actually it has little prestige in the French mind, due in part - in Jouvenel’s engaging frankness - to French preoccupations with France and general lack of interest in activities on the international plane. If the Congress is known in France, it is as something in which Raymond Aron is active.” He also reported that its supposed political character led to reluctance on the part of most French intellectuals to have much to do with it.¹¹⁹

The memorandum suggested that Americans were paying attention to the record of the CCF, and were concerned about ways in which the French intellectual class could be approached and successfully engaged. Its negative assessment is probably to be tempered by some considerations. First, Congress members themselves continued to

¹¹⁹ JM (John Marshall) Diary excerpt, 16 December 1957, b. 2, f. 18, Series 1957/100, Record Group 2, Rockefeller Records.

recognize that the penetration into the French cultural scene was far from accomplished at the time. The perception of the success of an organization such as the Congress could greatly change depending not only on political but on personal dynamics: which people took part in conferences and debates, or which circles were involved. In addition, Jouvenel ended up participating in CCF seminars, conferences, and events not many years later, suggesting that the situation could evolve rather quickly – as it did after the events of 1956. It is, however, a useful reminder that the gains made in the French context were by no means indisputable, and that a tendency to overestimate the importance of their work was inherent to the personalities involved in the Congress – few CCF members could be accused of excessive modesty. In the end, as Hochgeschwender concluded the Congress’ activities in France had positive results, as they significantly contributed to the survival of liberal Atlanticism at the height of the Cold War. It was only in the 1970s, however, with the publication of Alexander Solzhenitsyn’s *The Gulag Archipelago*, that the influence of Communist intellectuals on Paris’ cultural scene was reduced significantly.¹²⁰

Conclusion

The political and cultural contexts of France and Italy in the 1950s were crucial to determine the activities that the CCF and its associates could carry out. Rather than a background for attempts by Americans to contrast Communist hegemony among European intellectuals, these contexts set the limits of a successful anti-Communist message and influenced its tone and content. The debates and arguments in the two countries showed the interplay of personal and political elements that local actors could

¹²⁰ Hochgeschwender, “A Battle of Ideas,” 334.

best understand. The task to engage intellectuals who professed Communist or neutralist sympathies, however functional to Washington's interests, could not be accomplished by CIA operatives or American intellectuals in New York. It required the credibility and prestige of their peers, thus placing them at the center of the fundamental mission of the Congress. This approach also imposed some limits on the effectiveness of the CCF's penetration. In the first place, it forced the organization to rely on personal networks and interactions that were often volatile and arbitrary. Congress activities could at times concentrate more on those who were already convinced than on the attempts to make a dent into the "grey area" of neutralists or undecided. An effect of "preaching to the choir," especially at the outset of the two organizations, was thus in part related to their working and composition.¹²¹

In both countries, this cultural diplomacy reflected the concerns and agendas of European intellectuals, and at the same time was faced with resistance and suspicions that forced it to adapt to their unique context. French and Italian intellectuals were as active as Americans in setting the terms of this diplomacy, and of the relationship between the CCF and the intelligentsia of each nation. This aspect of their work was also inextricably linked with the operations of the national committees, which provided a logistical base for the outreach among the more prestigious figures. Any exhaustive consideration of the influence and success of the CCF in Italy and France must therefore include a detailed analysis of their nature and record, which is the subject of the next chapter.

¹²¹ Capozzi, "L'opposizione all'antiamericanismo," 334-35.

CHAPTER 5

“THE INTELLECTUAL SHOCK TROOPS OF FREE CULTURE”: THE FRENCH AND THE ITALIAN NATIONAL COMMITTEES

In July 1950, immediately after the founding Berlin Congress, Irving Brown of the American Federation of Labor, Melvin Lasky, editor of *Der Monat*, and Arthur Koestler met in the latter's house in Paris. On the agenda was the discussion of the outlines of the activities and characteristics of the national committees that should follow and build on the work done in Berlin. The creators of the Congress for Cultural Freedom envisioned a similar approach for Italy and France, which included both a penetration among the top circles of the European intelligentsia and a capillary work of democratic education and mobilization among the masses. The national committees would be responsible for the day-to-day operations in their countries and the publication and distribution of printed materials (pamphlets, possibly books and a magazine), in accordance with the International Secretariat. All those involved in the meeting – transcript copies of their discussion were also sent initially only to Sidney Hook and James Burnham – were either American or, in the case of Koestler, closer to a more militant form of anti-Communism than many Europeans had advocated in Berlin. The three men agreed that, in light of the outbreak of the Korean War a few weeks earlier, the setup of the organization had to be hastened, and that it was necessary to shift the emphasis of the enterprise from one aimed only at the intelligentsia to direct political activity.

The report of the meeting stated in no ambiguous terms: “First priority: France, Italy.” It envisioned the creation of an organization, Les Amis de la Liberté (“The Friends of Freedom”), aimed at professional classes, trade unions, students and youth groups, which would operate at the local level in support of the Congress in France. Its members would be responsible for collecting signatures for the Berlin manifesto, organizing counter-demonstrations, protests and other activities in response to Communist initiatives as the moment dictated. The Amis would “in fact fulfill the function of a deminform,” its primary aim being the mobilization of the segments of the population more favorable to the work of the Congress.¹

While the rationale for the presence of this “deminform” was very similar in France and Italy, the CCF presence assumed a very different aspect in the two countries. In the former, the Amis de la Liberté quickly developed into an organization with a sizable membership and presence in several provinces outside Paris. It successfully included different political families united by their anti-Communism, and directed its effort at an “intellectual middle class” comprised of professionals, teachers and local figures. In Italy, the Associazione italiana per la libertà della cultura (AILC) followed the opposite path, opting for a limited and high-profile membership rather than mass participation, and for a less militant approach. Only later did it join forces with existing local groups, to gain a wider reach and penetration into the provincial intellectual milieu.

This chapter examines the record of these two national committees, the Amis de la Liberté and the Associazione italiana per la libertà della cultura. They were autonomous organizations with their own staff, governing board, and distinctive identity.

¹ Notes on meeting in Fontaine le Port, 18 July 1950, s. II, b. 2, f. 8, IACF Records. The reference was to the Communist Cominform, a forum that included the Communist parties of the countries in the Eastern bloc plus the French and Italian one. Its purpose was to coordinate their actions under Soviet control.

Their main task was to organize and direct the activities in the two countries, and to facilitate the CCF's penetration into their intellectual milieux. Both received their funding from the CCF, initially through the American Federation of Labor and later directly as part of a regular allotment. The Paris Secretariat encouraged the two committees to increase their revenues through fundraising initiatives, but the main source of funding continued to be the international organization. Their dependence was demonstrated by the fact that, when the Congress had to curtail or suspend its allocation to the Amis and the AILC – respectively in 1960 and 1967 – both organizations could not survive without it. The chapter begins by tracing the setup of the committees in the early 1950s, which was itself problematic and a source of conflict with the Paris Secretariat. It then discusses their composition and their initial activities, which were similar in many aspects but also reflected the peculiar contexts of Italy and France.

Special attention is given to the events of 1956, in particular the reaction to the Soviet invasion of Hungary, which represented a turning point for the work of the CCF in the two countries. If in the first half of the decade the two national committees had had to face a largely hostile intellectual milieu, dominated by Communists and fellow-travelers, the events in Budapest caused a crisis in the pro-Communist groups that they tried to exploit. The chapter also examines the issues and events that highlighted the tensions between the international organization and its national affiliates, and how these were resolved. While the cooperation was mostly satisfactory for both sides, these moments showed the different ways in which they interpreted and waged their cultural Cold War. When conflicts arose, the competing views of anti-Communism between the International Secretariat and the national committees emerged and the CCF had to realize that its

power to influence its French and Italian members was by no means absolute. Finally, the chapter traces the decline of the Amis and the AILC, and tries to assess their significance and impact on the national scene.

Both organizations published pamphlets and promoted conferences and meetings, and both kept in constant communication with the Paris office to discuss their initiatives and financial arrangements. One fundamental difference, however, was in the stature and prestige of the individuals at the head of the organizations, which also influenced their development and characteristics. The case of Italy was unique because Ignazio Silone, one of the most important members of the CCF Executive Committee, also assumed the responsibility to set up and run the AILC. Nowhere else was the head of a national committee also the most prestigious member of the Congress from that country, combining the national and international dimension of the CCF's activity in the same person. The consequences were important for the relationship between the two organizations, and will be discussed later. When conflicts arose, each national affiliate defended its independence jealously, claiming that it was best suited to deal with the specific situation. In doing that, they also showed that they understood the need to keep their distance from an organization associated with American sponsors and American money, such as the Congress for Cultural Freedom was in many sectors of Europe. Far from being "unwitting assets" to be played, they strove to demonstrate their autonomy from outside pressures.

"First Priority: France, Italy": The Establishment of the Committees

Once the idea of the Amis de la Liberté had been laid out in the summer of 1950, the realization of the task fell to the few officers gathered in Paris. These men constituted the nucleus of the CCF staff, and acted as liaison with the scattered intellectuals who had expressed their willingness to participate actively. Among them were three Swiss: Denis de Rougemont, writer and leader of the European federalist movement, journalist and anti-fascist exile François Bondy, and René Lalive d'Épinay. Gaullist Daniel Apert, suggested by Irving Brown, acted as Secretary General of the Amis. Their work took place on two main levels: the publication of pamphlets, a regular bulletin and a projected magazine on the one hand, and the establishment of personal contacts with French intellectuals on the other. In his report at the International Executive Committee meeting in Brussels in November 1950, Bondy stated what was to become a characteristic element of the French national committee. While courting influential national figures such as Raymond Aron and Albert Camus, the Amis addressed themselves to a larger audience than the international Congress, defining "elites" in a rather broad sense. Letters were sent to lawyers, professors, union leaders and businessmen, who were deemed to have influence on the creation of the political climate and public opinion in France; the ambition was to create a center in all the nineteen university centers to involve students as well.²

Another stated goal for the organization, in line with the spirit of the original Berlin Congress, was to include representatives of all democratic forces, in order to create as wide an anti-totalitarian front as possible. The political spectrum thus went from

² Minutes of the CCF Executive Committee, 27-30 November 1950, s. II, b. 2, f. 9, IACF Records. By late 1953, the organization reported 2,372 dues-paying members. By comparison, the AILC's membership always remained around 100-150 intellectuals and the American committee never exceeded six hundred. Minutes of the CCF Executive Committee, 26-27 November 1953, s. II, b. 3, f. 5, IACF Records.

Socialists to Gaullists, which required a balancing act from the Paris officers to keep together very different positions. A clear veto was imposed instead on the participation of former members or sympathizers of fascist parties. In one instance, the mere possibility of collaboration with one of them caused many of the prominent and most active individuals working with the Amis to threaten to resign. As Bondy explained to Brown, such figures would harm the work in France and “destroy immediately our chance of an appeal to the wavering and intellectual left (which by now judging from the answers we receive has become a fact).”³

Even among the democratic forces, however, coexistence turned out to be difficult at times, and to highlight significant differences between Americans and Europeans. The first crisis for the Amis de la Liberté concerned the position of Secretary General, which Apert had initially occupied. Apert, close to the Gaullist camp, enjoyed the support of Brown and Burnham, two of the original promoters of the Congress. At the end of December 1950, the International Secretariat proposed Apert to work under the direction of Jacques Enock, member of the socialist Section française de l’Internationale ouvrière (SFIO). Apert sent a telegram to Burnham to protest the change, which he saw as connected to a new political orientation of the Congress, and to ask for instructions. Burnham agreed with Apert’s rejection of the proposed subordination, which would “violate [the] conception of the Congress and render it another useless centrist mush.”⁴

³ François Bondy to Irving Brown, 1 October 1950, b. 13, f. 3, Brown Papers.

⁴ Daniel Apert to James Burnham, 19 January 1951, b. 8, f. 3, Burnham Papers; James Burnham to Daniel Apert, 19 January 1951, b. 5, f. 10, Burnham Papers. Burnham also complained that to replace Apert with Enock would mean reducing the CCF to a “province of Lovestone empire”: James Burnham to Gerald Miller, 22 January 1951, b. 8, f. 3, Burnham Papers.

Despite Burnham's efforts, Rougemont decided to suspend Apert and eventually terminate his relationship with the Amis in May 1951.⁵

The episode generated a vigorous protest by Burnham himself, who wrote Bondy a few weeks later. He claimed that the question went well beyond that of the individuals concerned, and affected the whole character and mission of the CCF, whose "sole basis and justification" was the creation of a united anti-totalitarian front. The replacement by Enock, which Burnham ascribed to "a kind of corridor putsch," represented to him a violation of that spirit and a sign that the organization was increasing its already overwhelmingly leftist composition – at a time when Burnham himself was gradually moving toward the right. He therefore urged the Paris office to find a political compromise with Apert and the Gaullist milieu in France, warning of the "real tragedy" that could follow: "If this is not, then the united front is broken, the basis of the existence of the Congress is dissolved, and the Congress itself will soon disappear."⁶ Despite such dire warnings, Enock served on as Secretary General and the organization survived this early dispute, managing to preserve a united front that included several Gaullist members. According to Giles Scott-Smith, the move reflected Brown's own agenda for the CCF, which generated conflicts with the CIA's office charged with overseeing the new organization, closer to Burnham's positions. Scott-Smith has observed that the "connection between ideals, money and power" that characterized the early stages of the Congress makes it difficult to understand exactly what Brown's intentions were.⁷ If the

⁵ René Lalive d'Epinay to Daniel Apert, 18 May 1951, box 1, folder 4, Nabokov Papers.

⁶ James Burnham to François Bondy, 6 February 1951, s. II, b. 90, f. 12, IACF Records. Bondy tried nonetheless to reassure Burnham that the decision had been purely on personal grounds, and that Aron had been constantly informed: François Bondy to James Burnham, 16 February 1951, b. 8, f. 6, Burnham Papers.

⁷ Scott-Smith, "The 'Masterpieces of the Twentieth Century' Festival and the Congress for Cultural Freedom," 130.

rationale for the selection of Enock was to have a more “amenable” secretary of the Amis, however, Brown and the CCF would later find out that the leftist political leaning *per se* did not assure a smoother coexistence with the International Secretariat. One should also be careful not to read too much into the episode, given the chaotic and tentative beginnings of the Congress until it found a more solid footing. At the very least, it demonstrates that competing views about the purpose and nature of the operation existed in Washington as well as in Europe. It also suggests that American actors took the political and intellectual positions in France into considerations, and that Europeans would soon learn to make use of their bargaining power.

The need to balance the presence of Enock led also to the inclusion of writer, politician and anti-fascist militant François de la Noë as a co-Secretary General, to represent Catholic sensibilities. The Amis de la Liberté could thus continue developing, and at the CCF Executive Committee meeting in February 1951 Enock could boast the representation of all democratic spiritual families within the organization, a feat that he claimed no one else in France had yet accomplished. The organization included Catholics and Protestants, socialists, liberals, and Gaullists of the Rassemblement du Peuple Français (RPF); it would perform three main functions: study and research, distribution of publications, and oral propaganda through confrontation with local Communists and neutralists.⁸ While hopeful about the possibility of achieving these ambitious results, Enock warned about the difficulties due to the fact “that we are in France, that France is France, that Frenchmen are Frenchmen, and that 1951 is an election year.”⁹ Clearly, the task appeared to be very delicate right from the beginning.

⁸ Minutes of the CCF Executive Committee, 10 February 1951, s. II, b. 2, f. 10, IACF Records.

⁹ Ibid.

The setup of the Italian committee offered different challenges, but it was equally complicated. Preliminary contacts between U.S. Ambassador James Dunn and Ignazio Silone had already taken place before the Berlin meeting, and the profile of the individuals sought was clear: “sufficiently left wing that they could not be ignored by their fellow intellectuals, yet they rejected both communism and neutralism.”¹⁰ As the Congress began to lay the groundwork for it in the summer and fall of 1950, no one ignored the fact that Silone was the person everyone had to deal with in one way or another. It was maybe more wishful thinking than an incorrect assessment when Bondy wrote Brown that “Silone, now party secretary [of the socialist Partito Socialista Unitario], will less than ever to anything real, but he seems quite eager to keep the contact.”¹¹ It was Silone, in fact, who suggested to Bondy a list of names who could constitute a first working group, and who also began to establish contacts and gather support for the organization. Silone, finally, was the one who arranged for Bondy and Georges Altman, journalist for *Franc-Tireur* and delegate to the Berlin Congress, to meet with several groups of Italian intellectuals during a trip to Rome in October 1950. It was the first of several attempts by members of the Paris Secretariat, in the following months, to gain first-hand knowledge of the situation in Italy, which concerned them greatly and for which they largely had to rely on Silone.

The centrality of the writer from the Abruzzi remained undisputed throughout the existence of the AILC, even though other intellectuals assumed important roles in the organization. As already suggested, the presence of such a figure at the head of a national committee was unique to the Italian case, and explained some of its peculiarities. In the

¹⁰ See Brogi, *Confronting America*, 181.

¹¹ Ignazio Silone to François Bondy, 11 September 1950, s. II, b. 289, f. 9, IACF Records; François Bondy to Irving Brown, 1 October 1950, s. II, b. 90, f. 3, IACF Records.

first place, Silone's authority and prestige offered greater autonomy to the Italian outfit than otherwise would have been the case. His role as one of the global symbols of the Congress allowed him to be largely independent from pressures and to give the AILC an independent line, which reflected Silone's own convictions more than those of the Executive Committee. Simply put, his resignation – which he threatened repeatedly – would have damaged the Congress much more than Silone himself. A second consequence of the writer's role in the Italian organization was that the penetration among the Italian intellectual milieu, and the success or failure in attracting certain groups and individuals, assumed a more personal character than in France. Finally, when the revelation of CIA funds questioned the independence of the intellectuals who had worked with the CCF, the repercussions in Italy were significantly smaller than in countries like the United States or Great Britain. It was, in part, because the Italian association was already in a marked decline that the scandal only accelerated. More importantly, however, the fact that Silone had always been its public face helped guard it from some of the harshest critics: neither the record of the organization, nor Silone's personal history and reputation lent much credence to the accusations that he had been an agent of the U.S. State Department for almost twenty years.

In their report on the visit to Rome in October 1950, Bondy and Altman anticipated the distinctive challenges that the Congress would face in Italy throughout its existence. Their first meeting was with members of socialist and liberal circles (the weekly *Il Mondo* and its editor Mario Pannunzio, philosopher Carlo Antoni), which in Italy and elsewhere constituted that non-Communist Left that the CCF was intended to bolster. While they expressed their willingness to cooperate with the Congress, they also

voiced their concern that the greatest threat to cultural freedom in Italy was “the ever-growing Catholic monopoly,” the presence of reactionaries both on the right and the left supporting pro-clerical, and even corporative state principles. They therefore rejected anything in the CCF activity “which might tend to a sacred union with political Catholicism, and which might limit the free-play of argument between themselves and the pro-clericals.” Bondy and Altman also observed little sympathy for intellectuals behind the iron curtain, but concluded that, although liberal Italian intellectuals tended “to be obsessed with their own local problems – especially clericalism,” some forms of cooperation could be established on the international level.¹²

A second group from the Socialist Unity Party (PSU) also sent positive signals. At the same time, its members showed the kind of diffidence that the Congress would face from several Italian intellectuals when they asked Bondy and Altman questions such as “Is your liberty that of American capitalism?” or “Who pays for your organization?” Anti-Americanism was a concern because of its widespread hold on almost every political group: “In this respect,” they warned, “we can regard the left as extending all the way to the person of [Christian Democratic prime minister] de Gasperi.”¹³ Other meetings with left-wing Christian Democrats and federalists left them with some equally mixed impressions. The two men had diagnosed several of the peculiarities of the Italian intelligentsia: the divisions, the battles against clericalism, and the latent suspicions against America and its perceived interference in domestic affairs. They concluded that there were good chances of succeeding in Italy, but by “indirect approach”: “discreet help to movements and periodicals already in existence. This would be more effective than to

¹² François Bondy and Georges Altman, “Rome report,” undated (but October 1950), s. II, b. 173, f. 2, IACF Records.

¹³ Ibid.

establish a large organizational apparatus, which would be torn apart by social, religious, and personal differences.” The Congress could also overcome the Italians’ sectarianism by stressing the international aspect of its activities.¹⁴

The final recommendation of the report was to establish immediately a committee on Silone’s initiative, of which the author of *Fontamara* had already sketched out the general outlines. It included the creation of an honorary committee and a working committee, but not a broadly-based group like the Amis de la Liberté, which was not feasible for the time being. The activities would develop along three main lines: the preparation and distribution of a series of pamphlets, the creation of a magazine open specifically to young intellectuals, and the publication of a series of important books through a friendly publisher. The Italian committee would work with socialist and Catholic trade unions to increase its reach, and benefit from publicity and support from Paris, but it should be left to Rome to adapt the material to Italian needs. Silone also stressed the fact that Italian intellectuals were influenced in particular by the developments in France, and that the new monthly publication under discussion would therefore be crucial: “Our prestige in Italy,” Bondy and Altman warned, “and our chances of obtaining cooperation among the Italian intellectuals depends [sic] in large measure on this magazine.”¹⁵

Though the report was overall positive, some of the leading figures of the Congress began to express their concerns about the shape of the Italian organization. Irving Brown, whose American Federation of Labor was the main source of the initial funding for the AILC, told Koestler that “if we could keep Silone in Paris and out of Italy

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid. Eventually no new magazine was created in France, but the CCF bulletin *Preuves* expanded into one under the editorship of François Bondy. See chapter 6.

we could build a better Italian organization. I think that the visit of Bondy and Altman tended to reinforce a one-sided Silone outfit for Italy. I hope that we will be able to rectify this soon when we will be able to start our Italian work in a more serious manner.”¹⁶ Frictions also emerged about the exclusion of the federalist group from the organization, which Silone imposed. The federalists advocated the creation of a federal European union as an antidote to the nationalisms that had brought the continent on the brink of annihilation in World War II. As Daniela Muraca has remarked, the collaboration with their movement had been one of the keys for the CCF to draw non-Communist intellectuals in Europe. It is all the more striking, therefore, that even those intellectuals who had participated in the Berlin Congress (Altiero Spinelli, Aldo Garosci) were not actively involved in the Italian committee. The International Secretariat expressed its regret for Silone’s veto, but reassured him that his preference would be respected.¹⁷ At the beginning of 1951, Bondy briefed Nabokov – soon to move from New York to take the position of Secretary General – that the situation was not good in Italy and that he was having some tensions with Silone. Nabokov agreed on the need to visit the Rome offices to see the situation firsthand, and recalled the peculiar atmosphere around the AILC: “After Brussels [the meeting of CCF Executive Committee in November 1950] as you remember, I went to Rome and discovered there all sorts of curious rumors about our Congress as well as an apathy in regard to it among Italian intellectuals.”¹⁸

¹⁶ Irving Brown to Arthur Koestler, 2 November 1950, b. 13, f. 10, Brown Papers.

¹⁷ Daniela Muraca, “L’Associazione italiana per la libertà della cultura,” 143; François Bondy to Ignazio Silone, 3 November 1950, s. II, b. 289, f. 9, IACF Records.

¹⁸ François Bondy to Nicolas Nabokov, 22 January 1951, s. II, b. 246, f. 9, IACF Records; Nicolas Nabokov to François Bondy, 3 February 1951, b. 1, f. 4, Nabokov Papers.

The establishment of a Congress office in Rome had in fact some difficulties in attracting intellectuals, compounded by a delay in transferring the funding from Paris that frustrated the AILC staff, and forced Bondy to reassure Silone about the CCF's intention to respect its commitments.¹⁹ By the end of March 1951, however, the organization was able to take off under the presidency of Silone. It counted members from several Italian intellectual families, but equally significant were the absences. The committee included representatives from the non-communist unions and student groups, socialist circles, the federalist movement and other cultural and civic associations. No representative of the Catholic world – neither from the Christian Democracy nor from the numerous Catholic associations – initially joined the organization, marking an important difference with the Amis.²⁰

A “Manifesto to Italian Intellectuals,” published in Rome on December 1, 1951, marked the public debut of the organization and anticipated its character. In line with the Berlin manifesto, it stated the indissoluble link between human progress and cultural freedom, which no government could limit or discipline. Rather than a call to arms, however, the Italian manifesto formulated one to intellectuals' personal responsibility that revealed Silone's influence. Betraying the principle of their independence, intellectuals betrayed not only themselves, but also their own mission toward society and calling. Beyond Silone and CCF Honorary Chairman Benedetto Croce, the manifesto was signed by the members of the Italian delegation to the Berlin Congress (among them art critic Franco Lombardi and journalist Guido Piovene), journalists, academics, artists (most notably poets Eugenio Montale and Alfonso Gatto, and writer Elio Vittorini).

¹⁹ François Bondy to Alice Ceresa, 12 March 1951, s. II, b. 171, f. 5, IACF Records.

²⁰ Alice Ceresa to François Bondy, 10 February 1951 and 23 March 1951, s. II, b. 171, f. 5, IACF Records.

While the political positions ranged from liberals to social democrats to socialists, the majority of its signers shared the experience in the anti-Fascist militancy and in the Resistance movement during World War II.²¹

The Amis de la Liberté: Establishing a Presence in France

Just like the CCF itself, the two national committees shared the necessity to establish a presence among intellectuals at the outset. That included both reaching as large a number of intellectuals as possible, and dispelling the rumors that began to circulate about the U.S. State Department as the source of the Congress funding. Each began to publish a regular bulletin and a series of pamphlets, aimed at presenting their goals and character and denouncing Communist tactics and policies. The Amis were quicker to add to these publications the establishment of centers on the territory to reach and mobilize a larger section of the population. By subscribing to the manifesto “Appel à ceux qui veulent rester libres” (“An appeal to those who want to remain free”), which reprised the main themes of the Berlin Manifesto, anyone could join the movement and receive the materials prepared.²² These included a presentation of the goals and origins of the movement, in order to overcome some perplexities about the organization and its sponsors, and a denunciation of Communist regimes aimed at revealing the true conditions behind the Iron Curtain. Among the topics were forced labor and education in the Soviet Union, the theory of just war according to Communism, and inquiries on the situation in satellite countries, but also exposés and condemnations of the Franco regime.

²¹ For a detailed analysis of the manifesto, its signers and their political affiliation, see chapter 4, note 47. See also Muraca, “L’Associazione italiana per la libertà della cultura,” 145-47.

²² Within a few months, the Amis reported that more than 2,500 signatures had been received from university and school professors, mayors, generals, unionists, clergymen and professionals: all those who, by training or vocation, were in constant relationship with the masses.

As Enock explained, the documents that they published could be compared “to fire-brands with a special purpose,” and each was aimed at a particular social category (e.g. women, mayors of agricultural communities, workers in the movie industry). In addition, the Amis bulletin reported on the activities of the different affiliates of the organization and the international demonstrations of the CCF.²³ Also important were the parallel organizations created for young people and women, Les Jeunes Amis de la Liberté (“The Young Friends of Freedom”) and the Association des Femmes pour la Paix et la Défense des Libertés Humaines (“Women’s Association for Peace and the Defense of Human Rights”). These organizations, which according to Pierre Grémion were modeled after the structure of the Parti communiste français (PCF), aimed to address specific groups rather than the masses, which had been an early characteristic of the Amis.²⁴

The local circles, which Enock promoted soon after taking over at his position as Secretary General, were another important element of the Amis de la Liberté. The rationale behind them was twofold: on the one hand, avoiding limiting one’s attention to Paris alone, which was not always representative of the nation at large; on the other, the effort to broaden the geographical basis of the organization fit perfectly with the parallel desire to address the intellectual middle class rather than just the elites. While the organization did not try to attract large masses of people, it wanted to reach the “cadres” in trade-union politics and in the cultural and intellectual activities of the place. These provincial branches, which took the name of Maisons de la Liberté (“Freedom Houses”),

²³ “Report by Mr. Jacques Enock,” Annex 1 to Minutes of the CCF Executive Committee 29-30 December 1952, s. II, b. 3, f. 2, IACF Records.

²⁴ Grémion, *Intelligence de l’anticommunisme*, 75-76. See also Minutes of Amis de la Liberté Executive Committee, 30 May 1951, s. II, b. 77, f. 7, IACF Records; B. Enginger to Daniel Apert, 16 January 1951, s. II, b. 246, f. 10, IACF Records; Memorandum on Amis de la Liberté, undated, s. II, b. 79, f. 4, IACF Records.

were meant to replicate at the local level the character of the national organization: meeting places for a broad range of anti-totalitarian forces, and centers for the democratic education of the masses and for promoting conferences and debates. A few years after their creation, CCF Administrative Secretary Michael Josselson claimed that the Maisons were the most important aspect of the activity of the Amis in France, even beyond the publications and demonstrations. In some cases, the PCF tried to create its own version of centers promoting conferences, debates, and exhibitions, thus attesting to their impact.²⁵

Although the original plan envisioned the creation of local circles in a large number of French cities, the Maisons were eventually established only in Bordeaux, Lyon, Grenoble, Saint Etienne and Nice. The choice of these places, Enock recalled a few years later, was a deliberate attempt to challenge totalitarian forces where they were at their strongest: those were the cities with more than two hundred thousand inhabitants and a Communist electoral strength between 30 and 40 percent.²⁶ The most common activity was the conference or lecture, which usually took place every two weeks and, depending on the speaker and the topic, could draw audiences ranging from fifty or sixty people to several hundreds. On a sample three-month period, the topics could include general discussions on cultural freedom, social justice, and the responsibility of the citizen, a debate on the modern novel, a meeting on local issues, and a lecture on Mexican art. Additional activities included libraries, study centers, meetings with other

²⁵ Michael Josselson to Jaques Enock, 1 April 1955, s. II, b. 78, f. 10, IACF Records; Jaques Enock to Michael Josselson, 22 April 1955, s. II, b. 78, f. 10, IACF Records.

²⁶ Report by Jacques Enock, 18 October 1954, s. II, b. 78, f. 6, IACF Records.

organizations and even social gatherings and events – the Nice Maison set up a Christmas tree for the children of its members in 1955.²⁷

Each Maison relied on local elements, and thus assumed a specific character, membership, and preferred type of event (lectures, informal debates, educational talks).²⁸ Enock provided the liaison between the center and the periphery, occasionally discussing with Josselson matters that went beyond the local scene and could affect the national or international activities. For instance, he ask Josselson for advice when the Maison in Lyon received an offer of cooperation from the U.S. Consulate. They both agreed that caution would be advisable, and to avoid strictly propaganda material.²⁹ On another occasion, Enock checked with Josselson to see whether a conference with Josephine Baker planned by the Bordeaux Maison could embarrass the American committee, and to guarantee that nothing would be made of the project if that were the case.³⁰

Several cases showed that the significance of these provincial Maisons could be broader, and that the Paris offices of the CCF were interested in following the political implications of their activity and requested explanations for things they did not approve. In June 1954, Enock had to intervene in a controversy caused by Bertrand Russell's threat to resign as Honorary Chairman of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, which showed the interplay between local and international dynamics. Russell – whose relationship with the CCF was especially controversial – offered as a reason for his desire to resign the allegation that the Amis were influenced by the Catholic clergy, and that

²⁷ Bulletin de liaison of the Amis de la Liberté, December 1955, s. II, b. 79, f. 4, IACF Records; Jacques Enock to Michael Josselson, 25 October 1955, s. II, b. 78, f. 11, IACF Records.

²⁸ See Jacques Enock to Michael Josselson, 12 November 1954, s. II, b. 76, f. 6, IACF Records.

²⁹ Jacques Enock to Michael Josselson, 6 July 1953, s. II, b. 78, f. 2, IACF Records.

³⁰ Jacques Enock to Michael Josselson, 5 February 1957, s. II, b. 79, f. 6, IACF Records. Baker, an American dancer and actress who had moved to France in the interwar period, was an active supporter of the Civil Rights Movement.

“the cultural freedom which the body effectively advocates is only freedom against Communism and not freedom from the Church.” Prompted by Nabokov to investigate, Enock reported that the accusations against the Maison in St. Etienne came from a member of the local Communist Party, and that no such influence existed on its activities.³¹ Though Russell eventually resigned a few years later for his disagreement with the American committee, the episode showed the extent to which local politics and the international prestige of the CCF could be connected, and why the leadership of the organization could be forced to confront issues driven by local circumstances rather than just dictate its own agenda.

Alongside these recurring activities, the Amis also promoted initiatives, demonstrations and protests to counter Communist messages or raise public awareness. They organized meetings between students and workers, a drama competition and a cinema club, and exchanges with foreign groups (youths, women). While most of the polemical thrust was aimed at Communists, in France or abroad, the Amis also protested against the death penalty for African American Willie McGee, writing U.S. Supreme Court Justice Robert H. Jackson to condemn the racial prejudices and fanaticism that they thought undergirded the decision.³² The ability to mobilize larger sections of the population than the intellectual circles to which the CCF chiefly spoke made the Amis an essential element for the activities in France. They would prove to be especially useful

³¹ Bertrand Russell to Stephen Spender, 4 June 1954, s. II, b. 284, f. 7, IACF Records; Jacques Enock to Nicolas Nabokov, 21 June 1954, s. II, b. 78, f. 5, IACF Records.

³² Les Amis de la Liberté to Justice Robert H. Jackson, 15 April 1951, s. II, b. 77, f. 7, IACF Records. The condemnation of U.S. racism was a recurring theme of the Amis in their publications and protests, also due to the need to respond to the accusations of turning a blind eye to violations and inequalities in the United States.

when crises or developments within the Soviet bloc offered the opportunity to stage massive public demonstrations.

Nabokov himself stressed this aspect of the Amis in his first report to the American Committee for Cultural Freedom (ACCF). It was both a summary of the work done so far and a defense of the approach taken in France from the criticism coming from some U.S. members, concerned about an excessive emphasis on cultural over political aspects. The ACCF should, in Nabokov's opinion, attempt to raise from American foundations money specifically earmarked for the establishment of the local branches. "I am firmly convinced," he wrote, "that these centers of "Les Amis de la Liberté" can perhaps become the most useful instrument of anticommunist activity in France. They could easily form the nuclea [sic] of reliable friendly elements, upon whom we should be able to call upon short notice." He outlined a multi-layered approach to different sectors of French intellectuals "gradually" radiating from the work of the Amis: a magazine and other publications should serve to freely circulate ideas and distribute propaganda and information to the different centers, while the Amis centers should develop into the intellectual "shock troops" of free culture.³³

A year later, Arthur Schlesinger would echo such a positive assessment of the organization in a report written to his CIA contacts after the Paris Arts Festival of May 1952. Having attended most sessions of the meetings that the Amis organized in tandem with the larger CCF event, Schlesinger was "most impressed by the earnestness of the people involved, by the quality of the discussions, and by the spirit and élan of the organization." The Amis, in his mind, "filled a vacuum in French cultural life": they

³³ Nicolas Nabokov, "Report no.1 to the American Committee," 22 May 1951, s. II, b. 3, f. 1, IACF Records.

allowed intellectuals “who have been separately reaching the conclusion that Soviet totalitarianism threatens the survival of civilization” to realize that they were not alone. The result, he concluded, had been “a great release of energy and enthusiasm.” Schlesinger also praised the work done by Enock, though it is not hard to read in his words the intent to defend further the activities of his friend Nabokov from American criticism: Enock was “another of those men of belief whose drive and dedication outweigh certain defects and irascibilities of personality.”³⁴ These reports suggest that Americans were very interested in the work of the CCF’s committees, and in successful ways to mobilize the anti-Communist intelligentsia. They also underscore the fact, however, that the perception of the work done in France (or Italy) had as much to do with U.S. domestic dynamics than with the record of these organizations. There was no single American position, but rather competing factions arguing about the better course of action. Nabokov and Schlesinger fundamentally agreed on a more “cultural” line, and on moving the CCF away from a more militant anti-Communism. In order to do that, they had to convince both U.S. officials and their peers that such a line would yield better results with the local intellectuals. In that sense, then, the reality – or the perception – of the cultural Cold War in France and Italy had larger implications on American policy-making.

The Italian Committee: “Total Fight” and “Fight of Details”

The debut of the Associazione italiana per la libertà della cultura, in addition to the publication programs that resembled the ones by the Amis, was characterized by two priorities specific to the Italian scene: the support for a democratic student union which

³⁴ Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. to Kenneth Giniger, 9 June 1952, b. 375, f. 2, Schlesinger Papers.

could challenge the apparently dominant Communist and Fascist ones, and the exploitation of a breakup among the Communist base following the departure of two Parliament members. The two initiatives anticipated some of the features that would remain constant throughout its existence: a strong reliance on Silone's personality – he was directly involved in both, even hosting the founding meeting of the student union at his own house – and a markedly left-wing affiliation that influenced the positions and alliances of the Italian association. The committee soon moved away from more directly political initiatives of this kind, though, to concentrate on a different work of persuasion and debate among intellectuals.³⁵

The organization was slow to work at full speed due to problems with the staff of the Rome office, and to some misunderstandings with the International Secretariat, which will be discussed in more detail later. By mid-1952, however, Silone could finally announce to the CCF Executive Committee that the AILC was working regularly. A first characteristic was that the AILC never attempted to reach massive membership like the Amis, limiting itself to intellectuals and artists who had distinguished themselves in the fight for freedom, and who were chosen through cooptation. The debate was tackled early on by the members of the organization, who were initially divided about restricting the membership to a small elite or opening it to all “intellectual workers.” Relying on the authority of the CCF – showing that the relationship between national and international secretariat could be used in both directions – Silone argued that it had been decided in Paris to privilege a limited organization.³⁶

³⁵ Minutes of the CCF Executive Committee, 9-11 February 1951, s. II, b. 2, f. 10, IACF Records.

³⁶ Minutes of the AILC Comitato direttivo, 11 December 1951, s. II, b. 171, f. 5, IACF Records. See also Minutes of the AILC Comitato direttivo, 17 October 1951, s. II, b. 173, f. 2, IACF Records.

At the Executive Committee meeting in November 1953 Silone illustrated what this limited organization looked like, and who was part of it. The AILC was composed of about 150 personalities from the world of literature, arts, sciences or cultural life, admitted individually through the national association. It included an 18-member Comitato direttivo (Executive Committee), a five-member Consiglio di presidenza (Presidency Council), and a financial commission. Four centers in the major cities – Rome, Milan, Florence and Naples – also existed, together with cultural groups associated collectively in smaller cities with high- or middle-school professors without the reputation or intellectual qualification of the members of the national association.

Among the members were sixteen novelists and poets, about fifty professors of philosophy, law, natural science, and history, a few dozen artists (musicians, painters, sculptors, directors) and art critics, and about thirty journalists and editors. Most were well-known in Italy and some also abroad, like Montale and Silone himself. Among philosophers, critics, and painters were people with positions ranging from Benedetto Croce's idealism to existentialists and positivists. Politically, most members belonged to the liberal, republican, and social democratic parties. There were some Catholics, but not members of the Christian Democracy (DC). That did not mean, Silone pointed out, that the AILC was in a polemic or open fight with "ideological Catholicism." It was, rather, due to the particular situation of Italian Catholics, who after some hesitations had decided not to participate – a decision that, as Silone confessed, had made the organization's work easier.³⁷

The composition and structure of the AILC also determined the peculiarities of its work. Among its members were all the shades of democratic anti-Communism: militant

³⁷ Minutes of the CCF Executive Committee, 27 November 1953, s. II, b. 3, f. 4, IACF Records.

and “intermittent” ones alike. The latter were members to whom the AILC did not want to renounce because, as Silone put it, they were “the most advanced that we have within the intellectual milieu influenced by the Communists,” extending the organization’s influence.³⁸ To avoid ambiguities, it had been unanimously accepted that the criticism toward Communist totalitarianism and reactionaries in the West were not on the same level, and that the organization did not want to remain equidistant from the two. The solution was a theoretical distinction that justified the Italian committee’s approach and the possibility of keeping together such a diverse membership: one was a *lutte de détails* (“fight of details”) of democrats who wanted to improve their societies by fighting specific reactionary events and forces; the other a *lutte totale* (“total fight”) and a complete rejection of the totalitarian structure of Communist society and the absence of free citizens. One fight was a function of the other and determined its effectiveness: only by denouncing domestic violations to cultural freedom the AILC could earn in the eyes of Italian intellectuals the credibility to denounce the ones perpetrated by Communists abroad.

The ideological content of the work of the Italian committee was described by Carlo Antoni, a philosopher from Croce’s idealist school and one of the most prominent members of the AILC. In a “Moral Report” he gave at its General Assembly in January 1953, he offered a tentative road map for the organization. He reminded its members of the origins of the committee in the Berlin Congress of 1950, and in the consensus that the defense of cultural freedom transcended political affiliation. Antoni insisted, however, that the struggle against the limitations to freedom was fundamental not only for artists

³⁸ Minutes of the CCF Executive Committee, 27 November 1953, s. II, b. 3, f. 4, IACF Records. My translation.

and scientists, but for society as a whole. The AILC was not opposed to any political system *per se*, including socialism and communism, but to the attempts by any government – even the ones calling themselves democratic – to control arts and opinions.³⁹

As far as the role of the intellectual was concerned, Antoni rejected both the isolation in an ivory tower and the principle of *engagement* that Sartre and others were promoting in France. Artists and writers could not remove themselves from the problems of society and not draw inspiration from it, but neither could independent thinkers receive the guidelines for their artistic creation from a political party. Antoni forcefully denied the accusations that the committee refused to establish a dialogue with Communists, and touched on a peculiar aspect of the anti-Communist struggle in Italy. Many, he said, could not help but think of a friend or an acquaintance who had joined the Communist Party, often in the years of anti-Fascism or in the Resistance movement during World War II. Beyond the personal ties and the shared experiences, which necessarily mitigated the harshness of the polemical exchanges, many of those who had become Communists were in fact deeply rooted in Italian cultural traditions. According to Antoni, they had arrived at Communism moving from the premises of Croce's idealistic philosophy, and were now painfully experiencing the contrast between those liberal roots and the intellectual constraints that dialectical materialism imposed on them. Rather than dangerous adversaries to eradicate, Italian intellectuals saw many of their Communist counterparts as friends they had to help make the "slow, painful and courageous" act of rejection of the Communist dictatorship.⁴⁰

³⁹ Carlo Antoni, "Relazione morale," 17 January 1953, s. II, b. 173, f. 3, IACF Records.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 9.

In his conclusion, however, Antoni felt the need to state unequivocally that the AILC was not exclusively opposed to Communism. It was equally vigilant on police brutality and “moralism” (i.e. censorship of artistic works), and the dangers of a Fascist resurgence and its alliance with right-wing reactionary Catholicism – though he also denied any anti-Catholic orientation of the committee. In foreign policy, he warned against the danger of indulging in alliances with or tolerance of dictatorships that threatened cultural freedom in order to oppose Communism, such as Franco’s Spain.⁴¹

Antoni’s “Moral Report” carried a particular weight given his role in the AILC and his prestige as one of the followers of the late Croce, one of the honorary chairmen of the Congress. Together with Silone’s report to the CCF’s Executive Committee that same year, he sketched the main themes and goals of the Congress, explicitly placing the Italian committee in the larger context of an international movement. Nonetheless, he also touched on some issues and struck certain notes peculiar to the Italian scene, in their tone if not in their content. The AILC would vigorously oppose Communist interference into the cultural world, but inject its activities with theoretical and practical elements – the legacy of Croce’s philosophy, the personal relations with Communist intellectuals, the special sensibility to the dangers of Fascism – that set it apart from other committees. Such an attitude was in many ways an inevitable development in a country in which so many intellectuals had expressed sympathy for the Communist Party, and exemplified why the tone and contents of CCF activities in Italy could be so different from the militant anti-Communism that some – especially abroad – expected.

The work of the AILC developed in two main directions: it acted as an international “*prolongement*” of the Congress, but also dedicated to issues touching on

⁴¹ Ibid., 12-13.

Italian society and cultural life. To the first belonged the publication of brochures on Congress activities and the circulation of the CCF French magazine *Preuves* – which Silone deemed very helpful, as French was the second language of Italian intellectuals. The AILC also acted in coordination with the Congress when it called for demonstrations and protests against Soviet policies or actions. Alongside the international level was the opposition to Communists at home, but also other initiatives on issues that could not be reduced to the dichotomy Communism/anti-Communism. The Italian committee was, for example, particularly active in the campaign to expunge from the Constitution the Fascist laws that had not yet been abolished. The rationale was to avoid the danger that the Partito Comunista Italiano (PCI) would be seen as the party of the Constitution, and let the responsibility for the survival of these laws fall on the others. The AILC intervened through conferences and publications, and promoted the creation of a judicial commission to pressure the Parliament to apply the Constitution. Another aspect was the work against religious intolerance, which – as Silone pointed out, probably to prevent the recurring criticism aimed at the organization – was more effective because not carried out, for the most part, by anti-Catholics or anti-clericals.

The AILC also gained popularity and authority fighting against censorship of arts and literature, and through campaigns against the military tribunals' prosecution of crimes committed by civilian writers. It cooperated with directors of national cinema clubs, mostly anti-Fascist, which allowed the use of movies for meetings and local groups. Finally, it promoted the Associazione amatori d'arte ("Association of Art Lovers"), which sponsored the popularization of modern art by offering affordable

reproductions of paintings and other works of arts to those who wanted to buy them.⁴²

Silone and the AILC also reserved special attention to the work among university students and youth groups, which many in the early 1950s believed to be inevitably polarized between left- and right-wing extremists. The writer maintained a firm opposition to the idea of creating a uniform organization modeled after the Amis in France, reflecting the different conditions in the two countries.⁴³

The fight against Communism, given its large sway among Italian politicians, workers, and intellectuals, was the main task, but its effectiveness depended on its democratic character. The AILC had attempted to take away from Communists the monopoly of the defense of certain causes, in the belief that the CCF's task everywhere should be to remove from Communism the mask of advocate of democratic and liberal causes. In some cases, however, these domestic dynamics moved the national committee to initiatives that the International Secretariat did not understand or approve. In the summer of 1953, for instance, Silone warned Josselson that the AILC had decided to subscribe to an appeal against the death penalty promoted by the magazine *Il Ponte*, edited by the organization's member Piero Calamandrei. The reason was not a declaration of principles, he explained, but a precise political act. The Rosenberg case, which had had a lasting impact on the intellectual milieu of France and Italy in particular, had showed once again the "technical superiority" of the Communists at these

⁴² Minutes of AILC General Assembly, 22 January 1953, s. II, b. 171, f. 7, IACF Records; Report on AILC activities, 15 October 1953, s. II, b. 171, f. 7, IACF Records; Minutes of AILC Comitato direttivo, 27 November 1957, s. II, b. 172, f. 3, IACF Records; AILC bulletin n. 48, 15 January 1958; Memorandum on Associazione italiana amatori d'arte, undated (but March 1955), s. II, b. 171, f. 9, IACF Records; Report of AILC activities for 1956, s. II, b. 172, f. 1, IACF Records.

⁴³ Ignazio Silone to François Bondy, 20 November 1950, s. II, b. 289, f. 9, IACF Records; Minutes of the CCF Executive Committee, 31 May 1952, s. II, b. 3, f. 1, IACF Records.

public opinion campaigns.⁴⁴ The appeal, which opposed any summary condemnation or execution and hoped for the elimination of the death penalty all over the world, was aimed at those intellectuals who had been honest victims of the Communist propaganda in the Rosenberg case. Silone asked for the position of the CCF on making the appeal international, but Josselson delayed his reply until the Executive Committee met. There, the members decided to refrain from expressing an official position and showed the discomfort of many – including Americans who had defended the U.S. government on the Rosenberg case – to address such an issue, despite Silone’s urging to appropriate it. Privately, Josselson told Nabokov that he agreed with Raymond Aron and others in finding the text of the resolution “execrable.” He suggested to insist on the need to modify the character of the resolution, too “strictly political” and “anti-governmental” at a time when Italy was in danger of slipping into anarchy. Clearly, the AILC’s strategy of fighting Communists on their same grounds could at times become controversial and a source of embarrassment for the international organization.⁴⁵

Though the Italian committee opted for a limited and distinguished membership, the task of reaching a larger number of people outside the main cities and the elite intellectual circles remained central. In addition to the centers in the large cities, the AILC received requests for collaboration from several groups throughout the country. However, the model of the *Maisons de la Liberté* – local offices directed from Paris, acting as centers of oral propaganda, debate, and distribution of Congress materials –

⁴⁴ In 1953, the United States executed Julius and Ethel Rosenberg for passing to the Soviet Union secrets about the atomic bomb. The case was highly controversial in Europe, where Communists led a public opinion campaign questioning the verdict and demanding that Eisenhower grant a presidential pardon to the couple.

⁴⁵ Ignazio Silone to CCF Secretariat, 7 August 1953, s. II, b. 171, f. 7, IACF Records; Michael Josselson to Nicolas Nabokov, 5 February 1954, s. II, b. 243, f. 13, IACF Records.

could not apply to the Italian reality. Working against such an activity of penetration among the public was the fact that it would be almost impossible to set up from nothing a centralized movement that could challenge the monopoly of Communist and Catholic associations and groups on the territory.⁴⁶ The Italian provinces also presented especially unfavorable conditions for such a structure, suffering from intellectual isolation and a dependence on party structures even for cultural activities. The AILC chose instead to offer to already existing cultural centers the possibility to affiliate as a group with the organization by subscribing to its manifesto, and to receive limited financial and logistical help from Rome. The criteria for eligibility revolved around the exclusion of totalitarian elements, and of circles under the dominating influence of one party, even if democratic; the overwhelming majority of local leaders were liberals, republicans, and social democrats. The mutual benefit of this arrangement was that the local circles could break the isolation and backwardness of Italian provincial life, while the AILC could build a network of democratic groups representing its “organizational and ideal extension” without encumbering too much its limited staff.⁴⁷

By the end of the 1950s, the Italian committee had established a relationship of this sort with approximately one hundred groups and associations all over the country. While no generalization was possible given the profound differences between the places in which they operated (ranging from small towns of eight hundred people to cities of three hundred thousand), some common elements emerged. Most of the circles included a library for their members, and the AILC intended to provide financial help to the rest to set up one in each center; they also offered free consultation of magazines and

⁴⁶ Muraca, “L’Associazione italiana per la libertà della cultura,” 149.

⁴⁷ Memorandum “Circoli locali per la libertà della cultura,” undated (but March 1954), s. II, b. 171, f. 8, IACF Records.

newspapers (among them the AILC's own *Tempo Presente*, *Il Mondo*, *Il Ponte*). The Italian committee contributed to the purchase of some equipment for the circles – projectors, televisions, radios – and sent informational materials for lectures or meetings on topics of general interest, such as the Italian Constitution or the relationship between Church and State. Each circle also responded to the local context and inputs to organize its activities, which included lectures and debates, formation courses for adults, exhibitions of photographs, paintings or books, and gathering support for AILC initiatives.⁴⁸

The reliance of the AILC on this decentralized model to carry out its action stood out among the CCF's national committees. The Paris Secretariat itself requested advice and information on how to set up a system of local circles on the model of the Italian one for countries as different as Japan and India. Silone linked the development of the circles to a larger phenomenon, which he claimed interested far more places than Italy alone. He saw among the causes for it the spread of mass society – a theme in which he was becoming increasingly interested in the late 1950s – and the inertia that it created among the public. “Everywhere,” he told members of the Congress Executive Committee, “the mass parties and unions have created a new form of solitude from which the most sensitive spirits try to escape. Everywhere the so-called party culture is in decadence. Everywhere the mechanic resources of mass culture pose new problems to those who are concerned with freedom. It is not a question of creating centralized and bureaucratic

⁴⁸ AILC Bulletin n. 56, 15 January 1958, s. II, b. 172, f. 3, IACF Records; “Risultati di un'inchiesta sulla situazione dei circoli di cultura,” Supplement to AILC Bulletin n. 68, 18 May 1960, s. II, b. 172, f. 5, IACF Records.

organizations, but rather to stimulate the local energies, to guide and instruct them.”⁴⁹

The emphasis on local circles then became, at least in Italy, a way to discuss and deal with a dimension that intellectuals were observing for the first time on such a large scale.

Another peculiar aspect of the Italian committee was the response it gave to the intrinsic contradiction that characterized the Congress from its foundation. Its officers and members stressed repeatedly the notion that the organization was apolitical, in the sense that it claimed its independence from any country or political party and rather aimed at defending cultural freedom wherever it was in danger. Such an approach allowed it to draw intellectuals from very different milieux, and to establish its legitimacy as an autonomous intellectual force. At the same time, as Giles Scott-Smith has highlighted, the CCF had an evidently political dimension, despite its protestations to the contrary. According to Scott-Smith, the U.S. government institutionalized its allegedly apolitical culture as an ideological force, and turned it into the cultural-intellectual equivalent of the Marshall Plan in order to forge a “hegemonic” postwar Atlanticism.⁵⁰ Nabokov himself, in fact, had defended the emphasis on “cultural” activities by saying that “I don’t believe that there has been a single activity of the Congress for Cultural Freedom which did not have a political implication or meaning.”⁵¹

If the tension between apolitical identity and political goals was thus not unique to the AILC, it was especially delicate in Italy. Rumors and suspicions about the Congress being an American organization funded by the State Department had followed it from the beginning, and in part conditioned its activities. Silone even complained that a certain

⁴⁹ Minutes of the CCF Executive Committee, 23-25 January 1959, s. II, b. 5, f. 2, IACF Records. My translation.

⁵⁰ Scott-Smith, *The Politics of Apolitical Culture*, 1-2.

⁵¹ Minutes of the CCF Executive Committee, 24-25 January 1955, b. 1, f. 6, ACCF Records.

“carelessness” (*leggerezza*) in the CCF’s subsidies to the Italian office had led one of its employees to refer to it as “American money.”⁵² The danger for the organization of being perceived as political was that it would prevent it from engaging those neutralist or undecided intellectuals who responded to its initiatives on religious or cultural freedom, but did not want to be associated with pro-American positions. On the other hand, its membership made it extremely hard to devise a position that could be acceptable to all without generating tensions and compromising the work of the organization in other areas. As Silone explained to the other members of the CCF Executive Committee, it was impossible to promote political agitation on short notice without providing the intellectuals involved with the necessary documentation; the AILC, unlike the Communists, wanted its members not to sign anything on trust but to engage on themes they knew personally. Following his decision to keep the Italian committee out of direct political propaganda and agitation, the original solution was to create a separate organization, formally independent from the AILC, to carry out the more militant and propagandistic work: the Centro Italiano d’Azione Democratica (CIAD, Italian Center for Democratic Action). Josselson and Silone took the decision in late 1952, and they named the socialist Sigfrido Ciccotti as its secretary.⁵³

The CIAD, in the intentions of Paris and Rome, was to act as the equivalent of the Amis. Its task was to coordinate the democratic parties (mainly liberals, republicans, socialists not allied with the Communist Party, and Christian Democrats), unions, youth and civic associations. It published a bulletin, organized meetings and conferences, and

⁵² Ignazio Silone to François Bondy, 21 October 1951, s. II, b. 289, f. 9, IACF Records.

⁵³ Minutes of the CCF Executive Committee, 27 November 1953, s. II, b. 3, f. 4, IACF Records; Antoni, “Relazione morale,” and following debate, 17 January 1953, s. II, b. 173, f. 3, IACF Records. On the CIAD, see also Muraca, “L’Associazione italiana per la libertà della cultura,” 152-53.

established contacts with similar groups in other countries – in the summer of 1953 it hosted a delegation of the Americans for Democratic Action in Rome. During the crisis in East Berlin that followed the workers' revolt in June 1953, Josselson urged Ciccotti to mobilize the CIAD after the example of what the Amis were doing in France: mass demonstrations in the main cities, distribution of pamphlets and flyers, meetings and debates. The results were however disappointing, as all the parties showed their reluctance to sponsor any public event.⁵⁴ The whole CIAD, in fact, soon disappointed the expectations of Silone and Josselson, who lost interest in the enterprise until it eventually folded in 1956.⁵⁵

The Mid-1950s: Transformation and Breakthrough

If the period that went approximately from 1950 to 1954-1955 was a time of experiments and uncertainty for the CCF and its national committees, by the mid-1950s the organization could look at its initial record as a success story. The Congress was expanding its geographical scope and its activities, with the successes of the Paris Arts Festival in 1952, the Science and Freedom conference in Hamburg in July 1953, and the establishment of its reputation as an intellectual force in Europe and elsewhere. The developments abroad also contributed to the sense that a rethinking of the old approach was in order: Stalin's death in March 1953 had moderately improved the international climate, and many intellectuals felt the need to reevaluate the mission of the Congress

⁵⁴ Sigfrido Ciccotti, "Résumé des activités du "Centro"," 14 October 1953, s. II, b. 172, f. 8, IACF Records; Michael Josselson to Sigfrido Ciccotti, Jun 19 1953, s. II, b. 172, f. 8, IACF Records.

⁵⁵ Silone even complained about the fact that the continuing existence of CIAD could damage the AILC by creating confusion, and refused to act as "screen" for activities he was not informed of, claiming that as far as he was concerned the whole experience had ended in mid-1954. See Ignazio Silone to Michael Josselson, 3 January 1956 and 18 January 1956, s. II, b. 290, f. 2, IACF Records.

and the possibility of new activities beyond the more militant anti-Communism of its debut. Such a need was perceived more or less clearly by the national committees as well, which began to discuss their orientation.

Despite the remarkable success that the Amis enjoyed in their original goals, the organization's leadership acutely perceived the need for an evolution that reflected the changing situation in France and in the world. It was a delicate process, because it touched on some of the fundamental elements of the group's identity, and on the "founding compromise" on which it was based. In his reports to the Congress, Enock had continued to stress the difficulties in keeping together very different positions and traditions, and the occasional disputes that resulted. The Secretary General warned that, if any group were to leave the Amis, it would be a catastrophe and not a relief: the feeling of solidarity that had been accomplished was based on the presence of all democratic forces, and in his opinion if one should leave all the others would follow. Enock's assessment, though too pessimistic given the rapid progress the organization would make, was a reminder of the Amis' continuing, intrinsic fragility. Political realignments and local dynamics were as powerful in shaping its activities, and in setting the boundaries within which it could operate, as the desiderata and suggestions from the Paris offices.⁵⁶

Enock presented the question of a new direction for the Amis to the CCF Executive Committee in November 1953, and once again stressed the connection between the national developments and the direction of the international organization. The Amis, he said, were created initially as a place for discussion and coexistence of very different positions, a task they accomplished admirably. In the previous months, the organization had begun to pose in conferences and debates questions that were highly

⁵⁶ Minutes of the CCF Executive Committee, 29-30 December 1952, s. II, b. 3, f. 2, IACF Records.

divisive among its own members, as they did not touch on the basic opposition to the Communist bloc but on domestic policies or debates within the Atlantic community. Among them were the nature of French democracy, the Union Française (as the French colonial empire had been renamed after the war), Europe and the project of a European army that was especially controversial in France in those years.⁵⁷ The people who had given their support in the past, under the premises of a common and continuous work in defense of freedom, might now be at odds over these issues.

Enock warned that the Amis might become more effective if they began to take stands, but that might force some of their members to leave. The organization risked being radically transformed, and gradually turning into a more limited, cloistered organism, eventually retreating into a “para-socialist, para-unionist, center-left organization” that would be largely useless in the current environment. Enock asked for the advice of the Executive Committee on these options, regretting that the CCF did not pose the question globally but left it to the Amis, making it seem like a French problem.⁵⁸ Aron and David Rousset responded arguing that the role of the Amis could be to clarify the issues, look for honest debate, and try to propose some common parameters within which a constitutional system might be developed for France. Silone, anticipating that the problem would soon present itself in Italy as well, agreed that at a time when anti-Communist parties in democratic countries were divided, CCF organisms had to privilege

⁵⁷ The European Defence Community (EDC) was a plan to create an integrated European military force that would have included the original members of the European Community (France, West Germany, Italy and the Benelux countries). The plan was originally proposed by the French Prime Minister Plevin, and its goals were multiple: to allow the remilitarization of West Germany while assuaging French concerns, to provide a defense force against Soviet attacks on European territory, and to accelerate the process of European integration already under way in the economic sector. The treaty was signed in 1952 but met strong opposition in France, especially among Gaullists concerned about the loss of national sovereignty. When the French National Assembly rejected the ratification of the treaty, in August 1954, the idea was abandoned.

⁵⁸ Minutes of the CCF Executive Committee, 27 November 1953, s. II, b. 3, f. 4, IACF Records.

an effort in favor of democratic solidarity. They could open discussions, but should accept a contradictory debate only with the outside (regarding democratic solidarity), not on issues divisive for the democratic forces. The final advice for Enock was not to transform the Amis into a political organization for those discontented with other parties.⁵⁹

The Secretary General continued to press the discussion on the evolution of the organization at the beginning of 1954, both inside the Amis and in his dialogue with Paris, stressing that thematic and organizational questions were closely tied. On the one hand, it meant moving beyond a systematic criticism of the Stalinist regime to address domestic and international issues, and attempting to formulate original solutions by the Amis – or, as Enock put it, “dissecting the feeblest elements of French democracy.”⁶⁰ Such a shift also required a closer connection and exchanges between the local Maisons, and a clear direction in which all would move. Enock repeatedly expressed his confidence that the changed situation, in France and within the organization, allowed them to take this step. While previously he had believed the Amis should not take positions on sensitive issues, the situation now seemed to be more solid and the prospect of mass defections increasingly unlikely. At the same time, the organization could hardly maintain its relevance if it continued to avoid problems that were debated throughout the nation: the situation of youth, the colonial empire, the East-West dialogue, the housing

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ In a letter to Josselson, he indicated that the main themes that the Amis were interested in pursuing were the Union Française and the country’s role in the world, unemployment and union participation, and the constitutional debate on French institutions: see Jacques Enock to Michael Josselson, 23 September 1954, s. II, b. 78, f. 5, IACF Records.

crisis, alcoholism.⁶¹ This approach, however, risked creating splits in its own ranks, which continued to reflect a wide range of positions. When that happened, Enock's suggestion in accordance with Josselson was to fall back on foreign policy or "imperial" issues rather than exacerbate the tensions.⁶²

Americans, who had initially conceived this organization as an anti-Communist weapon, had now to watch it evolve into something else that could become internally divisive, or simply veer into questions that were not relevant to U.S. strategic interests. It is true that Enock repeatedly asked the Executive Committee of the CCF for something that lay between advice and directive, claiming that any action by the Amis would necessarily also implicate the international organization. Even within the latter, however, the weight of the Europeans who contributed to the fortunes of the CCF with their prestige was often hard to ignore. When Irving Brown suggested transforming the Amis into active promoters of the Atlantic partnership and NATO, an idea he had also expressed privately to Josselson, he faced the skepticism of Aron and others about the possibility of effectively building a consensus on the issue in France. French members – or for that matter any member – rarely deferred to the judgment of others when it came to deciding the course of action in their own country.⁶³

The year 1956 was especially important for the evolution of the two committees and for the CCF in general. Some events affected France more directly, like the escalation of the colonial crisis in North Africa and the failed intervention in Suez. Others, like the revolts in the Soviet satellites of Poland and Hungary, had a universal

⁶¹ Report on the Amis de la Liberté for the International Executive Committee, 20 December 1954, s. II, b. 3, f. 5, IACF Records; Minutes of the CCF International Executive Committee, 24-25 January 1955, b. 1, f. 6, ACCF Records.

⁶² Jacques Enock to Michael Josselson, 29 July 1955, s. II, b. 78, f. 11, IACF Records.

⁶³ Minutes of the CCF International Executive Committee, 24-25 January 1955, b. 1, f. 6, ACCF Records.

impact on Communists and non-Communists alike, and marked a turning point for the Congress. Following these events, the two national committees broke the isolation that had marked their beginnings in a largely hostile environment. The breakup of the alliance between Communists and progressives in the two countries allowed them greater penetration among intellectuals, and lessened the need for a purely defensive attitude.

The French colonial empire, which had survived World War II despite the occupation of several of its parts by foreign powers, had been replaced by the Union Française in 1946. With the spread of the decolonization process, however, a few countries had already begun to claim their independence from French rule – most notably Vietnam, whose victory in Dien Bien Phu, in May 1954, represented a humiliation for the French government. The process also affected the colonies in North Africa, but in the case of Algeria its particular status made it impossible to reach a peaceful settlement between French authorities and nationalist fighters. Not only Algeria was the oldest major colony, but its territory was also considered part of mainland France rather than a colonial possession. The hostilities between the guerrilla forces of the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) and the French army began in 1954 and lasted for almost a decade, until the country gained its independence. The impact of the conflict in France was enormous at both the political level, with the collapse of the Fourth Republic and the return to power of de Gaulle in 1958, and the psychological one. A majority of the French public opinion initially opposed the concession of independence to Algeria, with the notable exception of the Communist Party. It took the prolonged fighting and the human and moral costs of the war to move it to accept the loss of Algeria rather than to resist indefinitely. Even then, only someone with the prestige and authority of General de

Gaule, who was elected president in 1958, could avoid even more traumatic repercussions for the nation.⁶⁴

Already in the spring of 1956, the situation in the African colonies was one of the top priorities for the Amis to discuss in the coming months, given its growing importance among the French population and intellectuals. Enock reported to the CCF Executive Committee that for the first time anti-colonial demonstrations, which until that point had been the prerogative of Communist and progressive groups, would be organized by the Amis de la Liberté in Lyon.⁶⁵ As the Algerian crisis unfolded, the Amis opposed the extreme attempts to maintain French sovereignty over its colonies, also to prevent attacks from the Communists, but refrained from expressing support for the nationalist forces of the FLN.⁶⁶ They hosted debates and conferences in cooperation with *Preuves* and some CCF intellectuals, which reflected the gradual belief that the costs for France of maintaining control of the country would be too high. Given the divisive nature of the issue, however, the organization could not assume a unified position, but rather tried to avoid generating political tensions among its members.

Less controversial for the CCF and its affiliates, but no less important, were the revolts in the Soviet satellites of Eastern Europe in the summer and fall of 1956. The Amis and the AILC denounced the repression of the Poznań uprising in June, and tried to draw the public's attention to the oppressive nature of Soviet rule. The French committee issued a special bulletin and arranged for two lawyers to be sent to Poznań to protect the strikers; the Maisons also gathered signatures for a protest addressed to the Polish

⁶⁴ For more on the impact of the Algerian War, see chapter 6.

⁶⁵ Memorandum on the Amis de la Liberté, undated (but 1956), s. II, b. 79, f. 4, IACF Records; Minutes of the CCF International Executive Committee, 28-29 January 1956, s. II, b. 4, f. 1, IACF Records.

⁶⁶ Minutes of the CCF Executive Committee, 23-25 January 1959, s. II, b. 5, f. 2, IACF Records.

consulates in several French cities. The activities of the Italian committee were rather limited in comparison, since the circles were virtually paralyzed during the summer period. Silone informed Josselson that the AILC was working mainly through the press – using its network of friendly newspapers and magazines to publish articles, appeals, and reportages – and hoped to have speakers in the fall, especially aimed at the socialist milieu.⁶⁷

The Hungarian revolution in October had an even bigger emotional impact, offering greater opportunities for mobilization of French and Italian public opinion and for practical measures to help the émigrés who began to flee the country. A few days after news of the repression had reached the West, a CCF Executive Committee was hastily convened for the occasion. Enock announced to its members the intention to organize meetings in all the Maisons, seeing it also as the opportunity to reflect the growing influence of the movement. More importantly, he and Aron, the other Frenchman present, agreed on the need for a large demonstration in Paris in 1957 with the help of the Amis. “The center of the fight,” as he called it, the French capital was the battlefield in the struggle for the mind of the country’s intelligentsia, the last “island of Stalinism” in the world.⁶⁸

Showing the interplay of domestic and international politics, however, Enock also pointed out that the activities of the Amis faced a conundrum due to the current situation of the socialist SFIO – then in power – *vis-à-vis* the Algerian crisis. In France, he

⁶⁷ Jacques Enock to Michael Josselson, 13 July 1956, s. II, b. 79, f. 5, IACF Records; Ignazio Silone to Michael Josselson, 20 July 1956, s. II, b. 290, f. 3, IACF Records; Ignazio Silone to Michael Josselson, 21 August 1956, s. II, b. 290, f. 2, IACF Records. The PSI was at the time moving away from the alliance with the PCI that had begun in 1948. The activity of the AILC therefore looked in particular at that sector to exploit the negative impact of the events in Poland and, a few months later, Hungary.

⁶⁸ Minutes of the CCF Executive Committee, 27 October 1956, s. II, b. 4, f. 2, IACF Records.

claimed, one could only talk to the middle ranks of the intellectual class in the language of the left, “*socialiste ou socialisant*.” The party, he claimed, was currently “sterilized” and almost paralyzed by the increasingly complicated attempts to quell the independence movements in Algeria, which by the end of 1956 included the abolition of the Algerian Assembly, the arrest of nationalist leaders, and the granting of exceptional police powers to the army. According to Enock, the Socialists were concerned that, if they discussed Poland and Hungary, the Communists would bring up Algeria to accuse them of hypocrisy. Although the Amis could gather hundreds or thousands of people in several cities, the paralysis of a fundamental element of their organization blocked them. In what seemed like a veiled polemic against criticism moved against him, he repeatedly stressed the concept that “those who know the French situation” knew that socialism in France was paralyzed. The resulting paradox was that the Amis were in a stronger position than ever, and yet stymied by circumstances beyond their control.⁶⁹ When Aron suggested that they organize a public debate on Algeria, Enock appeared hesitant and seemed to imply that the association with the Congress could be a liability for the Amis in France: he wanted to avoid the possibility that its opponents launched a press campaign about the “friends of the Congress,” its origins and funding.

Nonetheless, the Amis were active in organizing demonstrations and protests against Soviet oppression, as well as in offering help to Hungarian refugees and exiles. In November and December 1956, the French committee convened five major meetings of more than a thousand people, followed in the next few months by conferences, public commemorations and other activities marking the anniversary of the revolt. Both in Paris and in the province Maisons, contacts were made with groups of exiles, particularly

⁶⁹ Ibid.

students, together with an effort to keep alive among the public the awareness of the conditions in Budapest in the aftermath of the repression. On such activities, the agreement with the Paris offices of the CCF was virtually complete, and the activities of the Amis were part of a larger effort of propaganda and humanitarian aid to which the Congress devoted a significant part of its energies. Josselson himself encouraged Enock to have the Amis take part in public demonstrations, but also urged him to evaluate each situation depending on the local conditions.⁷⁰

Compared to the international organization, the Italian committee was in an easier predicament following the events in Hungary and Egypt: having never been too closely associated to the United States – thanks in part to Silone’s reputation – it could concentrate on the denunciation of the Soviet intervention more freely. It immediately issued a manifesto expressing solidarity with the Hungarian rebels, which was circulated in the press and among intellectuals, and published pamphlets and reportages about the events and the consequences of the repression. In the following months, the AILC continued to organize events, demonstrations and conferences in Rome and in the local circles to keep alive the attention of the public in the West. It led the effort to help the refugees who had left Hungary through fundraising events such as art exhibitions and by sponsoring the publication of a Hungarian-language periodical directed at exiles.⁷¹

Vaseline and Castor Oil: The Tensions between the CCF and the Committees

⁷⁰ Minutes of the CCF International Executive Committee, 18-19 January 1958, s. II, b. 4, f. 5, IACF Records; “Activities of the National Committees,” Minutes of the CCF International Executive Committee, 23-25 January 1959, s. II, b. 5, f. 2, IACF Records; “Les Amis de la Liberté et le premier anniversaire de l’insurrection de Budapest,” 4 January 1958, b. 6, f. 5, Brown Papers.

⁷¹ Minutes of the AILC Comitato direttivo, 27 November 1957, s. II, b. 172, f. 3, IACF Records; “News from the National Committees,” January 1957, s. II, b. 113, f. 6, IACF Records; Minutes of the CCF Executive Committee, 20 November 1956, s. II, b. 4, f. 3, IACF Records; Minutes of the CCF International Executive Committee, 18-19 January 1958, s. II, b. 4, f. 5, IACF Records.

The relationship of the Amis and the AILC with the Congress was at the same time close, fruitful and conflicted. Most of the times they worked together successfully, as the two sides shared a fundamental agreement on the mission of the CCF and the importance of countering Communist propaganda. The Paris Secretariat understood the principle that the national committees needed to enjoy a significant degree of autonomy to work effectively, and largely respected the boundaries between national and international organization. In some cases, however, the relationship was far more complicated. An analysis of the instances of tension and conflict highlights the complexity of a dynamic that blended several elements: national and international perspectives and interests, personal as well as political disagreements, and competing views about hierarchy and respective roles.

Such instances should not be overdramatized: the Amis were a successful part of the activities of the CCF in France for a decade, and the things on which they agreed ran deeper than those on which they disagreed. It was not pressure from Josselson that determined the anti-Communist stance of the Amis, on which all its members agreed. Conversely, Enock's reaction to what he perceived to be attempts by Josselson to interfere with the Amis did not indicate that the French committee pursued radically different policies from its parent organization. The same can be said for Italy, where policy disputes did not diminish the underlying agreements or even the strength of personal relationships developed over time. A discussion of the tensions and controversies that emerged over the years is nonetheless important for reasons beyond the French or the Italian scene. It offers a more vivid picture of the ways in which different personalities, agendas, and political and intellectual backgrounds interacted. Though the

fundamental goals were close enough to guarantee an effective cooperation, the CCF could not expect to impose its will on the Amis or on the AILC simply because it was financing their activities.

Some of the tensions in France were of a political character, and touched on the delicate balance between the different families that composed the Amis. Thus, for example, in 1951 the CCF magazine *Preuves* came under criticism from the Catholic members of the Amis for an article that criticized private education as a tool for the Church to impose conformism and obedience. The Amis co-Secretary de la Noë wrote Bondy, its editor, on behalf of the Catholic groups he represented. He lamented the publication of the article, which went against the spirit of the Amis and the efforts he had made to convince his own camp to join. Enock shared the criticism of *Preuves*, and requested that the Amis be consulted before the magazine published further pieces on French domestic issues that could be divisive within the organization.⁷²

More frequently, the clashes that arose were not so much about fundamental disagreements over anti-Communism or French politics. They could revolve around tactical aspects, or be ascribed to the personalities involved: none of the main characters – Josselson and Nabokov for the CCF, Enock for the Amis – was particularly easy to work with.⁷³ A more significant source of tension, however, was the uncertainty about the relationship between the Amis and the Secretariat, and the reciprocal rights and obligations. The larger issue was the debate over what control the Congress could

⁷² Bertrand de la Noë to Pierre Bolomey and François Bondy, 20 September 1951, s. II, b. 77, f. 7, IACF Records; Minutes of the Amis de la Liberté Executive Committee, 4 October 1951, s. II, b. 77, f. 7, IACF Records.

⁷³ Nabokov once referred to the Secretary General of the Amis as “king Enock” and complained that “His Majesty” had been impossible to reach lately. Nicolas Nabokov to Gisèle Dubuis, 17 October 1953, s. II, b. 243, f. 9, IACF Records.

exercise over the activity of the Amis in France, and implicitly what power to influence the organization came from the financial support that the CCF provided. According to Enock, the response was little if nothing at all.

In the fall of 1952, for instance, Josselson wrote Enock with a few suggestions for pamphlets that the CCF had prepared for its national committees, requesting his decision on whether the Amis would use them for their activity. The response was a sharp pushback against the idea that the Congress would be involved in any way in deciding what was publishable in France:

I am absolutely decided to refuse tomorrow as I did yesterday any document that the Secretariat General of the Congress will find fit for publication in France without consulting me first. [...] It is not for the Secretariat of the Congress to play the role of brain trust, a function which it has given itself or has been given at a time when there were no national sections, and which it insists in maintaining at all costs (in France at any rate) in spite of any common sense. We will consult the Secretariat ourselves every time it will seem to us useful and necessary. [...] Congress policy as it is elaborated by its Executive Committee is carried out in France through the “Amis de la Liberté.” It is this way for the publications, and it will be for all the demonstrations (including the preparation of a congress) decided by the Congress. The international Secretariat has the authority to intervene directly in the countries where there is no national section as well as in the countries where the national sections accept its direct intervention without protesting. That is all.⁷⁴

Judging from the tone, one could be forgiven for wondering which man was used to giving orders to the other. At bottom, Enock insisted that there could not be two different centers for the activities of the Congress in France, and assumed that the Amis should be left free to pursue independently the goals that they shared with the Congress. If its promoters had expected to set up an organization that would merely implement their directives, they had to face a different reality. The Amis were not docilely waiting for the CCF to decide the best way to fight Communism in France, but demanded an equal – if

⁷⁴ Jacques Enock to Michael Josselson, 4 November 1952, s. II, b. 77, f. 9, IACF Records. My translation.

not exclusive – say in the matter. The communications between Josselson and Enock continued to be rather delicate, with spells of collaboration occasionally interrupted by protests, complaints and sarcasm. The former kept trying to discuss, suggest, and nudge the work of the Amis to make sure that their efforts were in line with the policy of the CCF and its international orientation; the latter mainly concentrated his criticism on the ambiguous structure of the Congress, and on the need to clarify the role of national committees, their responsibilities, and the relationship with Paris. Neither aspect was exclusive to the French committee – Silone and the AILC voiced the same remarks and were the object of similar criticism – but rather highlighted a constant dynamic between the Paris Secretariat and its national committees. Due to their importance, France and Italy represented a key test of how an organization like the CCF could interact with foreign intellectuals in the specific contexts of their countries, what it could demand and how successful it could be in persuading them.

Although it was not enough to cause a breakup, the tension between the international and the French arm of the Congress continued to run underground throughout the existence of the Amis. When Nabokov tried to secure the collaboration of Enock to select the French delegation to the Science and Freedom conference in Hamburg, in June 1953, he faced some considerable obstacles. Some of the organizers had expressed their reservations about one of the French scientists invited, and Nabokov had asked Enock to withdraw the request to present a paper at a preparatory conference. The Secretary General of the Amis questioned the fact that foreign scientists could discuss the value of French ones, and force the Amis to rescind their invitation. He almost threatened that, if that were the case, his organization would urge all its members

not to participate in the Congress, thus forcing the CCF to find replacements elsewhere and opening it to attacks from Communists. In a memorandum to Brown, Nabokov complained about the lack of cooperation from the Amis on the matter and even suggested that they were trying to “sabotage” the whole event, which eventually turned out to be a success for the CCF.⁷⁵

Josselson, too, was unable to hide his frustration at times. In the summer of 1953, the Congress and the Amis were mobilized to denounce the Communist suppression of the uprising of workers and citizens in East Berlin. The plan included the distribution of pamphlets to neutralists and Communist sympathizers, and appeals to French public opinion. Everyone agreed on the strategy, but the problem was how to implement it. After several letters and telephone conversations, Josselson sounded almost bitter: “since it is on my initiative that the Congress sets aside part of its funds for action in Berlin, the least that one could ask for is that our advice be at least taken into consideration.” Enock replied rather icily, and suggested that he was making an effort to maintain a friendly relationship mostly per Irving Brown’s request. He rejected the idea that the CCF could control the activities of the Amis in advance, if it wanted them to succeed. About Josselson’s request to modify a text that the SFIO had circulated, Enock claimed that the party was not at his service and he could not “make ring in their ears (*tinter à leurs oreilles*) the funds that we make available to them to this effect.”⁷⁶ In a nutshell, therein lay the challenge for Josselson, the CCF, and its American sponsors in general: their support for local actors and organizations allowed them to intervene in France or

⁷⁵ Jacques Enock to Nicolas Nabokov, 27 February 1953, b. 6, f. 4, Brown Papers. My translation; Nicolas Nabokov to Irving Brown, 19 June 1953, s. II, b. 90, f. 3, IACF Records.

⁷⁶ Michael Josselson to Jacques Enock, 22 June 1953, s. II, b. 78, f. 1, IACF Records; Jacques Enock to Michael Josselson, 23 June 1953, s. II, b. 78, f. 1, IACF Records. My translation.

elsewhere to boost positions that they shared, or prevent them from disappearing. It did not automatically mean, however, that they now had the right to demand that these actors follow their instructions diligently.

The importance of Italy in the overall mission of the CCF placed the Paris Secretariat and the Executive Committee in a similar position. A significant difference from the Amis was that, while the Secretariat had a first-hand knowledge of the situation in the French capital, it was not equally well-equipped to take the pulse of the Italian intellectual scene. Josselson and Nabokov, with the help of others more familiar with the complexities of the local intellectual milieu, followed and commented on the situation in Italy, the activities of the AILC, and the progress it made. The relationship was largely positive, as the Italian committee and the international organization collaborated to their mutual satisfaction. The Paris office requested Rome's help for the distribution of materials, for the selection of delegates to CCF events, or to establish contacts with certain intellectuals or groups. It could also turn to the AILC to stimulate responses to or polemics against Communist intellectuals or publications. Finally, it asked for its opinion to interpret issues and trends taking place in Italy – an intellectual's position, a party's evolution, the political connotations of a movement or group – which were unclear from the outside. Silone and the AILC in turn asked for the collaboration of the Secretariat in providing articles and documentation for its domestic campaigns, in coordinating the relationship with foreign intellectuals or national committees (e.g. invitations to events, or requests for articles), or to apply for grants from U.S. foundations. At times they even

used Paris as a cover to justify decisions that were unpopular with AILC members or local groups, for instance to turn down funding for certain projects.⁷⁷

Sometimes, however, the CCF tried to express its disagreement with the political orientation or the activities of the Rome office, and pushed for a change in tones or content. When these conflicts arose, Italian intellectuals usually responded by jealously guarding their independence and claiming that they alone could understand and determine the best course of action in their country. One of the recurring sources of tension between the Italian committee and the International Secretariat was the unclear relationship between the national and international organization. Like the Amis, Silone and others expressed dissatisfaction for the lack of an explicit legal framework for the Congress. Especially in the early stages of the difficult setup of the Rome office, its president pushed for a clear distinction between the tasks of the national committees and those of the CCF. He also called for greater communication and support from Paris, and for abandoning the “improvisation and precariousness,” and the “bohemian” character of the work of the International Secretariat, which he blamed on the uncertainty in responsibilities and division of tasks.⁷⁸ While they demanded more clarity and accountability, Silone and the AILC were also determined to state their independence from the CCF in terms of activities, policies, and materials to distribute – for example refusing to go along with the distribution of American magazines in Italy, a task already performed by U.S. “official” outposts. Other notable members of the AILC shared the need to maintain a visible autonomy from the International Secretariat, and Silone had to

⁷⁷ Michael Josselson to Vittorio Libera, 11 May 1954, s. II, b. 171, f. 8, IACF Records; Ignazio Silone to Michael Josselson, 18 April 1953, s. II, b. 289, f. 10, IACF Records; Nicolas Nabokov to Michael Josselson, 22 May 1954, s. II, b. 301, f. 5, IACF Records.

⁷⁸ “Remarques de Silone concernant son activité dans notre organisation,” undated (but Oct 1950), s. II, b. 173, f. 2, IACF Records; Ignazio Silone to CCF Secretariat, 7 June 1951, s. II, b. 171, f. 5, IACF Records.

reassure them that the Paris office recognized the “peculiar character” of the Italian committee.⁷⁹ Complaining with Josselson about the lack of communication on certain initiatives decided in Paris, Silone expressed a common feeling when he stated that the activity of the Congress in Italy could not be guided from two different centers, and that the Comitato direttivo of the AILC would not consent to be reduced to a mere advisory role.⁸⁰

From the point of view of the International Secretariat, the tensions with the Italian outfit were both on practical matters and on more substantial issues. Josselson and Nabokov were frustrated with the apparent “lethargy” of the committee, which they ascribed to the dominant role played by Silone in its setup and running. Discussing the possibility of securing a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, Nabokov expressed his skepticism about the AILC’s ability to develop an effective program, since everything was concentrated in Silone’s hands and he seemed to proceed “according to the principle of “trial and error” without much consistency between the different things he makes.”⁸¹ Silone’s centrality, however, left little room for gradual corrections according to the composer:

I’m afraid that very soon we’ll have to do something radical about it and either call it quits or get other blood into our Italian “apparatus”. If Paris is at times Vaseline this is pure castor oil. Silone thrones invisible in heaven and prevents the kids in the office from doing their work. I wrote him 2 letters, I wire to ask him to descend from his summer vacation for a day to see me here in Rome... no answer to anything. I see dozens of people daily. Most of them are ready to join, work, help (including [novelist Alberto] Moravia) but all say that so long as Silone is the sole master here, no work will be done. I formulated a concrete plan of how to change this situation. Will discuss it with Mike [Josselson] and Denis de R. [Rougemont] (also not entirely unlazy)

⁷⁹ Minutes of the AILC Comitato di presidenza, 5 February 1952, s. II, b. 171, f. 6, IACF Records.

⁸⁰ Ignazio Silone to CCF Secretariat, 3 October 1952, s. II, b. 171, f. 6, IACF Records.

⁸¹ Nicolas Nabokov to Michael Josselson, May 5 1954, s. II, b. 243, f. 12, IACF Records.

and then we must do something about it or else close the Italian office and have an agent in Italy.⁸²

The following months, rather than an expansion of the committee, saw a series of disappointing developments that the Paris Secretariat could only observe from a distance – with a certain bewilderment, it seemed at times. The apparent inability by the AILC to make inroads among intellectuals and the public opinion especially troubled the officers of the CCF. Both Americans and Europeans insisted on what the Italian outfit was expected to do in this regard, and on knowing what was preventing it from doing it. Bondy conceded that no one could demand something on the scale of what the Amis de la Liberté were setting up in France, but added that “the problem to move beyond the circle of a dozen illustrious intellectuals to touch a rather large mass of educators, students, professionals and union officers to orient them on totalitarianism and all the aspects of an international democratic solidarity, remains pressing for you and you must find an expression.”⁸³ A memorandum for internal use, probably drawn by Bondy, also listed among the questions that the AILC needed to clarify why it had not approached certain writers that had expressed their interest (Carlo Levi, Elio Vittorini, Dino Buzzati), and who took the decisions inside the Italian Executive Committee.⁸⁴ Nabokov, too, felt the need to restate to the members of the Italian office what the priorities should be according to the Paris bureau: at the top was the expansion of the committee’s base through personal contacts, to reach eventually a national membership; only afterward came the work on publications, on university students and with other national committees.⁸⁵

⁸² Nicolas Nabokov to Irving Brown, 13 September 1951, b. 13, f. 16, Brown Papers.

⁸³ François Bondy to Muzio Mazzocchi, 29 May 1951, s. II, b. 171, f. 5, IACF Records. My translation.

⁸⁴ Memorandum by F. B. (François Bondy), 27 June 1951, s. II, b. 171, f. 5, IACF Records.

⁸⁵ Nicolas Nabokov to Alice Ceresa, 24 July 1951, s. II, b. 246, f. 4, IACF Records.

Finally, the CCF decided to send its own men to Rome to try to sort out the confusion, which threatened to cause the failure of the whole committee.⁸⁶ While most of the concern was on organizational matters, Bondy and Pierre Bonuzzi also voiced the concern that the AILC was veering toward an anti-clerical stance that could be damaging for the Congress, prompting a response from Silone. In a letter to Bondy, he admitted that no disagreement existed among the Italian members about the opposition to an “anti-Soviet degeneration” of the CCF, and to excessive emphasis on movement-style tactics (“*degenerazione agitaria*”). He denied, however, that the work of the Committee was anti-Catholic or anti-clerical, and justified the absence of prominent Catholics with their own reluctance to join organizations on which they had no control.⁸⁷ The International Secretariat eventually obtained a reorganization of the office and a more active work of securing signatures and public support by Italian intellectuals for the CCF. However, Silone and the rest of the staff left them little room to influence the political line of their organization, and claimed the validity of their approach to the situation in Italy.

The relationship continued to be rocky in the following months, in particular about the alleged cold response from Paris to the idea of bringing in journalist and critic Nicola Chiaromonte to help with the work of the Rome office, which Silone strongly advocated. When the founders of the Congress had discussed a replacement for Silone in the Executive Committee, Arthur Koestler had in fact opposed Chiaromonte – unsuccessfully – deeming him not oriented toward “the effective action which must be

⁸⁶ “Voyage à Rome du 15 au 20 Octobre,” undated (but October 1951), s. II, b. 173, f. 2, IACF Records.

⁸⁷ Ignazio Silone to François Bondy, 22 May 1951 and 20 October 1951, s. II, b. 289, f. 9, IACF Records. Silone himself had recognized the opportunity of including some Catholics in the work of the AILC, but he denied that the organization’s line was causing the problems.

the first goal of the Executive Committee.”⁸⁸ When he believed that the Secretariat was ignoring his request for Chiaromonte’s participation, Silone came close, according to another member of the Rome office, to offering his resignation “in the most absolute, public, and definitive way.” Such a gesture would have destroyed the organization, and forced it to start with other people, not as prestigious.⁸⁹ Even though it is unclear whether there had ever been real opposition to Chiaromonte inside the CCF, the reaction from Rome was significant in suggesting that, when serious disagreements arose, Silone and the other Italians were aware of their bargaining power. More so than elsewhere, the Italian committee drew much of its prestige and credibility from Silone; if he were to resign, the consequences would be far worse for the work of the Congress in Italy than for the writer from the Abruzzi.

As far as policy was concerned, the disagreements revolved mainly around two issues: the approach toward Communists – mainly domestic, as fewer disagreements existed on condemning the Soviet Union – and the anti-clerical tones of the AILC. The first one was especially delicate, given the anti-Communist inspiration of the Congress, and reflected the particular situation in Italy. The underlying tensions had emerged as early as during the Berlin Congress of June 1950, in which many observers had seen a fundamental opposition between Silone and the more aggressive anti-Communism espoused by Koestler. At question was more than a personal dualism, however, as behind the author of *Fontamara* were a majority of the French and Italian – and British – delegates. The activities of the AILC developed along these lines, and more than once its members had to defend their decisions to the International Secretariat.

⁸⁸ Minutes of the CCF Executive Committee, 10 August 1950, s. II, b. 2, f. 8, IACF Records.

⁸⁹ Alice Ceresa to François Bondy, 8 November 1951 and 12 November 1951, s. II, b. 171, f. 5, IACF Records.

Given the strong support for Communism among intellectuals, the AILC had decided early on that it could not assume a purely anti-Communist position, which would have prevented it from reaching a large section of the Italian intelligentsia. Rather, it tried to expose Communist hypocrisy while establishing its bona fide with fellow-travelers and PCI sympathizers, separating the hard-core supporters from the rest. The way to do so was by joining causes that had large resonance in Italy but did not fall into the “Communist versus anti-Communist” divide, thus potentially siding with their adversaries on issues such as the suppression of surviving fascist laws. One of the reasons, as Silone explained to the CCF Executive Committee, was to prevent Communists from being the sole defenders of causes that many intellectuals – regardless of their political affiliation – felt as important. Both Silone and Chiaromonte expressed their concerns to Bondy about the danger of a purely anti-Communist line in Italy, and the need to avoid the impression of propaganda in favor of more practical steps, receiving reassurances from Paris.⁹⁰

Nonetheless, the CCF did not conceal its dissatisfaction when Italians failed – in its view – to pursue a vigorous anti-Communist line. Writing to Ciccotti, Josselson claimed to be “rather surprised” by the latest issue of the CIAD bulletin: “I do not think that the role of an anti-Communist publication is to downplay the differences which exist inside the Communist Party. This is psychologically false and a task that one can very well leave to the Communist themselves. I think you will agree with this critique.”⁹¹ Especially controversial was the AILC campaign against the laws passed by the Italian government that, according to their critics, were an attempt to limit the freedom of

⁹⁰ Ignazio Silone to François Bondy, 20 October 1951, s. II, b. 289, f. 9, IACF Records; Nicola Chiaromonte to Ignazio Silone, 30 October 1951, b. 4, f. 133, Chiaromonte Papers.

⁹¹ Michael Josselson to Sigfrido Ciccotti, 2 March 1955, s. II, b. 172, f. 9, IACF Records. My translation.

expression of Communist intellectuals and journalists, and to prevent PCI members from holding certain offices. The Italian committee strongly criticized the so-called “anti-Communist laws,” which in turn earned it Josselson’s rebuke: to attack the Christian Democratic government too harshly, he said, was to concentrate on a secondary problem while ignoring the real threat to freedom coming from Communists. “Tactics,” he wrote, “is one thing, and the main goal of our activity is another”: the AILC bulletin should denounce the attempt by Communists to exploit this episode instead of criticizing fascist laws or the Catholic Church.⁹² Josselson added that “given [AILC secretary] Mr. Libera’s susceptibility toward all infractions to freedom of press, which in my opinion is not threatened by [Italian Interior Minister] Mr. Scelba, I hope he will not let himself be drawn into supporting the cause of Communist journalists for his devotion to principle.”⁹³ Such a statement was remarkable, and in contrast with the CCF’s assertions that the defense of cultural freedom was apolitical and equally sensitive to violations from democratic and pro-Western governments. It seemed to belie the organization’s claims, and to suggest that its leadership expected the national committees to primarily combat Communist influence, and that they should subordinate other activities to this main goal. Whether these expectations were met is, however, a completely different consideration.

To these more or less explicit pressures to modify its line, in fact, the Italian committee could respond in two ways. One was to argue, as Silone did, that sponsoring campaigns that were not anti-Communist *per se* actually strengthened the organization in

⁹² Michael Josselson to Ignazio Silone, undated (but May 1954), s. II, b. 289, f. 11, IACF Records.

⁹³ Michael Josselson to Ignazio Silone, 11 May 1954, s. II, b. 289, f. 11, IACF Records. By comparison, Josselson intervened only once to condemn the use of a cartoon from an extreme right publication in the CIAD bulletin, which he considered unacceptable for a CCF affiliate. Given the composition of the committee, on the other hand, such tendencies were much less likely to occur. Michael Josselson to Sigfrido Ciccotti, 21 September 1954, s. II, b. 172, f. 8, IACF Records.

the eyes of neutralist and undecided intellectuals.⁹⁴ The other was to protest firmly any attempt to interfere, as Libera did in response to a suggestion by Josselson to take a more critical stance toward a recently formed leftist magazine:

I have not understood very well the reasons and implications of your letter about “Lo Spettatore Italiano” [...]; or I’m afraid I understood it all too well...: but that would mean questioning once again the “policy” of the Italian Association, which has been devised - in accord with the International Secretariat - during three years of discussions and research for the most effective ways to make a dent in the peculiar positions of Communist and fellow-traveling intellectuals in Italy. We find it to be normal and indispensable to sometimes mention (not to praise it but in a tone of objective evaluation) an important article from an extreme leftist, fellow-traveling or even Communist publication: we think it is a *conditio sine qua non* to continue to denounce these publications and argue with them effectively. [...] we have seen that it is the only way in which our Association (and Bulletin) has [...] gained in reputation among non-Communist intellectuals.⁹⁵

Once again, the Paris office had to come to terms with a national committee that disagreed with it on the best way to wage the battle against Communist intellectuals, and was independent enough to ignore its recommendations on certain issues. Josselson eventually sounded discouraged when he confessed he could not be surprised by or understand Italian writers, who were inflexible with fascists but not bothered by ex-fascists who had turned to Communism.⁹⁶ In that paradox lay the difficult dialogue between the Congress and the Italian committee.

The other big controversial issue was the relationship of the AILC with the Catholic Church and the political and intellectual groups close to it, which held great prestige and influence in Italy. The problem was in part due to the composition of the committee itself, which from the beginning tended to be overwhelmingly composed of

⁹⁴ Ignazio Silone to Michael Josselson, 16 February 1955, s. II, b. 290, f. 1, IACF Records.

⁹⁵ Vittorio Libera to Michael Josselson, 27 March 1954, s. II, b. 171, f. 8, IACF Records. My translation.

⁹⁶ Michael Josselson to Konstantin Jelenski, 19 September 1963, s. II, b. 189, f. 8, IACF Records.

socialists and liberals in the tradition of Benedetto Croce, critical of the role of the Church in Italian society. The CCF exhorted Silone and the Rome office to include some prominent Catholics among its members, setting as its first priority to expand its base. The attempt to replicate the successful experiment of the Amis in France, where a significant number of Catholic individuals and groups worked with other democratic forces, turned out to be impossible in Italy. The Paris Secretariat soon realized that, as Denis de Rougemont concluded after attending the AILC General Assembly, the Congress in Italy was a matter of anti-clerical liberals and socialists. It was impossible, he wrote, to hope that proponents of the center-right Christian Democracy would be willing to cooperate with the current members.⁹⁷ Despite Silone's reassurance that the committee was not planning to adopt an anti-clerical line, the Paris Secretariat observed with growing concern what it perceived to be an anti-Catholic turn in the AILC, and in particular in its bulletin.

In the spring of 1954, Nabokov was in Rome to organize the CCF's music festival, and collected first-hand knowledge of the perception of the AILC in Italy. He and Josselson agreed that for the Italian committee to be seen as an anti-clerical movement would damage not only its national activities, but also the global work of the organization. Josselson found it "grotesque" that Italians concentrated on secondary problems, given the current threat to Italian democracy coming from the Communists, and urged Nabokov to talk to Silone to convince him to moderate the AILC's tone. The effort had only limited effect: Silone agreed that other issues were more pressing, and to tone down the rhetoric. He reasserted, though, the need for the committee to defend

⁹⁷ Denis de Rougemont to Nicolas Nabokov, Michael Josselson, and François Bondy, 22 January 1953, s. II, b. 282, f. 11, IACF Records.

religious freedom, and the belief that the Church in Italy – unlike in France – was not interested in and even hostile to culture.⁹⁸ After his diplomatic efforts, Nabokov sounded hopeless about the prospects for any progress:

I cannot attempt to explain to the Catholics that the Congress and the Italian Association have different policies, without throwing an onus upon Silone and his friends, which, of course, would be highly resented and may lead to great unpleasantnesses. Talking “confidentially” to people I barely know, is impossible. It will immediately get back to Silone. The only way to improve things is for me to talk to Silone himself in the spirit of your letter. But, knowing Silone, I expect very little from it. Catholics, even the liberal ones, such as [philosopher Jacques] Maritain, as you know, resented the very presence, among our Congress patrons, of Croce; and the presence among the Italian association, of [anti-fascist historian and politician Gaetano] Salvemini, who eats the Pope the way [*New Leader* editor Sol] Levitas used to eat Uncle Joe, is to Catholics, unbearable. Besides, liberal Catholics of the French type, who would accept to cooperate with the non-and-anti-Communist Left, are rare in Italy. But what the Association could and should do is to stop that quixotic and bellicose tone as regards to the Church and its various organs. In other words, it is a question of intelligence and manners and also of the proper recognition of one’s mission.⁹⁹

Nabokov, in fact, confessed to be “depressed” by the impossibility to make the Italian office accept an effective and coherent program. He identified the cause for what he considered the extremism of the AILC in the fact that “most of the members of the Italian Association are so profoundly steeped in Croceism, and besides, are drug-addicts of anti-Fascism.” He proposed that someone in the CCF Executive Committee (Aron, Rougemont, Hook) read the bulletins and raise the question at the next meeting, “so that we could finally have a show-down with Silone.” At the same time, he suggested that a prominent Catholic like French philosopher Jacques Maritain, one of the Honorary Chairmen of the CCF, write a “long letter” to the Vatican authorities to present the

⁹⁸ Nicolas Nabokov to Michael Josselson, 8 February 1954, s. II, b. 243, f. 13, IACF Records; Michael Josselson to Nicolas Nabokov, 24 May 1954, s. II, b. 243, f. 12, IACF Records; Nicolas Nabokov to Michael Josselson, May 26 1954, s. II, b. 243, f. 12, IACF Records.

⁹⁹ Nicolas Nabokov to Michael Josselson, 1 June 1954, s. II, b. 243, f. 12, IACF Records.

Congress in a more favorable light and assuage their hostility.¹⁰⁰ Nabokov's proposal was extraordinary for several reasons. The first was the high profile of the figures involved – Silone was one of the founding members and public faces of the Congress. The fact that the International Secretariat discussed the possibility of both confronting and bypassing a national committee also suggested the level of conflict and frustration toward the AILC, and highlighted the tensions between the international organization and its local outfits.

Josselson probably realized the seriousness of the proposal, and advised Nabokov to avoid a confrontation that could result in the definitive resignation of “our friend.” He suggested instead talking privately to the Italian office to stress the fact that they belonged to an international organization, and could not compromise its activities by pursuing too aggressive a campaign against the clergy. They should not think only of their “selfish or national” point of view, but also of the repercussions for the whole Congress. Josselson also made sure to stress that he was not offering orders but merely suggestions, possibly to avoid a negative reaction from Rome. Nabokov agreed to this course, but doubted that a talk with “Silone and his slaves” would do any good, since the reputation of the Italian committee was well established by now, and the Vatican itself did not seem interested in distinguishing between national and international activities.¹⁰¹

The International Secretariat obtained some results on the issue of anti-clericalism, as it managed to smooth some of the roughest polemical edges of the Italian committee. It was not as successful in changing its fundamental orientation, which by this time reflected a well-defined membership and political affiliation. The importance of the tensions on Italian anti-clericalism, however, goes beyond the issue itself and speaks to

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Michael Josselson to Nicolas Nabokov, 4 June 1954, Nicolas Nabokov to Michael Josselson, 9 June 1954, s. II, b. 243, f. 12, IACF Records.

the relationship between the “center” and the “periphery” of the CCF. The Paris Secretariat left a considerable degree of autonomy to its national committees, but it tried to intervene and influence their policies when it considered them to be misguided or damaging. Its efforts reflected the ambiguity of the hierarchical structure of the Congress, which did not explicitly provide instruments to impose the International Secretariat’s will when it clashed with local actors. It could certainly reduce or cut off funding as it did with the American committee, though such decisions could not be immediate. When they tried to intervene with the AILC, however, Josselson and Nabokov had to rely on a personal diplomacy – either directly or through other members of the Executive Committee – that often turned out to be complicated and frustrating. Finally, in their concerns for the anti-Catholic stance in Italy they expressed the fear that it could negatively affect the international movement, highlighting a different aspect of their relation with the national committees. Not only were they not always able to “play a tune” to which local intellectual would respond and march, as some historians have argued. On the contrary, their strategic interests and global activities could be threatened by dynamics and concerns that, though national in their genesis, could travel well beyond their borders.

The decline of the committees

The experience of the Amis, which was so representative of the decade in which the organization was born, did not survive the decade itself. The financial aid had been declining steadily, as it had been for other European committees and initiatives, with the progressive broadening of the geographical and thematic scope of the CCF in the late

1950s. The main reason, and the one that the CCF gave to Enock in the summer of 1960, was indeed that the organization was no longer financially able to support the Amis as it had in the past. Executive Secretary John Hunt¹⁰² expressed regret for the impossibility of continuing on the previous basis, and recognized the important contribution that the Amis had given to the fight against totalitarianism. It is likely, however, that the CCF officers also saw the benefits of ending a relationship that had been successful, but also demonstrated the difficulty in controlling the work of Enock and the political implications that the Amis had for France.¹⁰³

Despite Hunt's friendly tone, the separation left a considerable bitterness in the relationship between the CCF and Enock, who publicly complained about the decision at the Executive Committee of the Amis de la Liberté on December 3, 1960.¹⁰⁴ Some of his remarks concerned what he believed to be a lack of recognition for the work of the Amis in the publications that the Congress put out to celebrate its tenth anniversary, or the way in which it communicated its decision. Others, however, were serious enough to require a response by Nabokov at the next CCF Executive Committee, in March 1961. The Secretary General of the Congress rejected the claim that the decision to end the funding for the French committee depended on the change of U.S. policy *vis-à-vis* Europe, claiming that the CCF was not influenced by any nation in determining its policy. The decision to direct its resources toward Africa and Asia was exclusively in response to the request of intellectuals there.

¹⁰² John C. Hunt had joined the CCF in the late 1950s, and had gradually relieved Josselson of some of his tasks, also due to the worsening of the latter's health.

¹⁰³ John C. Hunt to Jacques Enock, 7 July 1960, s. II, b. 164, f. 6, IACF Records.

¹⁰⁴ I have not been able to find a copy of the minutes for the meeting.

As far as France itself was concerned, Nabokov denied the intention to suppress the Amis in order to manage directly the Maisons in the country. He also claimed that the Congress had never meddled in purely French matters. When it had released a statement or taken a position, it had always been in line with its founding principles and in the same way it could have done for events in the United States, Italy, or other democratic countries. In each case, it had done so at the request of the Executive Committee members from that country, without endorsing any specific position in the national debate.¹⁰⁵ Nabokov concluded by blaming Enock for spreading incorrect information in an attempt to “save face,” but the fact that he felt the need to respond to these accusations suggests that he understood the potential damage to the organization that they might cause. Having battled for years the reputation of an American-sponsored organization promoting a line favorable to the State Department – which was generally believed to be behind the CCF – such allegations were a delicate issue.

Nabokov’s assurances notwithstanding, the Congress for Cultural Freedom did move in rather quickly to replace the existing structures of the Amis, at least in the province centers. The Paris offices established contacts with the personalities who had managed the Maisons to inquire whether they would be willing to continue their involvement in a different form. As they explained to these officers, the new *Cercles pour la liberté de la culture* resembled a lot their predecessors, but also differed in some significant way. They reaffirmed the intention to include a wide range of political positions, excluding only left- and right-wing totalitarians. They also continued their

¹⁰⁵ Minutes of the CCF Executive Committee, 6 March 1961, s. II, b. 5, f. 4, IACF Records. Nabokov referred here to the controversy surrounding the Manifesto of the 121, a public statement criticizing the French government for its handling of the Algerian crisis that had generated a reaction against its signatories. See chapter 6.

activities of conferences, debates and exhibitions, beginning with a commemoration for the death of Albert Camus. In fact, the emphasis shifted predominantly to cultural aspects rather than political ones, as demonstrations and direct political involvement became less relevant. Writer René Tavernier and the CCF also implicitly turned down the suggestion to create regular communication and consultation between the Cercles, preferring to discuss matters with them separately.¹⁰⁶

In private correspondence, members of the Congress Secretariat made no mystery of some of the expected characteristics of the Cercles. Tavernier reminded Bondy that the creation of the Cercles had been in large part to help the distribution of *Preuves* outside Paris, a character on which the Secretariat insisted throughout the decade. As far as substantive issues were concerned, Manès Sperber wrote in a memorandum to Hunt that the circles should divide their lectures between topics of “*actualité immédiate*” and discussion of a philosophical or esthetic nature on a higher level. Some topics, however, were off-limits: “There are topics of interior French politics which might provoke interesting debates and attract nation-wide attention. Yet, some of those topics can not [sic] be put in the center of our debates – for obvious reasons which have to do with the international situation of the Congress. This is a regrettable restriction which we should not forget – at least as long as the present uneasy situation will last.” Sperber urged the Cercles to make a particular effort to draw young people, and to abandon the “luke-warm comforts of the coexistential fiction” in favor of a more aggressive stance toward

¹⁰⁶ René Tavernier to François Bondy, 21 March 1961, s. II, b. 299, f. 7, IACF Records; René Tavernier to Robert Vial, 13 December 1960 and 4 January 1961, s. II, b. 300, f. 3, IACF Records; Grémion, *Intelligence de l'anticommunisme*, 389-90.

Communism.¹⁰⁷ The Cercles continued their activity until 1967, when the combined effect of financial difficulties and revelations about CIA funding forced the CCF to end its subventions. Only the Lyon Cercle managed to find the sources to continue independently until the mid-1970s, promoting conferences, exhibitions and involvement of local groups and individuals.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the Italian committee continued its double activity of “*lutte totale*” against Communism and “*lutte de details*” against the violations to cultural freedom in Italy and elsewhere, both in the Western bloc and in Communist countries. Over time, however, it also developed an attention for less directly political issues that reflected the rapid transformation that Italian society was experiencing during the industrial boom that began in those years. It focused in particular on the theme of mass society, which was gaining relevance at a time when an unprecedented number of people discovered consumerism, mass consumption, and the popularization of new lifestyles and cultural models. With the increase in the urban population, the greater availability of free time, and its “mechanization,” culture was facing new challenges: modern man risked to be turned into a machine himself, repeating the same acts –turning on the television, for instance – and losing the ability to reflect and think critically. The consequence could be to educate the masses to a new conformism, which the political power encouraged as an effective means of control. The AILC promoted debates, courses for the leadership of the local circles, and other initiatives to address the question of mass culture and the defense of freedom from the dangers of mechanization and massification – an effort of “democratic education,” as Silone defined it. Once again, it showed the

¹⁰⁷ René Tavernier to François Bondy, 21 March 1961, s. II, b. 299, f. 7, IACF Records; M.S. (Manès Sperber) to J.H. (John Hunt), 9 May 1961, s. II, b. 171, f. 3, IACF Records.

close relationship between the organization and its president, who had been exploring these themes in his writings of the period.¹⁰⁸

At the political level, the early 1960s saw the slow movement in Italian politics toward the *apertura a sinistra* (“opening to the left”), i.e. the entrance into the government coalition of the Socialist Party (PSI), which in the postwar years had been a close ally of the Communists. The move, which the United States had not encouraged under the Eisenhower administration, was strongly backed by the new Kennedy White House. Schlesinger, in particular, advocated for a new approach to Europe, and saw in the Italian center-left coalition an experiment that could be successfully replicated elsewhere. In reporting to the CCF Executive Committee, Silone claimed that the opening to the left had an impact only at the social and economic level, not on the cultural one and on the AILC activities.¹⁰⁹ What was also true, however, was that the new phase saw the emergence of a different intellectual center, the group around the magazine *Il Mulino* in Bologna, as a dynamic force on the Italian scene. It was a sign that the AILC was exhausting its initial impulse, and for several reasons. The magazine published under the auspices of the Congress, *Tempo Presente*, was assuming the function of arena for discussions and circulation of ideas that the organization had played initially. After more than a decade, the original members had also inevitably lost some of their energy – some, like Antoni, had died in the meantime. Finally, the new international situation called for original approaches that other groups could provide more easily.

¹⁰⁸ AILC bulletin n. 49, 16 April 1958; Report on AILC activities for 1958, s. II, b. 172, f. 4, IACF Records; Minutes of the CCF Executive Committee, 23-25 January 1959, s. II, b. 5, f. 2, IACF Records; Ignazio Silone, *Emergency Exit*.

¹⁰⁹ Minutes of the CCF Executive Committee, 10-11 March 1962, s. II, b. 5, f. 4, IACF Records.

Ultimately, the AILC suffered from an identity crisis that reflected the changed circumstances of the 1960s. The CCF itself had to adapt its structure and mission, and did so by broadening its geographical scope and encouraging new activities – seminars, study groups – further from the militant anti-Communism of its beginnings. As far as the Italian committee was concerned, the transition was much more difficult due to the generational and ideological divide from the new intellectuals who had not lived through the early Cold War years. Silone had confessed the intention of closing down the organization repeatedly during the 1960s, but never moved forward with the idea. Eventually, the suspension of the CCF’s financial aid in 1967, compounded by the revelations that the Congress had received CIA money, led to an almost painless phasing out of the AILC. In his last communication to its members in March 1967, Silone announced that the financial difficulties were forcing the AILC to cease its activities. He also added what was probably the least celebratory assessment that could be made of a successful twenty-year effort – a success he always claimed with pride. The political and ideological atmosphere, Silone wrote, was so different from the early 1950s that it would make little sense to keep the organization alive even if it were possible: the democratic forces no longer had to defend themselves from a totalitarian ideological offensive, and the abuses against cultural freedom from the State were also significantly fewer. The experience of the AILC was concluded, and anyone interested in the defense of cultural freedom should start from new goals, means, and personnel.¹¹⁰

Conclusion

¹¹⁰ Ignazio Silone to the Members of AILC Comitato Direttivo, 31 March 1967, s. II, b. 44, f. 3, IACF Records; Muraca, “L’Associazione italiana per la libertà della cultura,” 159-60.

The history of the activities that the Congress for Cultural Freedom undertook in France and Italy, and the policies it pursued, is central to the understanding of how an international organization, with an American inspiration and a sizeable American element, tried to navigate the cultural and intellectual intricacies of the European scene. The Amis de la Liberté and the Associazione italiana per la libertà della cultura stood out among the national committees that the CCF sponsored for their longevity. In most other European countries, the reliance on the committees is rather limited in its duration and scope of activities. Established to provide a bridge with prominent intellectuals in a given place, or a base to launch specific projects, they became increasingly less important to the Congress during the 1950s. As Grémion suggested, the peculiarity of the French and Italian cases reflected the continuing strength of the two Communist Parties, but also the nature of the CCF presence in the two countries. In Italy, the influence of Silone guaranteed the strong autonomy of the AILC; conversely, the “overlapping” (*imbrication*) of the Amis and the International Secretariat made the experience of the French committee unique.¹¹¹

Both the national committees and the intellectuals associated with the CCF shared to a large degree the democratic anti-Communism and defense of freedom that were the stated goals of the organization. They also, however, responded to stimuli and dynamics that were exclusively national, and put them at odds with their allies. A more detailed analysis of the working of the Congress in the two countries also highlights an important discourse of agency and responsibilities. In the Executive Committee, as well as in the ranks of the national committees, it was Frenchmen and Italians who were mostly concerned with discussing the actions to take in their country, and whose opinion carried

¹¹¹ Grémion, *Intelligence de l'anticommunisme*, 101.

the greatest weight. Of course, Americans like Josselson and Nabokov, or other members, were fully involved in the discussions and had the opportunity to influence the decisions. They were rarely, however, in the position to impose orders or directives.

A different question is whether, given the fact that the Executive Committee seldom met more than twice a year, the day-to-day operations of the Secretariat could alter this character. There is no doubt that Josselson was the animating force of the CCF throughout its existence, and that his role emerged much more clearly in running the operations than in the collegial meetings. On the other hand, his correspondence suggests that even on organizational matters he tended to consult with the Congress members involved, and at the very least with towering figures like Aron or Silone. Paradoxically, the impossibility of convening the Executive Committee too frequently might have resulted not in an increased “American” prevalence, but rather in a larger role of those already crucial figures. A practical consideration also discouraged the officers of the CCF to push too vigorously in directions that were unpopular with their members: those intellectuals, and not the Secretariat, were the public faces of the Congress in their countries, and their prestige was on the line if the organization became unpopular or compromised. To withdraw their support publicly, therefore, would represent a debacle that would strongly weaken the Congress, and its members and officers were fully aware of that. Some – Silone more than anyone else – made a more liberal use of the threat to resign than others, but none of them quietly accepted to be imposed certain decisions with which they did not agree.

CHAPTER 6

AMBASSADORS IN PRINT: THE ROLE OF *PREUVES* AND *TEMPO PRESENTE*

In the fall of 1966, the ground under the Congress for Cultural Freedom was beginning to crumble. The rumors that had surrounded the organization from its beginning, which painted it as a tool of American propaganda, seemed to find increasing confirmation. The *New York Times* had suggested, in April 1966, that the CCF was among the organizations that had received covert CIA funding, wondering whether the scope and nature of the agency's operations had become a source of concern for the American government.¹ Members of the Paris Secretariat and prominent American intellectuals, such as Schlesinger and Kennan, had responded by denying all allegations and restating their independence from outside pressures, but few members could ignore the question altogether. Nicola Chiaromonte, one of the two editors of the CCF's Italian magazine *Tempo Presente*, had nonetheless more prosaic concerns about his situation. Writing to Dwight Macdonald, he acknowledged that the magazine had had "several misfortunes" recently, and that he and Silone, the other editor, would travel to Paris in a few days to "thrash things out" with CCF Administrative Secretary Michael Josselson. He sounded defiant: "If they insist on circulation and such facts, they will be just sent to hell, by me at least. They should be glad they found two people like Silone and myself, who are not CIA agents and put out a decent magazine. [...] I think that Mike will realize this. He might be a crude character, but he is decent."²

¹ "C.I.A. Is Spying from 100 Miles Up; Satellites Probe Secrets of the Soviet Union," *The New York Times*, 27 April 1966.

² Nicola Chiaromonte to Dwight Macdonald, 24 September 1966, b. 10, f. 244, Macdonald Papers.

The exasperated Chiaromonte did not eventually send anyone to hell, editing *Tempo Presente* for two more years until the magazine folded due to economic difficulties. The outburst, however, offers a valuable insight into the relationship between the Congress for Cultural Freedom and the magazines it sponsored. This chapter deals in particular with *Tempo Presente*, for the Italian scene, and *Preuves*, the French-language magazine. While the two differed in many respects among themselves and from the other CCF publications – most notably *Encounter*, the English magazine that reached by far the largest circulation and influence worldwide³ – they were both fundamental elements of the CCF’s network of magazines. As Chiaromonte’s letter suggests, European intellectuals did not perceive the question of the influence of the CIA or others on their work as the defining element of the experience of the magazines, to the point that it could be made the object of passing sarcasm. More characteristic were the concerns for the quality of the magazine, or the interactions with the Secretariat on practical matters such as financial constraints and the survival of the reviews. Their experience, therefore, provides a different perspective on the role of these magazines and the CCF in their countries.

This chapter and the following one discuss the history and significance of the two magazines. As Giles Scott-Smith has argued, the sponsorship of highbrow publications was, even more than the work of the committees, closely tied to the transnational character of the CCF itself. The ambition of its creators was that the Congress could position itself “outside or *above* more petty national and ideological struggles,” much like the Atlantic community that it promoted. The most effective way to do this was the

³ On *Encounter*, see Coleman, *The Liberal Conspiracy*, 59-79, 183-87; Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*, 165-89, 369-90; Wilford, *The CIA, the British Left and the Cold War*, 262-96.

establishment of journals, which could serve as platforms that would connect isolated intellectual scenes.⁴ This ideal, however, also had to reckon with the reality of national traditions and phenomena. I begin by analyzing the genesis of the magazines, which reflected the context in their countries but also the different stages of the organization's evolution – *Preuves* began its publications in March 1951, while the first issue of *Tempo Presente* came out in April 1956. The chapters also explore more in depth the magazines' themes and characteristics, assessing the impact that *Preuves* and *Tempo Presente* had on their domestic audiences in terms of readership and influence. By tracing the themes, regular contributors, and editorial line of the two magazines, I also intend to highlight their role in the larger transatlantic network of intellectuals and magazines. A central question is the balance between the editors' interests and the need for the magazines to support the larger goals of the CCF: to what extent the Secretariat intervened with suggestions and pressures about their editorial line, and what happened in case of disagreements. Finally, the chapters pay special attention to the portrayal of America and its society that *Preuves* and *Tempo Presente* offered to their European readers. For the magazines, which constantly faced the risk of being labeled as too pro-American by their critics, the choice of how to describe the United States was not unproblematic. On the other hand, the sensitive issue of their relation with the U.S. could be turned to their advantage: the editors could use the reputation of their magazines as a reason to reject suggestions from Paris, arguing that they needed to be particularly careful not to be seen as too pro-American. Ultimately, they tried to counter both the anti-American propaganda coming from the Communist press, and an uncritical celebration of U.S.

⁴ Scott-Smith, "The Congress for Cultural Freedom," 139.

politics and culture. In doing so, they showed the ambivalent relationship of European intellectuals with the reality and myth of American society.

Alongside other CCF figures, these chapters rely significantly on the correspondence between Nicola Chiaromonte and Dwight Macdonald, and their perspectives on events and personalities. As such, there is the danger of overemphasizing their roles and viewpoints over other members of the Congress. The two men's continuing interest in radicalism and in questioning the status quo did not necessarily reflect the range of positions in their countries or within the organization. Personalities and personal relations played a significant role in shaping this transatlantic network of intellectuals or, for instance, a magazine like *Tempo Presente*. Rather than undermine the chapter's analysis of the two magazines, however, this fact reinforces the larger point of my work. Given the nature of the CCF's structure and activities, interpersonal dynamics were often more important than the intentions and guidelines from Washington. *Tempo Presente* and *Preuves*, despite their similarities and common interests, also differed among themselves on contributors and themes due to the personalities of their editors. Highlighting the Chiaromonte-Macdonald relationship, therefore, is a conscious methodological and thematic choice of this chapter. It is also a useful reminder that, in many cases, the interactions between members of the CCF, and intellectuals in general, took place directly rather than through the mediation of the Secretariat, limiting the latter's ability to exercise influence or control.

The Establishment of *Preuves*: Fighting Against the Tide

The creation of an international magazine that could become the voice of the movement was among the first tasks for the CCF after the Berlin Congress. Historian Richard Kuisel has noted that its establishment was inscribed in the context of a broader cultural and informational campaign to redress America's image and present its achievements to the French. The effort, launched in 1948 and peaking in 1952, included cultural exchanges, the distribution of press releases and documentaries, and the sponsorship of libraries, associations, and magazines.⁵ At an Executive Committee meeting in Versailles, in February 1951, CCF members began to discuss the need and feasibility of such an enterprise. While there was general agreement that it would be a useful tool to promote its ideas, some of the objections revolved around practical difficulties. Raymond Aron, in particular, pointed to the difficulty for a new cultural magazine to succeed on the already saturated French scene, where the most important writers already collaborated with the existing ones. He suggested instead following the example of *Der Monat* in Germany, a journal focusing on political culture with a literary part reduced to a minimum. Even so, he warned, the crucial problem was to find someone who would assume the day-to-day responsibilities to edit it, a task that Aron himself had turned down for personal reasons. Other objections to the creation of an official CCF magazine in France were more on principle, and linked to the heterogeneous nature of the Congress. As Swiss writer and director of CCF publications François Bondy reported, Silone had expressed doubts about the possibility of collaborating with such a wide range of contributors as the original plans envisioned. While he could do it in the context of the Congress, he said, a magazine would require greater "ideological cohesion" to succeed.⁶

⁵ Kuisel, *Seducing the French*, 25.

⁶ Minutes of the CCF Executive Committee, 10 February 1951, s. II, b. 2, f. 10, IACF Records.

The question of the French magazine dragged on for months and, as Secretary General Nicolas Nabokov confessed to James Burnham, gave the CCF officer “sleepless nights.” He lamented the difficulty of finding someone of the stature of Aron or Camus willing to undertake the editorship of a magazine, but feared that the whole enterprise was bound to be a failure without people of this caliber. As Pierre Grémion has detailed, the debate mixed different opinions on the French intellectual scene, political agendas and personal ambitions. Aron’s proposal to found a weekly rather than a monthly journal reflected his desire to contrast the influence of *L’Observateur* on the non-Communist French Left, while other potential editors (Bondy, Manès Sperber, Suzanne Labin) also jockeyed for support from other members of the CCF.⁷ In his report to the American Committee, Nabokov confessed that he feared that Aron’s proposed weekly, given his Gaullist associations, could lead to a breakup of the “common front” of the Congress in France and thus prove itself useless.⁸ The solution was eventually to expand and improve the already existing bulletin, *Preuves*, which Bondy had edited for a few months. It was originally conceived as a digest for articles and facts on the *Ost Probleme*, but its early success – a circulation of twelve thousand copies and first subscriptions soon after its appearance – convinced Josselson to turn to the internal solution.

Beginning with its ninth issue, in November 1951, *Preuves* assumed more and more the features of a complete magazine, in both appearance and content. The initial staff consisted mainly of Bondy and socialist Jacques Carat as secretary. Polish émigré

⁷ Grémion, *Intelligence de l’anticommunisme*, 78-79. The situation was commented upon from the outside as well, as Chiaromonte and Silone discussed the merits of the most likely candidates: according to Chiaromonte, Sperber would be “politically better,” but Aron would be a better editor in chief; the dominant impression, however, was the confusion regarding the planned magazine. Nicola Chiaromonte to Ignazio Silone, 8 September 1950, b. 4, f. 132, Chiaromonte Papers.

⁸ Nicolas Nabokov, “Report no.1 to the American Committee,” 22 May 1951, s. II, b. 3, f. 1, IACF Records.

Konstantin Jelenski was also crucial to the operations of the magazine, both thematically – his ties with Eastern Europe and the group of émigrés gathered around the Polish magazine *Kultura* deeply influenced *Preuves*' interest in the subject – and personally, as he mediated the complicated relationship between Bondy and Aron.⁹ The magazine's first issue stated that *Preuves*, founded under the auspices of the CCF, intended to defend and illustrate the freedom most severely threatened in the twentieth century: “that of the critical and creative reflection, rebel to propaganda and partisan watchwords.” It planned to do so by providing evidence (*preuves*) of totalitarian oppression against culture, hidden or brutal, wherever it may be.¹⁰

Together with the Amis de la Liberté, from which it was clearly distinguished, the magazine constituted one of the two means of operation of the CCF in France. Politically, as Grémion explains, it was firmly rooted in a *Troisième Force* (Third Force) perspective: it mainly spoke to and drew its contributions from the coalition of parties that, during the Fourth Republic, tried to provide an alternative to both Communists and Gaullists. Its closest ties were with the socialist Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière (SFIO) and the Mouvement républicain populaire (MRP), a non-confessional party expressing prevalently Catholic sensibilities. *Preuves* strove to maintain a certain degree of autonomy from the CCF, but it was defined initially as a rightist publication because of its ability to draw contributors from different milieux, from Aron to David Rousset. The Communist press disparaged it as merely a “policing magazine” (*revue policière*) stifling public debate on domestic and international issues, while *Esprit* stated that it was devoted

⁹ Grémion, *Intelligence de l'anticommunisme*, 391-92. In his memoirs, written after the CIA scandal, Aron never mentioned Bondy or *Preuves*.

¹⁰ Remy Roure, “Presentation,” *Preuves* I n. 1 (March 1951), 1-2. My translation.

to a “propaganda need.”¹¹ The magazine placed itself in opposition to the anti-anti-Communists, in particular *Esprit* and Jean-Paul Sartre’s *Les Temps Modernes*, but had to do so subtly. Rather than a frontal assault on Sartre, who enjoyed enormous prestige among progressives, *Preuves* pointed out the contradictions in the treatment that the Soviets reserved to figures like him or Picasso: on the one hand they were celebrated as the embodiment of a progressive conscience, on the other condemned as representatives of a decadent art and a degenerate philosophy.¹²

The magazine immediately focused on the themes that would characterize it throughout its existence. As the name itself suggested, *Preuves* wanted to provide evidence of the conditions of life in the Soviet world without falling into a spirit of crusade. This in turn entailed special attention to the question of totalitarianism, its defining elements, and its significance. The magazine was also interested in the idea of Europe and its values, conceived in opposition to the Stalinist threat, and followed sympathetically the first steps of the construction of the European community. A recurring element was the debate about the meaning and future of socialism, both in Europe and in the world. On a cultural level, *Preuves* clearly distinguished between the tradition of Russian culture, which it celebrated, and the Soviet regime and its cultural productions, which it denounced as hostile to cultural freedom.¹³ Later on, it made a central element of its identity to encourage the dialogue with Eastern European intellectuals, and to give a voice to the dissidents of the Communist regimes. Finally, the

¹¹ Grémion, *Intelligence de l’anticommunisme*, 278; Pierre Grémion, “*Preuves* dans le Paris de guerre froide,” *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d’histoire* 13 (January-March 1987): 63.

¹² Grémion, *Intelligence de l’anticommunisme*, 301.

¹³ See for instance in the first issues Jean Gauvain [pseudonym of Jean Laloy], “Peuple et culture en U.R.S.S.,” *Preuves* I n. 3 (May 1951), 1-3; Wladimir Weidlé, “Quand la Russie était « cosmopolite »,” *Preuves* II n. 12 (February 1952), 1-12.

magazine systematically promoted transatlantic dialogue between America and Europe, stressing the common elements between the two and defending the forces inside the U.S. society that worked in the direction of freedom and solidarity.¹⁴

At the political level, Raymond Aron was the *première plume* for *Preuves* throughout its existence, helping legitimize the magazine with his own growing prestige. Silone also played an important role, albeit less visible, thanks to its ties with the French Left in the demonstrations against Francoism. When, in fact, *L'Observateur* tried to distinguish the Italian writer from the CCF and *Preuves*, the latter responded forcefully.¹⁵ Unlike *Encounter* in England, *Preuves* could not rely on a stable “constituency” of social-democratic reformists. According to Grémion, it established its ties with a “transpartisan Europeanist milieu” composed of politicians, academics and diplomats, including the Federalist movement.¹⁶ The literary side of the magazine presented a great variety of genres and authors rather than the expression of a specific esthetic movement. The goal, shared with other magazines, was to recreate a European intellectual, literary, and artistic life. *Preuves* was part of a family of European and American magazines like *Der Monat*, *Partisan Review*, *The New Leader*, and *Commentary*, whose inspiration were the antitotalitarian writers of the 1940s and 1950s (Orwell, Koestler, Camus, Polish émigré Czesław Miłosz). Beyond these common references, the specific character of the magazine was determined by the taste of Bondy and Jelenski in particular. The European aspect was the axis around which all CCF magazines revolved, facilitating the exchange

¹⁴ Grémion, *Intelligence de l'anticommunisme*, 76-77.

¹⁵ Grémion, “*Preuves* dans le Paris de guerre froide,” 70-73.

¹⁶ Grémion, *Intelligence de l'anticommunisme*, 406-07.

of texts and authors – the reverse being true: the editors usually dubbed what they disliked as “provincial.”¹⁷

The issue of *Preuves*' relation with America, both as a subject of discussion and in terms of its actual ties with foundations and intellectuals, was inescapable. “*Preuves*,” according to Grémion, “was American money, American policy, American culture.” Its adversaries pointed to source of the magazine's funding from the beginning, implying that its ties with the U.S. meant that its intellectuals were not actually independent.¹⁸

Richard Kuisel has described the degree of hostility that the French leftist intelligentsia reserved for “pro-American dissenters.” *Preuves* was the main advocate for the United States among the Parisian literati, so much so that the leftist daily *Le Monde* dubbed it “the American review.” In the most acute phase of the Cold War, in the early 1950s, its U.S. connections were a significant handicap. Reading the magazine openly at an institution like the École Normale Supérieure, Kuisel points out, “was generally considered to be an act of defiance.”¹⁹ Bondy repeatedly requested his American correspondents for articles on the topics that interested European intellectuals the most: the trend of civil liberties in America, racism and race relations, the dangers of a new U.S. isolationism, and the challenges to a free society coming from growing wealth and social inequality.²⁰

¹⁷ Ibid., 404-06. The negative connotation of the term “provincial” was, in fact, common to other magazines connected to or sympathetic with the anti-Communism of the CCF, like *Partisan Review* or *Tempo Presente*. See for instance Cooney, *The Rise of the New York Intellectuals*, 67-94.

¹⁸ Grémion, “*Preuves* dans le Paris de guerre froide,” 63, 76-77.

¹⁹ Kuisel, *Seducing the French*, 46-47. Even as late as 1965, the members of the Executive Committee could not agree on whether *Preuves* was still considered as an American magazine in France, and whether it hampered its activity. See Minutes of the CCF Executive Committee, 8-9 October 1965, 69-70, s. II, b. 6, f. 2, IACF Records.

²⁰ See for example François Bondy to Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., 14 January 1952, b. 383, f. 5, Schlesinger Papers; François Bondy to Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., 1 December 1953, s. VII, b. 11, f. 7, IACF Records; Grémion, *Intelligence de l'anticommunisme*, 136-37.

Preuves concentrated its attacks mostly on Stalinism, and generally defended an Atlanticist foreign policy. One of the best examples of this stance was a long essay by Aron's on James Burnham's *Containment or Liberation?*, published in the May 1953 issue. The book, which immediately became controversial, argued that the policy followed by the United States since the end of World War II – “containment,” as George Kennan had put it – was self-defeating and based on a lack of resolve to confront the Communist threat. Against it, Burnham advocated a policy of “liberation” that would include cutting off diplomatic relations with Soviet governments, training an army of volunteers, and explicitly aiming for the liberation of the peoples behind the Iron Curtain. While acknowledging Burnham's merit in posing uncomfortable questions, Aron expressed his disagreement with many of his assumptions – such as the idea that the State Department had the power to influence every event in the world – and conclusions. Regarding the book's central argument, Aron expressed skepticism about the possibility to liberate countries in the Eastern bloc under Soviet occupation without resorting to a war, and through means such as political or psychological warfare. In fact, he noted, should the U.S. actually announce its intent to liberate the peoples behind the Iron Curtain, it would become less popular among Europeans and Asians. Moreover, one failed to see “why a nation as radically non-ideological as the United States would discover the secret of ideological action.”²¹

Expressing the outlines of an “Atlanticist consensus,” Aron pointed out how, compared to previous conflicts, Americans and Western Europeans were relatively united in opposition to Communism. Burnham's positions thus threatened to drive a wedge

²¹ Raymond Aron, “James Burnham et la politique de libération,” *Preuves* III n. 27 (May 1953), 7. My translation. The article was a slightly modified version of Aron's postface to the French edition of Burnham's book.

between allies by voicing a “spirit of crusade” with which a majority of Europeans was profoundly uncomfortable. In addition, the philosopher would only end up reinforcing the “penchant for an easy solution” of the American people, letting them believe that psychological warfare could be an alternative to a military conflict. Ultimately, Aron condemned both those Americans who considered Communism responsible for all the problems in the world and did not rule out a total war to defeat it, and those Europeans who, under the pretext of objectivity, refused to choose one side over the other. Between those two extremes, he advocated a historically-informed approach that recognized the differences between the capitalist and the socialist system without granting to either of them “the benefit of an unconditional absolution or condemnation.”²² The best approach for the West was thus sustained vigilance to stave off the danger of a total war, while at the same time doing all within its means to prepare for a long confrontation – a responsibility, Aron concluded, to which Europeans had not always lived up.

If in the early 1950s *Preuves* did not question American foreign policy and the tenets of Atlanticism, *Preuves* was not uncritical of the U.S. domestic policy. The magazine – which at this time was still little more than a bulletin – took a position early on regarding the question of racial discrimination and segregation in the American South. In its very first issue it condemned the execution of seven African Americans accused of raping a white woman in Martinsville, Virginia – although it also attacked the hypocrisy of Communists and fellow-travelers who approved summary executions and forced labor in the Soviet Union.²³ A few months later, another article tried to discuss the racial question beyond the “political exploitation,” and to explain its social and economic

²² Ibid., 16. My translation.

²³ “Contre la discrimination raciale aux U.S.A.,” *Preuves* I n. 1 (March 1951), 27.

aspects rooted in the backwardness of the South. While the author predicted that acts of violence and discrimination would continue to take place, he expressed optimism about the gradual improvement of the condition of blacks, and the hope that whites would realize the importance of better race relations to improve their own economic status.²⁴ If not an uncritical celebration of American society, then, the magazine nonetheless strove to counter the most negative descriptions of its racial issues.

Even more disturbing to a European audience were, however, the extreme forms of anti-Communist repression during the Red Scare. The McCarran Act of 1950, which allowed federal authorities to investigate people suspected of subversive activities, and to deny entrance into the country to members of totalitarian groups, was one of the magazine's favorite targets. *Preuves* published a statement from the American Committee for Cultural Freedom calling for radical changes to the law, described as "ridiculous" in its current form.²⁵ Aron also weighed in on the issue in early 1953, eschewing a debate on principles but concentrating on the effectiveness of the law. The sociologist did not question the right of a government to defend itself against attempts to overthrow it, but doubted that denying visas to intellectuals who had sympathized with Communism in the past would serve the American national interest in any way. Quite the opposite, its effects were negative, as friends of the U.S. in Europe perceived more clearly than Americans themselves: it caused a loss of prestige – a central element in the Cold War – and made America seem "fearful, finicky, obsessed" ("*craintif, tatillons, obsédé*").²⁶

²⁴ Henri Pierre, "La condition noire évolue aux U.S.A.," *Preuves* I n. 4 (June 1951), 15-17.

²⁵ "Lettre de New-York. Censure cinématographique et atteintes aux libertés civiles aux États-Unis," *Preuves* I n. 2 (April 1951), 27.

²⁶ Raymond Aron, "La politique américaine des visas," *Preuves* III n. 23 (January 1953), 68-70.

On the trial and execution of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, *Preuves* separated the issue of guilt from that of punishment: while the former was beyond question, the magazine hoped that Eisenhower would commute the death penalty to a life sentence, for humanitarian and political reasons. When that turned out not to be the case, Bondy and Carat lamented its negative impact on America's image. They also condemned, however, the hypocrisy and disingenuous nature of the Communist campaign: while appealing for clemency, it consciously conflated humanitarians concerns with the issue of guilt, making it less likely that Eisenhower would in fact spare their lives.²⁷ Finally, *Preuves* condemned McCarthyism and distinguished its own anti-Communism from that of the Wisconsin senator. Nonetheless, it questioned the accuracy of the reports describing the United States in the grip of anti-Communist "hysteria," and pointed out the limits of McCarthy's power.²⁸

In fact, the magazine opened its pages to different positions about the character of anti-Communism in the United States, although it fundamentally maintained its attempt to dispel the more apocalyptic portrayals of the country. Sidney Hook argued that, despite the "stupidity" of laws such as the McCarran Act, the need to fight Communist propaganda actively was pressing and justified. Americans could not content themselves with simply redressing the social ills that Communists exploited. Rather, the country needed a work of political education, to strengthen its democratic resolve.²⁹ In one of the

²⁷ F.B., "L'affaire Rosenberg," *Preuves* III n. 24 (February 1953), 78-79; in the same issue, a contribution by Roger Baldwin made the same point: Roger Baldwin, "Opinion d'un libéral américain," *Preuves* III n. 24 (February 1953), 79-81; F. B. and J. C., "Après l'exécution des Rosenberg," *Preuves* III n. 29 (July 1953), 86.

²⁸ See Nathan Glazer, "Que peut le Sénateur McCarthy?," *Preuves* III n. 27 (May 1953), 37; Sidney Hook and Mary McCarthy, "A propos du "McCarthyisme"," *Preuves* III n. 28 (June 1953), 89-91; David Dubinsky, "McCarthy, ou vraie et fausse défense de la liberté," *Preuves* III n. 32 (October 1953), 18-22; François Bondy, "McCarthy et la « croisade rentrée »,," *Preuves* IV n. 38 (April 1954), 64-69.

²⁹ Sidney Hook, "Propagande et vérité," *Preuves* I n. 5 (July 1951), 5-6.

first issues of *Preuves*, however, George Kennan publicly wondered whether the attempts to counter Communism could not risk turning American society into a copy of its enemy, terrified of dissent and turning its back on the country's ideals – a question that journalist Robert Bendiner dismissed forcefully. Bendiner accused instead of irresponsibility those leftist intellectuals who concentrated on denouncing the “hysteria” on the anti-Communist side rather than on fighting the enemies of freedom on the left and on the right.³⁰ Mary McCarthy attacked instead the excesses of the Red Scare, and the pressure to swear loyalty oaths that required not only a condemnation of Communism, but also active support for U.S. foreign and domestic policy. The consequences for American society, she feared, could be poisonous:

What we will do, if we insist on using the investigation methods of McCarthy and McCarran, will be to create a new clandestine condition (*clandestinité*) under the façade of conformism, of new lies, of new loopholes, of new human beings who will float like shining icebergs on the surface of society, with nine tenths of their beings hidden under water. And we will live in a society of appearances, where books and newspapers circulate freely, like many abstract ghosts, while their human authors will have been imprisoned or excluded.³¹

On the other hand, Bondy reported in somewhat approving terms on the position of the American Committee for Cultural Freedom, which had opposed the open letter by Albert Einstein encouraging witnesses called by the House Un-American Activities Committee to plead the Fifth Amendment. While the methods of the Committee had to be amended, the central problem was whether citizens who chose to defend unpopular positions would be ready to undergo a test of their courage and character. Freedom was not a given, Bondy concluded, in the United States as elsewhere, but a conquest to

³⁰ George Kennan, “L’autre danger,” *Preuves* I n. 7 (September 1951), 10-11; Robert Bendiner, “La question de l’hystérie,” *Preuves* I n. 7 (September 1951), 11-13.

³¹ Mary McCarthy, “« Qui menace la liberté de la culture ? »,” *Preuves* II n. 15 (May 1952), 68. My translation. The article was a transcript of McCarthy’s intervention at a conference organized by the ACCF in New York on the theme “In Defense of Free Culture.”

defend: in this sense, the larger debate in the American public opinion about the rights and responsibilities of investigators and witnesses appeared “necessary, urgent, and healthy.”³² A year later, nonetheless, Bondy himself railed against a certain domestic isolationism that exploited Soviet expansionism to launch an anti-Communist crusade at home. Demagogues in Congress, he accused, were pushing for a reduction of foreign aid, and to abandon all the “constructive elements” of solidarity between members of the free world in favor of a domestic witch-hunt. This anti-Communism, which denounced a global danger only to limit those who fought for freedom in the U.S., was at the same time “provincial, nationalist, and obscurantist,” and was turning an alleged “campaign of truth” into a “campaign of stupidity.”³³ As this brief survey suggests, anti-Communism in America remained a highly controversial topic in the magazine during the 1950s. It would be hard, in fact, to identify an unambiguous line within the articles that *Preuves* published – sometimes even between those by a same author. If the magazine constantly strove to dispel the most negative perceptions of America in France, it also reflected the genuine concerns and perplexities of European intellectuals.

In addition to the pressing issue of anti-Communism and McCarthyism, *Preuves* also debated American society more in general. In the summer of 1952, novelist Upton Sinclair opened a series of articles dealing with the United States. Since some people in Europe had formed their impressions of the American working class based on his novels, Sinclair explained, he felt the need to affirm that America was no longer a “jungle.” He stressed the continuous improvement of the workers’ situation, and the nature of America as a “permanent revolution,” in which the denunciation of social ills by journalists and

³² F. B., “Liberté de parole, liberté de silence,” *Preuves* III n. 29 (July 1953), 86-88. My translation.

³³ François Bondy, “Que devient le « leadership américain » ?,” *Preuves* IV n. 43 (September 1954), 72-75. My translation.

writers could accomplish significant results. The American capitalist, in fact, was much less powerful and protected than the Soviet bureaucrat. Sinclair also felt the need to reassure his European readers that he had not abandoned the fight for freedom and social progress, probably suspecting how his evolution could be perceived abroad.³⁴

Preuves also printed a selection of essays from the symposium “Our Country and Our Culture,” published in *Partisan Review* in 1952. The symposium of former radicals is considered a turning point in the history of American intellectuals, who after decades of alienation embraced U.S. culture and claimed it as their own. Although in a hesitating way, and not without a touch of irony, the New York intellectuals who had been critical of U.S. society in the 1930s and 1940s signaled that their attitudes had significantly softened. For people like Hook, the Cold War and the threat of the Soviet Union played an important part in this intellectual reconciliation with their country’s democratic culture, however imperfect. Many were increasingly ready to acknowledge that America had emerged as the chief defender of the cultural traditions they cherished, and of the civil liberties on which freedom rested. The intensified contacts with European intellectuals during and after World War II, finally, had contributed to the discovery of an unexpected sense of identification with America, but also to abandon in part the inferiority complex of U.S. intellectuals *vis-à-vis* European culture.³⁵ In a note accompanying the contributions from Reinhold Niebuhr, Leslie Fiedler, Norman Mailer, Lionel Trilling, and James Burnham, the magazine remarked on the significance of this development at a time when anti-Communism might lead to a new conformism and

³⁴ Upton Sinclair, “L’Amérique n’est plus une « jungle »,” *Preuves* II n. 18-19 (August-September 1952), 47-49.

³⁵ See Wilford, *The New York Intellectuals*, 21; Jumonville, *Critical Crossings*, 90-91; Cooney, *The Rise of the New York Intellectuals*, 260-62.

paranoia. “But,” the note continued, “there is evidence of sanity [...] in the new embrace, by the intellectuals of the young generation, of a world that is theirs.”³⁶ Other articles also dealt with the economic situation of the United States, or discussed the character and significance of egalitarianism in American society.³⁷ If, then, *Preuves* was firmly placed in the Atlantic camp throughout the 1950s, its portrayal of America was more nuanced than the epithet “American review” might have suggested. The magazine offered an ambivalent view of the new superpower, in particular about the most disturbing problems that beset its society at the time: racial discrimination in the South, and the anti-Communist excesses of the Red Scare. Although it belonged to the transnational network of CCF intellectuals and magazines, *Preuves* also expressed positions that reflected European concerns about the democratic shortcomings of the U.S.

While America was an important area of inquiry for *Preuves*, articles on other significant topics also contributed to place the magazine on the radar of the French intelligentsia in its early days. Securing the collaboration of Polish poet Czesław Miłosz was an important *coup* for the magazine, which published an article of his in its fourth issue. Until his defection to the West in 1951, Miłosz had been cultural attaché of the Polish embassy in Paris and Washington. The Congress for Cultural Freedom quickly welcomed him at a press conference presided over by Rougemont and Silone, which helped the new organization gain legitimacy. Miłosz’s “Un païen devant la nouvelle foi,” in June 1951, introduced some of the themes that he would develop in his book *The Captive Mind* (1953), an analysis of the mechanisms of intellectuals’ resistance and

³⁶ “L’Amérique devant sa conscience,” *Preuves* II n. 18-19 (August-September 1952), 47. My translation.

³⁷ “Réalités américaines : Interrogations sur les États-Unis,” *Preuves* III n. 29 (July 1953), 5-26; Ernest van den Haag, “Égalitarisme aux U.S.A.,” *Preuves* IV n. 35 (January 1954), 42-46.

accommodation to a repressive regime.³⁸ A few months later, Raymond Aron penned his first contribution to the magazine in response to an article by Kennan in *Foreign Affairs*, on the possibility of détente with the Soviet Union. In its first years, *Preuves* also published pieces from, among the others, George Orwell, Nicola Chiaromonte, Ignazio Silone, and André Malraux, drawing from and contributing to build an ideal pantheon of anti-totalitarian writers.³⁹

The first years of the magazine thus marked a more than satisfactory progress from the point of view of the CCF officers. Private correspondence and reports during meetings of the Executive Committee stressed the expansion of *Preuves* in terms of both distribution and influence. The number of printed copies had stabilized around ten thousand by 1953, with close to 1,500 regular subscriptions. All those involved hastened to stress, however, that the influence of the magazine went far beyond the mere distribution figures. The most significant development had been the “blossoming out” of *Preuves* to French life, which was reflected in the increasing number of names and political tendencies appearing in its pages. It boasted contributors ranging from Burnham to French socialist politician André Philip, and the most prestigious French intellectuals now spontaneously approached its editor to write for the magazine.⁴⁰ Its influence was proven, according to its advocates, by the fact that *Preuves* was the most quoted French-language magazine in the French and foreign press, and by the number of reprints. *Preuves* was no longer merely a mouthpiece for the CCF, Bondy argued, but it had become an intellectual enterprise with its own identity. At the same time, it represented a

³⁸ Czesław Miłosz, “Un païen devant la nouvelle foi,” *Preuves* I n. 4 (June 1951), 6-12.

³⁹ For a selection of the most significant article appeared in *Preuves*, with a brief introduction, see in particular Pierre Grémion, ed., *Preuves, une revue européenne à Paris* (Paris, Julliard: 1989).

⁴⁰ “Activities of *Preuves* for the period March-December 1952,” Annex to Minutes of the CCF Executive Committee, 29-30 December 1952, s. II, b. 3, f. 2, IACF Records.

useful resource for the organization as an “opening wedge” or “calling card” for the Congress among intellectual milieux abroad.⁴¹

Pascal Ory and Jean-Francois Sirinelli have instead provided a less celebratory assessment of the magazine’s efforts not to be perceived as too political and to establish itself at a cultural and artistic level. The “strategic failure” was evident, according to the two historians, and due to the combined effect of a certain intellectual nationalism and to the influence of Marxism in France. In part, however, *Preuves*’ difficulties reflected its insistence on issues that had little relevance to the current French debates, for instance European federalism. The magazine also struggled to stake its intellectual ground in relation to *Esprit* and *Les Temps modernes*, two influential fellow-traveling publications.⁴² Some critiques also emerged at the time from within the Congress, about both the appearance and the content. Irving Brown, the European representative of the American Federation of Labor (AFL), urged its editors to work on the commercial aspect of distribution. Brown also commented on the “heavy” character of *Preuves* compared to other CCF magazines, although he concluded that it was appropriate for the current situation in France. A recurring remark, with which Aron and Rousset also concurred, was the danger that the magazine would focus too much on a negative form of anti-Communism, not developing a positive message to integrate it.⁴³

By the mid-1950s, the CCF had considerably expanded its network of magazines beyond its original elements. In addition to *Preuves* and *Der Monat* in Germany, which in

⁴¹ François Bondy to Nicolas Nabokov, 28 June 1952, s. II, b. 3, f. 1, IACF Records; Minutes of the CCF Executive Committee, 29-30 December 1952, s. II, b. 3, f. 2, IACF Records; Minutes of the CCF Executive Committee, 26-27 November 1953, s. II, b. 3, f. 5, IACF Records.

⁴² Ory and Sirinelli, *Les intellectuels en France*, 171.

⁴³ Minutes of the CCF Executive Committee, 29-30 December 1952, s. II, b. 3, f. 2, IACF Records; Minutes of the CCF Executive Committee, 26 November 1953, s. II, b. 3, f. 3, IACF Records.

fact predated the Congress itself, the organization had subsidized the creation of *Encounter* in England, *Cuadernos* for the Spanish-speaking world, *Forum* in Austria, and *Quest* in India. Talks were also taking place for the launch of an Italian magazine, and others would follow as well. In short, it had become necessary to coordinate more effectively the work of these reviews, and to tackle some intellectual and logistical problems. The agenda for one of the first editors' meetings, in January 1955, included the question of defining the great ideological themes of the magazines, the balance between political and cultural contents, and the place of scientific and artistic issues in CCF magazines. From a more practical point of view, its members reflected on the need to establish a better coordination between the journals in terms of contributors, distribution and publicity.⁴⁴

At the same time, though, the Executive Committee continued to be the main arena where the discussions on the magazine would take place, especially when they touched on the general nature of the CCF. Thus, at that same January 1955 meeting, the disagreements between Hook and Silone came into full display once again. The NYU philosopher had criticized *Encounter* for failing to serve the political purpose of the CCF, arguing that it did not carry enough explicitly political material and failed to oppose actively the leftist *The New Statesman* and *The Nation*. Silone was, not surprisingly, of the exact opposite opinion: not only *Encounter*, but the CCF publications in general, had more or less "a certain propaganda tone" that was highly regrettable. Such an assessment did not come from their opponents, but from the "good friends" that the Congress had to wrestle away from Communist propaganda. To demand from its magazines that they

⁴⁴ "Ordre du jour de la réunion sur les publications périodiques du Congrès," 26 January 1955, s. II, b. 3A, f. 1, IACF Records.

emphasize their political character would only make things worse, according to Silone.

At bottom, he argued, it was a more fundamental problem than the matter of what themes to discuss, or what articles to publish:

All that is authentic, all that rests on a true testimony is always accepted, even coming from the most radical of anti-Communists. Propaganda is what peddles opinions received from the outside. [...] Propaganda consists, on the diplomatic level, at the official level, in working on a theme, in summarizing viewpoints. It is the reason why I have always refused to be the editor of a Congress magazine in Rome, as it would be virtually impossible for me, having made too much propaganda in my life, to make any more, even in very limited circles. I say it is necessary to trust Bondy and other friends and not push them toward propaganda, all the opposite.⁴⁵

When one person's political message could appear like propaganda to another, coordination was inevitably more delicate. At the Executive Committee meeting held the following year, it fell to Manès Sperber to assess the situation of the main CCF magazines. Judging the success of *Preuves*, he argued, was especially difficult for people outside France, who ignored the extent of the hostility it faced from the beginning. As an ideological magazine, it had had to fight the psychology of the French intelligentsia that Aron had described in *The Opium of the Intellectuals*. Ory and Sirinelli have defined Aron's book as an "anti-clerical" one for its criticism of the Communist religion: more than a contribution to a debate, it was an attack on a set of beliefs – its revolutionary messianism and proletarian eschatology, for instance – that touched many members of the French intelligentsia at a deep level of their self-identification. His harsh criticism, therefore, had a lasting effect on the intellectual community that it attacked – Sartre refused to mention Aron until 1968.⁴⁶ Aron was crucial to *Preuves'* attempts to challenge the prevailing ideological currents of the time, and with his prestige helped put the

⁴⁵ Minutes of the CCF Executive Committee, 24-25 January 1955, 149-50, b. 1, f. 6, ACCF Records.

⁴⁶ Ory and Sirinelli, *Les intellectuels en France*, 178.

magazine on the map in the mid-1950s. Three of his articles in a little more than a year dealt with the “seduction of totalitarianism” on French intellectuals, and their relationship with Marxism and Communism.⁴⁷ Moreover, according to Sperber, the saturation of the periodical press made it harder for the magazine to expand its readership without wresting readers away from competitors such as Sartre’s *Les Temps Modernes*. In light of these conditions, the results of the first five years of operation were mixed. On the one hand, *Preuves* had established its presence and legitimacy among French intellectuals, many of whom considered it the best magazine in the country. On the other hand, such praises were often still expressed in private, and the contacts with contributors and publishers were of a “clandestine” nature.

The writer also criticized *Preuves* for its lack of courage in taking on the “ideological poverty” of the current age. He acknowledged that the original aim of the magazine had been to provide “evidence” against ideological claims, but the treatment of economic, social, intellectual and artistic realities was not enough. *Preuves* should oppose more forcefully the “lay liturgies and ideologies” of its time, and make ideology itself an object of study rather than a subject. Other remarks, aimed at all CCF journals, pointed to the tendency to foreground the political subjects too much over the ideological contents, at the risk of making the magazines political organs rather than intellectual forces. Finally, *Preuves* and the others should devote more attention to esthetic – rather than

⁴⁷ Raymond Aron, “Les intellectuels français et l’utopie,” *Preuves* V n. 50 (April 1955), 5-14; Raymond Aron, “Aventures et mésaventures de la dialectique,” *Preuves* VI n. 59 (January 1956), 3-20; Raymond Aron, “Le fanatisme, la prudence et la foi,” *Preuves* VI n. 63 (May 1956), 8-22. On the influence of Aron on the CCF in general, see also chapter 2.

merely sociological or humanistic – topics, because that was where authentic intellectual revolutions originated.⁴⁸

Bondy himself was paradoxically more critical of his own review at the following editors' meeting, in June 1956. He, too, pointed out that the magazine was gaining greater acceptance than ever among leading French circles, including praise from figures such as André Malraux and Albert Camus. He also explained that some of the accusations of “foreignness” were the inevitable consequence of any attempt to move beyond the narrow national circle of authors and themes dominating the Parisian field of monthly magazines. However, he conceded that many aspects of the editorial work of *Preuves* were “depressing and even self-boring,” and wondered whether the staff should make substantial changes to the publication program, taking up new themes such as the problems of prosperity or colonialism.⁴⁹ Clearly, after five years in which it had successfully weathered a largely hostile environment, *Preuves* had both reasons to celebrate and concerns about the direction to take.

Tempo Presente: Silone and Chiaromonte's Magazine

As the CCF network expanded, by the mid-1950s Italy remained the only major European country without a Congress-sponsored publication in its own language.⁵⁰ This exception led many to discuss openly the need for such a magazine, both for the organization and the Italian intellectual scene. Once again, it was Silone who set the pace for the development of the project rather than the Paris Secretariat. The writer had

⁴⁸ Manès Sperber, “Critique des revues du Congrès,” CCF International Executive Committee meeting, 29 January 1956, 1-5, s. II, b. 295, f. 7, IACF Records.

⁴⁹ Melvin Lasky, “Editorial Report,” 20 June 1956, b. 15, f. 375, Macdonald Papers.

⁵⁰ The Associazione italiana per la libertà della cultura published a monthly bulletin with a few articles and analyses, but it never reached a scale sufficient to compete with full-fledged magazines.

already expressed his doubts about the appropriateness of the CCF publishing a magazine during the discussions that culminated in the establishment of *Preuves*. The Executive Committee had overcome his objections at the international level, but his centrality to the Italian operations made it impossible to move ahead with such a project until Silone himself was on board. Still in late 1953, he explained to the other members of the Executive Committee that he remained unconvinced about the idea of publishing a Congress magazine in Italy, because it would be impossible to find a unified line. A cultural magazine, Silone argued, should be the organ of something and not of someone. A party with a well-defined ideology could afford to vulgarize its credo, but the variety within the Italian Committee – which he described as one of its greatest strengths – made him skeptical about such an attempt. Sidney Hook challenged the notion that the heterogeneity of the contributors made a magazine impossible, as long as there was respect for everyone’s freedom to disagree, but there was little that the Paris Secretariat could do to move the matter ahead without the consent of its prominent Italian members.⁵¹

Another issue, as Chiaromonte explained, was the place that such a magazine would occupy on the Italian scene. The problem of creating an “eclectic” journal was that it would resemble almost every existing magazine in the country. It should also distinguish itself from *Preuves*, which had reached a respectable circulation among some Italian circles and would be a competitor in its own right. The only opening that Silone and Chiaromonte could envision, and the angle they eventually pursued, was to create a truly international magazine that would break the isolation and provincialism of Italian intellectuals. A CCF magazine could only be useful in Italy if it provided regular updates

⁵¹ Minutes of the CCF Executive Committee, 27 November 1953, s. II, b. 3, f. 4, IACF Records.

and information on international events and debates, and if it engaged in the systematic discussion of ideas and ideologies.⁵²

Although Josselson periodically urged Silone to reconsider his opposition to a new magazine, the planning and the details of the whole enterprise were left almost exclusively to the latter. As Grémion notes, Silone was responsible for the conception of the project, its autonomous funding, and the choice of Chiaromonte as the main editor, independently from the Executive Committee and the International Secretariat. Moreover, he waited until the whole project was finalized to submit it for approval.⁵³ In order to stress the autonomy of the new journal, in fact, Silone and Chiaromonte made sure that it would not appear under the auspices of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, despite the initial objections of other Executive Committee members. The reason, the two men explained, was that to attach itself to an international organization would create complications among the members of the Italian committee, who might request a “dosage” of collaborations and cultural tendencies. Josselson was not convinced about it, and remarked that appearing under the auspices of the CCF had not hampered *Encounter*’s success. Silone and Aron, however, retorted that the psychology in Italy was very different from the English one, where there was also no longer a national section. Ultimately, Silone and Chiaromonte asked their colleagues to trust that, whether or not it appeared under CCF auspices, they would edit the magazine in accordance with the organization’s commitment to cultural freedom, claiming that their past actions spoke for

⁵² Ibid. For a description of what they envisioned see the proposal for a monthly magazine submitted to the Secretariat: Ignazio Silone and Nicola Chiaromonte, “Progetto di rivista mensile,” undated (but 1954-55), s. II, b. 301, f. 6, IACF Records.

⁵³ Grémion, *Intelligence de l’anticommunisme*, 148. Saunders’ suggestion that the choice of the name of the magazine was a deliberate echo of Sartre’s *Les Temps Modernes* and part of the CIA’s strategy to “create or support ‘parallel’ organizations which provided an alternative to radicalism” seems therefore a bit overstated. See Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*, 215.

them. Josselson, while continuing to disagree, expressed his confidence in the two editors along with the other members.⁵⁴ The discussion left no bad feelings on either side, however: a few weeks later Chiaromonte wrote Josselson to announce to him the creation of *Tempo Presente* (“Present Time”), thanking him for his support “though you might have not been convinced of certain details,” and stating that the whole magazine would not have been possible without Josselson’s initiative and support.⁵⁵

Chiaromonte and Silone, unquestionably the forces behind the magazine, had already discussed among themselves the character that they wanted to give to their creation. To differentiate itself from the activities of the Italian committee, *Tempo Presente* would aim to provide the space for a broader discussion of domestic and international issues, and a bridge toward different milieux. It would also devote special attention to the moral dimension of the new consumeristic society, and the contradictions that its unprecedented wealth created.⁵⁶ The purpose of the magazine would be to offer “first-hand information on the biggest facts that affect man’s life today, and to discuss, criticize the theories that provide a wrong picture or judgment of those facts.” It should stay away from purely academic debates, but not refrain from engaging with the ideas behind those facts. In terms of ideology, Chiaromonte thus wrote to Silone:

As far as the word “liberalism” is concerned, of course you are right. Let’s avoid it. The fact remains that, after the war, those like us who have wandered among all ideologies, and especially the socialist ideologies, have found themselves defending with certainty the “tangible liberties,” the refusal in any case and at all costs of “totalitarianism” and of the ideologies leading to it: whose substance, if you look carefully, is the moral primacy of politics over any other human activity. Against this perversion, we find ourselves defending the liberal principle

⁵⁴ Minutes of the CCF Executive Committee, 18 September 1955, s. II, b. 4, f. 1, IACF Records; Minutes of the Board of the CCF Executive Committee, 4 December 1955, s. II, b. 4, f. 1, IACF Records.

⁵⁵ Nicola Chiaromonte to Michael Josselson, 11 January 1956, s. II, b. 172, f. 1, IACF Records.

⁵⁶ Capozzi, “L’opposizione all’antiamericanismo,” 344-47; Teodori, *Storia dei laici*, 156.

[...]. We question it, we do not know for sure what consequences to draw from it, we know it entails new and unresolved problems, but nonetheless we invoke it.⁵⁷

Writing to Macdonald around the same time, Chiaromonte also drew a direct line between *Tempo Presente* and the causes that the two men had advocated through *politics* in the postwar period: “we want to draw attention to realities and not to cultural or academic conventions. Do you remember the pages I wrote, when we were planning the *New Politics*, that never came into being? My idea of a modern magazine is still very much the same.”⁵⁸ In the tone and some of its themes, in fact, *Tempo Presente* would show an ideal continuity with its predecessor, transplanting its ideas on the other side of the Atlantic and providing a critical voice within the CCF.

The editors of the new magazine immediately began to set the tone of *Tempo Presente* and the main avenues of inquiry into modern society that it would emphasize. The opening editorial announced that the purpose of the magazine was “essentially to inform and discuss,” adding in characteristic Sionian terms that the defining element of modern society was man’s conscience: “what men think and feel of themselves and the world they live in, not the vicissitudes of power, strength, or fortune.”⁵⁹ The two editors also stressed *Tempo Presente*’s international character, which remained a constant throughout its existence, in conversation with magazines like *Preuves* or *Partisan Review*:

Ours wants to be an *international* magazine. By this we mean a cultural enterprise based on the recognition that the world today has no borders. This is not because the political and ethnic borders are abolished, but because the borders of our moral world are uncertain and problematic; uncertain are the norms of individual behavior; uncertain the meaning and limits of political

⁵⁷ Nicola Chiaromonte to Ignazio Silone, 11 October 1955, b. 4, f. 133, Chiaromonte Papers. My translation.

⁵⁸ Nicola Chiaromonte to Dwight Macdonald, 13 January 1956, b. 10, f. 242, Macdonald Papers.

⁵⁹ “Editoriale,” *Tempo Presente* I n. 1 (April 1956), 1-2. My translation.

action as one practices or advocates for it today; uncertain especially the value of current ideas and ideologies. [...] Provincial, today, is anyone who, faced with this fact, withdraws himself into his national, ideological, cultural or religious province.⁶⁰

A particular interest in the United States clearly emerged from the first issues of the magazine. Within a year, *Tempo Presente* published reports on the progress of desegregation in the South and race relations, including a piece by Robert Penn Warren. It also presented to its Italian readers different aspects of American society, to provide a more sophisticated understanding of its contradictions and of the aspects that most puzzled Europeans. Mauro Calamandrei – correspondent from the U.S. for the Italian weekly *L'Espresso* – described the “frenetic” and “throbbing” American cities, which had replaced the frontier as America’s new melting pots. Dwight Macdonald published his reportage on the world of U.S. foundations, in particular the Ford Foundation, appeared in the *New Yorker* in 1955. Chiaromonte described American cinema and its difference from European tastes and standards of artistic quality. Sociologist Lewis Coser attempted to explain why socialism continued to be a negligible force in U.S. society, decades after the original remarks by Werner Sombart, and how this affected American intellectuals. Mary McCarthy offered a scathing account of playwright Arthur Miller’s hearing before the House Un-American Activities Committee, which European intellectuals continued to find especially troubling. According to McCarthy, the committee was not interested in discussing Miller’s convictions, or the broader implications of the balance between national security and freedom of expression. All its members wanted was to know whether the author would name others who, in the

⁶⁰ Ibid., 1-2. My translation.

previous decades, had been Communists: not an authentic desire to understand, but a mere test of Miller's loyalty.⁶¹

Some common elements emerged from these articles to paint an ambivalent portrait of the Western superpower. On the one hand, American society seemed forward-looking and dynamic, its social mobility offering immigrants and minorities the possibility to rise through its ranks over time. There was also an effort to single out the positions of progressive intellectuals who, despite their isolation, had much in common with their European counterparts. On the other hand, a recurring trope about America was its character of mass society, almost a social experiment more advanced along a path that Western Europe was also beginning to take. Mass production and consumerism were repeatedly noted, together with observations about the effects of this phenomenon on the cultural and intellectual life. Emblematic was the long discussion of sociologist Ernest van den Haag on "mass culture in America," in which he described the effects of industrialization on social institutions, cultural tastes, and the individual.⁶² Overall, *Tempo Presente* refrained from either relentless attack or wholehearted praise for the United States. It rather expressed the ambiguous views that many Italian intellectuals had about the country, which they feared and admired at the same time. Such a relationship did not sit well with the rigid divisions of the Cold War, as Chiaromonte implicitly

⁶¹ Lionel Abel, "Lettera da New York," *Tempo Presente* I n. 1 (April 1956), 76-78; Robert Penn Warren, "La coscienza divisa. Inchiesta sulla segregazione razziale negli Stati del Sud," *Tempo Presente* I n. 8 (November 1956), 611-29; Mauro Calamandrei, "La città americana," *Tempo Presente* I n. 3, (June 1956), 226-38; Nicola Chiaromonte, "Nota sul cinema americano," *Tempo Presente* I n. 5 (August 1956), 384-85; Dwight Macdonald, "I filantropoidi. Profilo della Fondazione Ford," *Tempo Presente* I n. 6-7 (September-October 1956), 446-68; Lewis Coser, "Il socialismo in America," *Tempo Presente* I n. 6-7 (September-October 1956), 515-20; Mary McCarthy, "Del fare nomi. Il caso Arthur Miller," *Tempo Presente* II n. 5 (May 1957), 394-97.

⁶² Ernest van den Haag, "Note sulla cultura di massa in America," *Tempo Presente* II n. 11 (November 1957), 839-56. On the reception of mass culture in Europe, see also Pells, *Not Like Us*; Kuisel, *Seducing the French*; and Victoria de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance Through Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2005).

lamented in one of the first issues of *Tempo Presente*. Commenting on the apparent thaw between the U.S. and the Soviet Union in the mid-1950s, the writer recalled the impact that the rigid polarization of the previous years had had on European intellectuals. The thrust of his argument was against fellow-travelers and Communist sympathizers, but Chiaromonte suggested his discomfort in straddling the lines of anti-Communism during the Cold War:

The United States was debated as an ideological formulation, a reduction to which a country like that is especially resistant, both in its institutions and in its social reality. [...] One tried to argue that, although the American form of government appeared better than the Soviet one, it did not mean at all that one approved everything the U.S. government did, but that on the contrary one felt free to criticize it: it was a hypocritical way to side with the « American party ». [...] On the other hand, if in calling oneself democratic one expressed doubts on the benefit of reducing the defense of democracy to a question of armaments, it was not infrequent to be accused of weakening an endangered democracy with sentimental scruples.⁶³

As Chiaromonte implied, *Tempo Presente* and its editors rejected the more simplistic divisions of the world – including that of the intellectuals – into two rigidly separated camps, and would continue to do so.

“This Egalitarian, Anonymous World”: Strangers in America

Preuves and *Tempo Presente*, much like other intellectual magazines of the time, shared a similar format. They occasionally published special issues with a particular emphasis on a given subject or region, and some regular features might change or disappear over time. Nonetheless, the general structure remained remarkably constant throughout their existence, and permits to describe a typical issue with a certain accuracy. Both magazines resorted to brief editorials, either unsigned or written by the editors, to

⁶³ Nicola Chiaromonte, “Gazzetta,” *Tempo Presente* I n. 2 (May 1956), 179-80.

present the issue and emphasize the most significant articles or a common theme. The leading article, frequently by the most prestigious of the contributors, tended to deal with current issues of national or international politics, especially in relation to the role and responsibilities of intellectuals. Other lengthy articles could instead concentrate on more specifically cultural topics – philosophy, art, literary criticism – without direct political implications. A few pages were inevitably devoted to poetry, in particular from less renowned authors – during an editors’ meeting, in fact, Chiaromonte complained that they had to accept the work of younger poets even when the manuscripts were poor, because “if you don’t publish poetry you are simply considered crude!”⁶⁴ CCF magazines made extensive use of contributions in the form of letters from other countries, which could discuss the recent developments of a certain place or deal with some delicate issues. Both *Preuves* and *Tempo Presente* reserved the last thirty or forty pages of an issue to regular features: a news section dealing with the latest events around the world; a discussion of the creative arts (which depending on the month could include painting, theater, music, or cinema); a summary of the articles appeared in domestic and foreign journals; and a book review section.

The issues of February 1958 offer a fairly representative snapshot of what the two magazines would look like. *Preuves* opened with an article by George Kennan reflecting on the repercussions of the Suez crisis of October 1956, followed by an essay on the relationship between socio-economic development and political regimes in China, India, and Japan. The readers of *Tempo Presente* found instead an editorial by Silone on the Italian Communist Party and the legacy of Antonio Gramsci, then a piece by philosopher Carlo Antoni on Christianity and the human conscience. *Preuves’* issue continued with an

⁶⁴ Lasky, “Editorial Report,” 20 June 1956.

interview with painter Marc Chagall, a reportage by journalist Guido Piovene on Italy, and a short story by French writer Romain Gary. *Tempo Presente* printed some reflections on poetry and literary criticism by W.H. Auden, a selection of poems by Giuseppe Ungaretti, and a short story by a young Italian writer. It then followed with the translation of an essay by Daniel Bell on American capitalism and the evolution of the labor movement, a letter from Hong Kong, and a discussion of Boris Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago*, which its author had just managed to smuggle out of the Soviet Union. *Preuves* continued instead its survey on the meaning of "European identity" for intellectuals, and published an article investigating generational divides in French society. Both magazines then included features on art critic, book reviews, and a report on other periodicals. Needless to say, it would be impossible to find two issues from either *Preuves* or *Tempo Presente* repeating this same pattern of topics and contributors. This brief overview, however, offers an example of how their editors strove to balance the political and cultural dimension, as well as domestic and international topics.

America continued to be a prominent topic for the magazines, even after they had established themselves more firmly in their countries. Each of them, however, emphasized different aspects of U.S. society that reflected a more general attitude. *Preuves*, for instance, devoted much more attention to the issue of racial relations and the emerging civil rights movement – an issue that its Italian counterpart covered less extensively. While condemning racists and segregationists in no uncertain terms, the magazine also stressed the positive significance of the African American struggles, and the hope that American democracy could find the solution to its racial problems in its own principles and traditions. *Tempo Presente*, instead, stood out for its willingness to

publish articles very critical of the U.S., and to probe more freely into the “dark” sides of its society. The close friendship between Chiaromonte and Macdonald also helped open the pages of the magazine to more iconoclastic positions, which offered an ambivalent view of America, and in particular consumerism and mass society.

In its coverage of racism and the African Americans’ struggle for equality, *Preuves* frequently mixed optimism for the progress made with outrage for Southern resistance and violence. Commenting on the “Brown v. Board of Education” sentence, which had declared the principle of “separate but equal” unconstitutional, the magazine hoped that the Supreme Court’s decision could open up new prospects for the advancement of racial relations in the country. The emphasis of the article’s author was on the progresses since the end of World War II in eliminating the discrepancies between the proclamation of the equality of all humans and its denial in everyday life.⁶⁵ In the following years, however, the magazine also had to report on the resilience of the worst aspects of Jim Crow – including the brutal murder of Emmett Till and the “caste verdict” that acquitted its perpetrators – and on the resistance to school integration that emerged in the South.⁶⁶ Regarding the latter, Bondy tried in fact to put a positive spin on the most extreme cases of opposition to desegregation: in America, he approvingly quoted the British *The Observer*, the support from the public opinion and the press at least gave the oppressed races the possibility to claim their rights, making it more advanced than the British Commonwealth.⁶⁷ A “Letter from the United States” by French journalist Leo Sauvage also provided a sympathetic report on the Montgomery bus boycott, and stressed

⁶⁵ Gustave Stern, “La ségrégation raciale devant la Cour Suprême,” *Preuves* IV n. 41 (July 1954), 64-66.

⁶⁶ A. Pr., “L’impitoyable acquittement,” *Preuves* V n. 57 (November 1955), 57-58.

⁶⁷ F. B., “Blanche Alabama,” *Preuves* VI n. 61 (March 1956), 59.

the significance of the “awakening” of African Americans, no longer willing to let Southern whites hold them back.⁶⁸

Preuves, finally, opened its pages to some of the most prestigious black American intellectuals, and tried to sketch the contours of a black culture that drew on developments both in the U.S. and abroad. A central place in this canon was reserved to writers like James Baldwin, Ralph Ellison, and Richard Wright. From the latter, in fact, the magazine printed several reportages describing black intellectuals and leaders from Africa and Asia. In the years when decolonization was assuming an unprecedented centrality and significance, this interest also tied into a special attention to the emergence of the Non-Aligned Movement, signaled by the 1955 Bandung Conference.⁶⁹ Ellison and Wright were also among the respondents to a survey that *Preuves* launched on the meaning and elements of a “black culture,” both political and artistic. The author of *Invisible Man* took issue with the idea that “black culture” could apply indistinctively to all peoples of color. African Americans had in fact developed a distinctive identity that was rooted in historical, social, and political experiences that were distinctively Americans. According to Ellison there were not “black” or “white” values, but American ones; blacks demanding civil rights were actually the ones espousing the most authentically U.S. ideals, and doing so by following the letter and spirit of the Constitution. The “essential cultural fact” was that African Americans found their claims

⁶⁸ Leo Sauvage, “Lettre des Etats-Unis. Printemps noir,” *Preuves* VI n. 64 (June 1956), 39-47. A few years later, a contribution by U.S. writer Norbert Muhlen also discussed the activities of civil rights organization in the South, and the emergence of nonviolence as a way to fight discrimination and segregation: see Norbert Muhlen, “Les Noirs du Sud des États-Unis prennent l’offensive,” *Preuves* X n. 116 (October 1960), 84-89.

⁶⁹ See Richard Wright, “Deux portrait africains,” *Preuves* IV n. 45 (November 1954), 3-9; Richard Wright, “Vers Bandoeng, via Séville,” *Preuves* V n. 52 (June 1955), 6-15; Richard Wright, “Le Congrès des hommes de couleur,” *Preuves* V n. 54 (August 1955), 42-48; Richard Wright, “Le monde occidentale à Bandoeng,” *Preuves* V n. 55 (September 1955), 45-51; Richard Wright, “De la Côte d’Or au Ghana,” *Preuves* VII n. 75 (May 1957), 11-14.

to be both black and American entirely compatible and equally desirable. Wright voiced a less optimistic view, but agreed on rejecting the notion of a separate “black culture.” That phrase was in fact the expression of a culture of oppression, and of resentment toward the white society that has governed and conditioned blacks everywhere.⁷⁰

In June 1956, *Preuves* translated Baldwin’s “Stranger in the Village” a reflection on the difference between America and Europe on race relations. The U.S. experience of slavery stood as a “dreadful abyss” between the two continents, according to Baldwin. The black slave in America had been permanently marked and defined by the sudden removal of his past and identity, and by the need to argue and answer the question of his humanity. Europe, where the question had always remained abstract, thus lacked the same racial history as the United States. White Americans, however, could not cling to the illusion that there would be some means of recovering “the European innocence”: blacks were “an inescapable part of the general social fabric.” That same interconnectedness could also become an asset, however: America’s history of the mutual involvement between blacks and whites could be indispensable in a world that “will never be white again.”⁷¹ A few years later *Preuves* printed another piece by Baldwin discussing race relations, this time specifically in the South, which had first appeared in *Partisan Review* in 1959. Recounting his impressions and feelings in visiting the region where his family was originally from, the writer struck a much more pessimistic note about his country: “I am very often tempted to believe that this illusion is all that is left of

⁷⁰ Ralph Ellison, “Notre lutte nous proclame à la fois “ Nègres ” et “ Américains ”,” *Preuves* VIII n. 87 (May 1958), 33-38; Richard Wright, “Le « Noir » est une création du Blanc,” *Preuves* VIII n. 87 (May 1958), 40-41.

⁷¹ James Baldwin, “Ce monde n’est plus blanc,” *Preuves* VI n. 64 (June 1956), 25-32. The quotes are taken from the original version, reprinted in James Baldwin, *Notes of a Native Son* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955), 159-75.

the great dream that was to have become America; whether this is so or not, this illusion certainly prevents us from making America what we say we want it to be.”⁷²

Racism was by no means the only topic related to American society that *Preuves* discussed in the second half of the 1950s. Other contributions reflected the desire to understand trends and events that especially interested a European readership. Writer Norbert Muhlen described the increasing similarities, both social and political, between the two major parties in America. He also pointed out the limits of this emerging consensus in promoting a sort of mediocrity and “greyness,” but suggested it might be the price to pay for the improvement of the material conditions. Daniel Bell published in 1957 a selection from “Work and Its Discontents,” which analyzed the plight of the American worker in an age of mechanization and ever-increasing material wealth. Norman Thomas offered an explanation for the failure of U.S. socialism to become a sizeable political force, but at the same time claimed that his country had gone as far as any European one in the implementation of socialist measures of welfare state. French journalist Jean Daniel reflected on his feelings in visiting America as a “stranger,” and on his encounters with the members of the political and intellectual elite in Washington and on the East Coast. The large presence of U.S. culture abroad, according to Daniel, gave to its visitors a superficial sense of familiarity, and of knowing Americans and their society. It was thus necessary to pass through three stages: “superficial familiarity, the rediscovery of otherness (*étrangeté*), and, finally, the understanding of a certain authenticity.” Ultimately, his dominant impressions of American society were a sense of modernity, constant change, the future. *Preuves* also reprinted an article by Dean Rusk on

⁷² James Baldwin, “Un Noir du Nord à Atlanta,” *Preuves* IX n. 102 (August 1959), 5. Quote from the original version, reprinted in James Baldwin, “Letter from the South,” *Partisan Review* 26 n. 1 (Winter 1959), 72-82.

the role of the president, appeared in the April 1960 issue of *Foreign Affairs*, and a letter by Irving Kristol on the relationship between civil society and organized religions.⁷³

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, several articles in *Tempo Presente* dealt with U.S. foreign policy, or with Cold War developments.⁷⁴ The magazine, however, reserved more sustained attention to the description of American society and its changes.

Macdonald discussed the emergence of “teenagers” as a new sociological category that he saw as connected to the last frontier of consumerism; Calamandrei examined the growing concentration of millionaires, and the impact of the new “plutocracy” on social relations and public discourses in the country. A contribution from sociologist David Riesman, author of the influential *The Lonely Crowd* (1953), described the mechanisms that led Americans to conform to social norms in their public lives, and to resign themselves to a “corporate” lifestyle.⁷⁵

A recurring theme, thus, was that of mass society, with its related phenomena of consumerism, uniformity, and standardization. Not coincidentally, it seemed to strike the

⁷³ Norbert Muhlen, “Lettre de New York : Les dangers du raisonnable,” *Preuves* VII n. 71 (January 1957), 50-54; Daniel Bell, “La roue d’Ixion : Le travail et ses servitudes,” *Preuves* VII n. 72 (February 1957), 3-17; Norman Thomas, “Le handicap du socialisme américain,” *Preuves* IX n. 99 (May 1959), 34-39; Pierre Schneider, “Portrait de Los Angeles,” *Preuves* IX n. 102 (August 1959), 13-24; Jean Daniel, “Un “étranger” à New York,” *Preuves* IX n. 102 (August 1959), 25-35, and n. 103 (September 1959), 13-25. My translation; Dean Rusk, “Le rôle du Président,” *Preuves* XI n. 120 (February 1961), 14-24; Irving Kristol, “Lettre de New York : Dieu et la politique aux États-Unis,” *Preuves* XI n. 127 (September 1961), 59-61.

⁷⁴ See Mauro Calamandrei, “Lettera da New York,” *Tempo Presente* III n. 7 (July 1958), 579-83; Mauro Calamandrei, “Lettera da New York: La crisi nel Medio Oriente e le contraddizioni della diplomazia americana,” *Tempo Presente* III n. 8 (August 1958), 655-60; Mauro Calamandrei, “Lettera da New York,” *Tempo Presente* IV n. 7 (July 1959), 551-56; Mauro Calamandrei, “Kruscev in America: Lettera da New York,” *Tempo Presente* IV n. 9-10 (September-October 1959), 749-52; Mauro Calamandrei, “Lettera da New York,” *Tempo Presente* V n. 2-3 (February-March 1960), 166-70.

⁷⁵ Dwight Macdonald, “Teenagers. La sedizione dei minorenni americani,” *Tempo Presente* III n. 11 (November 1958), 831-44; Mauro Calamandrei, “Plutocrazia vecchia e nuova,” *Tempo Presente* III n. 11 (November 1958), 845-59; David Riesman, “Lo studente e la macchina sociale,” *Tempo Presente* III n. 11 (November 1958), 867-70. Oddly enough, there were no articles dealing directly with the civil rights movement of the early 1960s, and the nonviolent struggles for desegregation. On the portrayal of American culture in *Tempo Presente* see also Antonio Donno, *La cultura americana nelle riviste italiane del dopoguerra: Tempo Presente (1956-1968)* (Lecce: Milella, 1978).

contributors of *Tempo Presente* at a time when Italy was entering its own economic boom. Through the scathing portrayal of a critic of mass culture such as Macdonald, Hollywood and the entertainment industry came to embody, in a sense, this process of gradual decline of American cultural life. They were by no means the only areas where one could observe this phenomenon, though. The publishing industry was also more and more turning to the creation of low-quality products, soon to be forgotten, and forcing talented writers to face the dilemma of whether to pursue an easier and immediate success or write for few thousand readers.⁷⁶ Conservative sociologist Ernest van den Haag, instead, tackled directly the issue of what approach intellectuals should have toward mass culture. He was critical of the notion that mass media could help bring high culture to the masses, and that entertainment could become the main criterion to judge cultural endeavors. Unlike in the past, the market logic had invaded the whole cultural industry, removing the possibility of an independent space for the cultural elites, and subjecting them to the “dominant power of the mass of consumers on the production and on public opinion.”⁷⁷

In an article describing his experience touring the U.S. over a few months, writer Italo Calvino combined many of these elements to present a critical view of American society. The defining features, at least to the eyes of a European visitor, were consumerism – along with the resistance to it – and commercialization, mass society and atomization. “Even that glorious theme of American literature that found in Hemingway

⁷⁶ Dwight Macdonald, “Lettera da Hollywood. « Miss Lonelyhearts » ovvero né arte né cassetta,” *Tempo Presente* IV n. 5 (May 1959), 382-87; Dwight Macdonald, “Lettera da Hollywood,” *Tempo Presente* V n. 4 (April 1960), 256-58; Niccolò Tucci, “Lettera da New York. Cinque milioni di lettori,” *Tempo Presente* IV n. 12 (December 1959), 921-23.

⁷⁷ Ernest van den Haag, “Note sulla cultura di massa,” *Tempo Presente* V n. 5 (May 1960), 339-42. My translation.

its most faithful and maybe last poet,” Calvino wrote, “the cult of the lone man up against the forces of nature, a theme which represented for us the attraction of a literature coming directly from life, we find it to have become a superficial, commercialized myth in magazines like *True*.” Even the California landscape appeared as a nature with which it was impossible to relate: “maybe due to the superhuman dimensions, maybe because all human relations – therefore including those with nature – are informed by this sense of alienation, of anonymity, of tasteless rarefaction.” The small towns encountered along the way gave all the same impression of boredom and anonymity, while mechanization was widespread at all levels.⁷⁸ Clearly, the portrayal of American society in the pages of *Tempo Presente* was far from an uncritical celebration.

Whereas *Preuves* also commented on America’s mass society, its take on it was not as overwhelmingly negative as that of its Italian counterpart. In fact, an article by poet Pierre Emmanuel explicitly challenged the widespread concerns in France about becoming “Americanized” – a shorthand, he claimed, for the fear that efficiency and time-saving would eventually destroy choice, charm, individuality, and the French way of life. Emmanuel’s apology took the cue from a most unlikely symbol of American society: the banana-split. Reflecting on how it was the same everywhere in the U.S., the poet confessed his love for this “absolute uniformity.” He then turned on its head the argument that uniformity deprived the individual of his freedom:

This egalitarian, anonymous world, where even the actions and relations that elsewhere would require an effort are automatic, suits me because it frees me. I am free to look inward more (*être*

⁷⁸ Italo Calvino, “Diario dell’ultimo venuto. Appunti d’un viaggio negli Stati Uniti,” *Tempo Presente* VI n. 6 (June 1961), 411-18. My translation.

plus intérieur), to create — if I can and I want to — *my* force which sets me free: if I can't or don't want to, if my inner world is closed to me, [I am free] to lose myself inside the mass.⁷⁹

The America described by Emmanuel was the scapegoat of a distinctive kind of French intellectual: revolutionaries who, in the name of a future ideal, were opposed to material well-being and the enjoyment of the present. The U.S. had instead proven to be naturally suspicious of ideologies, but respectful of the concrete freedoms of the individual: “America does not have absolutes: in that respect it is, for me, a land of freedom, where the absolute remains a personal affair.”⁸⁰ France was not “Americanizing,” Emmanuel claimed, but only adapting its society to the new technologies and the prosperity that they created; America was simply further ahead in adopting these new lifestyle. In conclusion, he placed the debate about Americanization in the context of the Cold War, and made clear where his sympathies lay. True, he conceded, the Western world was far from perfect and often dominated by “boredom” (*ennui*). The alternative, however, offered both boredom and terror, and threatened the individual in an equal – if not more menacing – way: “the danger is that terror is conquering (*conquérant*), boredom nothing but contagious. But one does not solve the other, we can at least convince ourselves of that.”⁸¹

“Blossoming Out” and Infighting: The Late 1950s and Early 1960s

With the creation of *Tempo Presente*, the main elements of the network of CCF magazines were in place, and the following decade saw an increase in the effectiveness and influence of Congress publications. One of the strengths of this network was the

⁷⁹ Pierre Emmanuel, “Terreur, ennui et liberté ou des avantages et des inconvénients d’être américanisés,” *Preuves* VIII n. 90 (August 1958), 4. My translation.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 8. My translation.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 11. My translation.

possibility, for the different magazines, to share contributors and articles more easily and facilitate synergies. As Saunders has noted, the fact that these magazines could attract and make coexist a wide spectrum of intellectuals who, in the words of a CIA agent, “wouldn’t go to a cocktail party together,” was an impressive feat. Josselson and Melvin Lasky played a key role in this effort, arranging regular meetings between the editors and sharing a similar outlook on what the magazines should publish, and how. As Josselson’s wife put it decades later, the CCF Administrative Secretary was “publisher and editor-at-large” of the magazines, while the editor of *Der Monat* – and later *Encounter* – acted as “vice-president, and, to a certain extent, Michael’s mouthpiece.”⁸² Such an assessment captures effectively the deep involvement of Josselson in the activity of the magazines, but his ability to influence the content of their publications should not be overstated. While collectively CCF journals acquired greater legitimacy and respect among the intellectual elites on both sides of the Atlantic, each magazine developed in its own way and reflected the concerns and debates of its national audiences. For the French and Italian ones, in particular, this became evident after the crisis in leftist milieux following the Hungarian revolution, which created an opening for their work. *Preuves* and *Tempo Presente* thus expanded on familiar themes, but also engaged in independent initiatives that the Secretariat did not always receive well.

In some cases, these initiatives might be in conflict with the general interests of the CCF or the sensibilities of some of its members. One such instance was a meeting between editors of Western and Eastern magazines, held in Zürich in September 1956. While *Tempo Presente* and *Encounter* were among the journals participating, *Preuves* was not invited to the meeting in favor of other, more neutralist French publications. The

⁸² Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*, 216.

meeting itself was a step to establish a kind of personal dialogue between Western and Eastern intellectuals, and it led to a short-lived exchange between Silone and the Soviet writer Ivan Anassimov in the pages of *Tempo Presente*.⁸³ It nonetheless provoked a furious reaction from Aron, who accused Silone of a personal initiative that undermined *Preuves*' standing in France and its fight against neutralists and fellow-travelers.⁸⁴ The episode did not have lasting consequences, in part because the outbreak of the Hungarian Revolution a month later absorbed the CCF's attention and radically changed the question of dialogue with intellectuals in the Eastern bloc. Its significance lies nonetheless in the fact that the magazines of the CCF network followed their own line, and could at times end up on different sides of an issue. On the one hand, this suggests that the Congress could take advantage of the peculiar character of each of its affiliates to increase its outreach. In the case of *Tempo Presente*, its perceived independence made it an effective ambassador among the intellectual milieux, both in the East and the West, who looked with suspicion at the more militant anti-Communism of a magazine like *Preuves*. On the other hand, it complicates the notion that the CCF could always impose its agenda on the magazines that it sponsored, when at times the opposite was the case. *Tempo Presente*, while a central element of its network, did not hesitate to reach outside of that circle without the assent of all its members.

The editors of the Congress magazines also had to reconcile their transnational vocation with the need to address the delicate issues of each nation's political debates, which journals dealing with public affairs could not ignore. As Lasky reported, the

⁸³ Ivan Anassimov, Ignazio Silone, "Un dialogo difficile: dal disgelo al neo-stalinismo," *Tempo Presente* II n. 2 (February 1957), 85-98; Ivan Anassimov, Ignazio Silone, "Dialogo impossibile," *Tempo Presente* II n. 4 (April 1957), 275-76.

⁸⁴ Minutes of the CCF Executive Committee, 27 October 1956, s. II, b. 4, f. 2. For more details on the controversy, see chapter 2.

editors suggested that the international character of the CCF magazines, which constituted an asset for most of them, could itself be a solution to the problem. A “tactful and knowledgeable outsider” could possibly “put the finger on the wounds” – for instance Cyprus for England, North Africa for France, mass culture or foreign policy for America – in a way that “national” magazines could not.⁸⁵ The CCF network did indeed make a large use of the format of letters to and from a country, usually from a foreign contributor. If such a method helped reinforce the international character of the magazines, its limits were evident when certain crises created sharp divisions even within the CCF, as for example with the Algerian War.

The situation of *Preuves* – and to a lesser extent of *Tempo Presente* – changed remarkably after 1956, as a consequence of the intellectual displacement in Paris that followed the Hungarian revolution. The magazine was no longer attacked as an organ of right-wing American propaganda, and a new generation of ex-Communist intellectuals emerged for which reading and writing for *Preuves* was no longer a scandal but a consecration. Bondy and Jelenski also managed to secure the collaboration of Jean Bloch-Michel, a novelist and essayist friend of Camus, who became a member of the editorial staff. The two editors had tried to associate Bloch-Michel since 1950, but he had refused being, as Grémion puts it, “furiously anti-American.” His rapprochement thus signaled the distance that *Preuves* had traveled in a few years.⁸⁶ The fact that Communism in France was experiencing what Tony Judt dubbed a “crisis of confidence,” however, did not mean that the anti-Communism of the CCF was suddenly popular everywhere. In fact, according to Judt, even after 1956 the complete rejection of

⁸⁵ Lasky, “Editorial Report,” 20 June 1956.

⁸⁶ Grémion, *Intelligence de l’anticommunisme*, 391, 402-03.

Stalinism placed intellectuals like Aron outside the mainstream of Parisian life, although in the company of a transnational network of like-minded thinkers (among them Koestler, Chiaromonte, Silone, Sperber, Rougemont, and Claude Mauriac).⁸⁷

With the decline of Communism's appeal, French intellectuals turned their attention to the non-European world and *tiers-mondisme*, at a time when decolonization was assuming a growing centrality in Paris. As Judt argues, the shift was in part due to the fact that a serious debate over the meaning of Communism after 1956 would have been difficult for many, and in part to the "seemingly straightforward moral choices" that the colonial question posed.⁸⁸ The emergence of the problem, which in the case of Algeria would lead France to the brink of a civil war, in turn forced *Preuves* to engage with an issue that escaped an easy dichotomy between Communist and anti-Communist. The challenge was also compounded by the political earthquakes that led to the fall of the Fourth Republic, and the return to power of General Charles de Gaulle in May 1958. A curious reversal took place as far as the magazine's ties to the French political elites were concerned: while during the previous regime *Preuves* had been in good terms with the government parties of the *Troisième Force* but marginalized by the dominant intellectual milieu, with the Fifth Republic the phenomenon was almost reversed. The greater intellectual legitimacy of the review corresponded to a colder relationship with the new governments.⁸⁹

On Algeria in particular, *Preuves* tried to strike a moderate course. The issue had become increasingly controversial by the mid-1950s, and touched the French consciousness and identity at a deep level. The spread of decolonization after World War

⁸⁷ Judt, *Past Imperfect*, 117-18, 282.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 282-83.

⁸⁹ Grémion, *Intelligence de l'anticommunisme*, 402-03.

It had already resulted in the independence of several French colonies in the previous years, but the peculiar status of Algeria made it a unique case. Unlike its other possessions, the colonial power had administered the region as an integral part of mainland (“metropolitan”) France, which made the idea of independence at the same time more legally complicated and symbolically painful. Moreover, by the mid-twentieth century a sizeable contingent of white French immigrants (the *pieds-noirs*) had established itself in the midst of a largely Muslim population, and strongly opposed a French withdrawal that would leave them behind. The rise of a militant nationalist movement, led by the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN), met therefore with a violent response from Paris. A turning point came in 1956, with the victory of a left-wing coalition at the legislative elections and the escalation of the conflict with the nationalist guerrillas into an all-out war. On October 23, the same day the Hungarian insurrection began, the French army intercepted a plane with five Algerian nationalists and arrested them.

Rightist forces and parts of the French army opposed any concession toward independence, and repeatedly assumed positions of open defiance toward subsequent French governments. An attempted coup in Algiers, led by a coalition of generals, politicians, and colonial officers in May 1958, brought about the collapse of the Fourth Republic and the return of General de Gaulle to active politics after a twelve-year absence. As the conflict dragged on with no success in quelling the nationalist uprising, the French public gradually signaled its increasing support for independence. Nonetheless, it still took de Gaulle’s prestige to conclude the peace negotiations culminating in the Évian Accords of March 1962, which recognized Algeria as an

independent country. Although the Algerian War had only a limited impact on the daily concerns of most Frenchmen, it was especially traumatic for France and its intelligentsia. Unlike previous, equally unsuccessful attempts to hold on to parts of the French empire, the proximity of Algeria to the national territory, the presence of a large European population, and the recourse to draft soldiers left a significant mark on the French public. The prolonged fighting and the human and moral costs of the war – the French army was accused of resorting to torture against its opponents – also raised issues that divided the political and intellectual communities.⁹⁰

Preuves followed extensively the developments and debates about the conflict, in a way that far surpassed the coverage of the unsuccessful attempts to maintain control of Vietnam in the early 1950s. It argued in favor of independence out of realism, but stopping short of open support for the Algerian nationalists of the Front de Libération Nationale.⁹¹ The magazine was critical of the attempts by subsequent governments to solve the crisis militarily – the French authorities in Algeria even seized its July 1958 issue, prompting Bondy to complain directly with de Gaulle's Minister for Cultural Affairs, writer André Malraux.⁹² Its pages were open to Aron's more polemical articles

⁹⁰ On the Algerian War and its significance see Todd Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006); Judt, *The Burden of Responsibility*, 116; Ory and Sirinelli, *Les intellectuels en France*, 196. The war also had internal political implications for the PCF, whose failure to support the non-Marxist FLN undermined the party's radical credentials. The working class proved to be a conservative force over decolonization, and the Communist Party lost its hegemony on the leftist intellectual milieu, prompting the emergence of new forces to its left. See Christofferson, *French Intellectuals Against the Left*, 39-40; Ory and Sirinelli, *Les intellectuels en France*, 201-02.

⁹¹ See for example P., "L'Algérie n'existe pas," *Preuves* V n. 56 (October 1955), 50-53; Jean Daniel, "Un Français d'Algérie," *Preuves* VII n. 79 (September 1957), 25-29; Germaine Tillon, "Algérie 1958 - Les ennemis complémentaires," *Preuves* VIII n. 87 (May 1958), 3-9; Jean Daniel, "L'Algérie après Conakry," *Preuves* VIII n. 92 (October 1958), 3-6; François Fontaine, "L'Algérie, la France et les autres," *Preuves* IX n. 99 (May 1959), 13-18.

⁹² François Bondy to André Malraux, 1 July 1958, s. VII, b. 9, f. 4, IACF Records. Bondy rhetorically asked Malraux who could talk to Algerian intellectuals, if a magazine like *Preuves* was not allowed to.

toward de Gaulle, which he could not publish in the daily *Le Figaro*.⁹³ The Sorbonne professor played a central role in charting a course for the organization on the issue. His own personal evolution had reflected, rather than a moral judgment, the belief that France's continuing colonial presence in the Maghreb was costly and pointless. It was time for Algerians, he argued, to gain their independence out of realism and reason, rather than invoking historical inevitability. The real "Algerian tragedy," as Aron titled his reflections on the subject, was not in the moral dilemma of the individual caught in the war, but in the absence of an alternative to continuing conflict and "catastrophic independence."⁹⁴ Analyzing the situation during an Executive Committee of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, he noted that the Algerian conflict highlighted a contradiction at the heart of the CCF's Berlin Manifesto – and, at a broader level, of the West itself. Two competing conceptions of liberty were at play: collective freedom through national independence, and the individual's cultural freedom; in the twentieth century, giving complete satisfaction to one of the two had usually meant denying the other. Aron advised the Congress not to take a position on the problem of collective freedom, given its political character, but conceded that national committees might do so.⁹⁵

The organization, however, could hardly afford to remain completely silent on the issue. In fact, its officers were under considerable pressure from its own members.

Indonesian writer Mochtar Lubis clearly stated this fact in a letter to Nabokov, wondering

⁹³ Grémion, *Intelligence de l'anticommunisme*, 393; see Raymond Aron, "Un seul homme, un homme seul," *Preuves* X n. 109 (March 1960), 3-12; Raymond Aron, "La présomption," *Preuves* X n. 117 (November 1960), 3-10; Raymond Aron, "L'heure de la vérité," *Preuves* XI n. 119 (January 1961), 3-7; Raymond Aron, "Après le coup d'Etat, avant la négociation," *Preuves* XI n. 124 (June 1961), 3-9; Raymond Aron, "Adieu au gaullisme," *Preuves* XI n. 128 (October 1961), 3-16; Raymond Aron, "Dénouement provisoire," *Preuves* XII (June 1962), 3-11.

⁹⁴ Raymond Aron, *La Tragédie Algérienne* (Paris: Plon, 1957). See also Judt, *The Burden of Responsibility*, 165; Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization*, 68-73.

⁹⁵ Minutes of the Board of the CCF Executive Committee, 2 May 1958, s. II, b. 4, f. 5, IACF Records.

whether the CCF would publicly take a position on Algeria as it had on the Poznań crisis, which had taken place around the same time but within the Eastern bloc. “I really expect to hear from you on this,” wrote Lubis, “because we in Asia have the impression that when westerners speak of freedom they think only of freedom for themselves and not for other people.” Nabokov tried to reassure him that the Congress was “most concerned” about the issue, and pointed to some of the articles published in *Encounter* and *Preuves*. But, he added, there was “a further point” to keep in mind: “namely, that the site of the Congress is, of course, Paris, and no matter how strongly we may feel as an organization about the Algerian question, it is apparent that we must exercise a judicious amount of tact and discretion in dealing with our immediate environment.” The presence of the International Secretariat in Paris posed “quite pertinent problems,” Nabokov concluded, and it was “essential to recognize one’s limitations.”⁹⁶

In May 1958, the CCF issued a statement on the Algerian question that reflected Aron’s considerations, and clarified its stance. Although it rejected the notion that an organization like the Congress could impose a common line on a divisive political issue, it nonetheless pointed to a certain consensus among its French members on the subject. Aron, David Rousset and Georges Altman, in particular, had consistently taken a “liberal” position that opposed the brutalities on both sides. They had recognized the legitimacy of the national aspirations of many Algerians, but expressed their concern for the rights of minorities and the individual in the new state. The statement added that *Preuves*, for its part, had also consistently dealt with the Algerian question since 1955,

⁹⁶ Mochtar Lubis to Nicolas Nabokov, 9 July 1956, s. II, b. 197, f. 11, IACF Records; Nicolas Nabokov to Mochtar Lubis, 25 July 1956, s. II, b. 197, f. 11, IACF Records.

trying to move beyond the partisan positions to analyze the complex problems that the war posed.⁹⁷

While the communiqué was an evident attempt to defend the organization from the accusations that it had failed to speak up on the subject, it did not convince everyone. Among the CCF affiliates, the Associazione italiana per la libertà della cultura and *Tempo Presente* were the voices most critical of the French government, and at times of the CCF for failing to denounce it vigorously. Writing to Josselson in the summer of 1958, Silone denied having called de Gaulle a fascist,⁹⁸ but claimed that he and others were entitled to their independent judgment. He also added that the CCF had an obligation to speak up against any form of dictatorship and nationalism, and that, while it could be neutral on some secondary or technical questions, it could not do so on the issue of freedom, its *raison d'être*. The situation in France, he concluded, was not a problem for *Tempo Presente* but rather for *Preuves*: its “balancing act” could not continue for long, and it threatened to damage the reputation that the magazine had earned in the previous years. The Congress should therefore discuss especially the attitude of *Preuves* toward the latest events, since it was the “official organ of the Congress.” This last statement prompted Josselson to underline the sentence and jot down two large question marks next to it; evidently, the question of how independent the magazines were, and to

⁹⁷ “The Congress for Cultural Freedom and the Algerian Tragedy,” Statement of the CCF International Secretariat, 20 May 1958, s. II, b. 4, f. 5, IACF Records.

⁹⁸ *Tempo Presente*, and Silone and Chiaromonte at a personal level, had been highly critical of de Gaulle and the circumstances by which he had come to power. The role of right-wing forces in the crisis that doomed the Fourth Republic, and the constitutional measures taken by de Gaulle to introduce a presidential regime and strengthen the executive power, had raised concerns about an authoritarian drift of the country. Silone and Chiaromonte, in fact, were more critical of de Gaulle than left-wing Frenchmen like Camus. Such a response can be explained in part by the similarities between the French Fourth Republic and the Italian political system, whose instability also exposed it to the fear of a right-wing *coup* that would curtail civil and political freedoms with the justification of fighting the Communist threat. See for instance Guido Piovene, “De Gaulle e noi,” *Tempo Presente* III n. 9-10 (September-October 1958), 701-07.

what extent they were instead considered to express a CCF “official line” even when its officers did not want them to, remained unclear even among its prominent members.⁹⁹

Chiaromonte wrote to Macdonald that *Tempo Presente* had had a clash with Josselson on de Gaulle on account of their “relatively stiff” stand against him, “or rather of our refusal to be fooled into supporting him on account of the Commies, and so forth and so on.”¹⁰⁰

Preuves had thus paradoxically to navigate between the opposite criticisms of not taking a clear enough stand in favor of Algerian independence, and of being too critical of the French government’s actions against it.¹⁰¹ A report prepared for the meeting of the CCF International Executive Committee in January 1959 recognized that with the events of May 1958 a difficult period had begun for the magazine, which had not yet ended.

Preuves had suffered from the “strong psychological pressure” of the events in Algeria, but had responded with a special effort to bring in contributors with different perspectives. While Bondy reported that some readers had abandoned the magazine due to its line, *Preuves* seemed to have found a less fluctuating public and a clearer sense of what it stood for.¹⁰²

The Algerian question, however, would continue to cause tensions among Congress members, especially with the Italian committee and magazine. New clashes arose from the different reactions to the “Declaration on the right of insubordination in the Algerian war,” an open letter signed by 121 French intellectuals – hence the

⁹⁹ Ignazio Silone to Michael Josselson, 8 July 1958, s. II, b. 290, f. 5, IACF Records. In his reply, Josselson pointed out that *Preuves* had gained the respect of many intellectual circles, and it was incorrect to characterize it as a Congress organ. He also questioned the decision by Chiaromonte and Silone not to publish a letter from Bloch-Michel which would have offered a different point of view, closer to the line *Preuves* had adopted. See Michael Josselson to Ignazio Silone, 18 July 1958, s. II, b. 290, f. 5, IACF Records.

¹⁰⁰ Nicola Chiaromonte to Dwight Macdonald, 16 July 1958, b. 10, f. 242, Macdonald Papers.

¹⁰¹ In addition to the seizure of the magazine’s July 1958 issue by the French authorities in Algiers, the offices of the CCF in Paris were bombed by the right-wing organization OAS in February 1962.

¹⁰² “Report on ‘Preuves,’” CCF International Executive Committee, 24-25 January 1959, s. II, b. 5, f. 2, IACF Records.

unofficial name of “manifesto of the 121.” The event that prompted it was the trial of the “reseau Jeanson,” a network of left-wing French militants who had helped the FLN by collecting funds for it. The members of the network were charged with encouraging sedition, a law introduced by Napoleon, and their trial became a polarizing moment for French intellectuals. The manifesto, published in the summer of 1960, called on the French government and nation to recognize the legitimacy of the Algerian struggle against colonialism, and denounced the use of torture by the French army. It also demanded respect for the position of conscientious objectors who refused to participate in the conflict, and claimed the right for French citizens to resist their government, or even assist its enemies, in defense of universal values. The signatories of the appeal, while not formally condemned, were subjected to government pressure through the exclusion from activities in State-supported theaters, radio, television, and cinema.¹⁰³ Tony Judt has argued that the Algerian crisis, and in particular the controversy around the manifesto of the 121, was a crucial moment in the evolution of French intellectuals toward *tiers-mondisme*. It allowed them to reaffirm their identity as defenders of universal values and human emancipation, easing the transition from previous attachments to universalist projections of a “certain idea of France.”¹⁰⁴

Preuves and the prominent French members of the CCF remained opposed to the manifesto, of which Sartre was one of the promoters. Aron’s views on the issue were published in *Preuves* in October 1960, and offered a reflection on the meaning of “treason.” Such a notion was especially delicate in light of the recent history of France: in refusing the armistice with Nazi Germany in June 1940, some argued, Charles de Gaulle

¹⁰³ See Sirinelli, *Intellectuels et passions françaises*, 210-24; Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization*, 70-72.

¹⁰⁴ Judt, *Past Imperfect*, 286-87.

had himself committed an act of treason against the legitimate French government of the time. What, then, made the position of the opponents to the Algerian War different? Aron argued that, in an age in which conflicts between States intertwined with clashes between ideologies, it was pointless to invoke a notion of “national absolutism” – which he summed up in the expression “right or wrong, my country” – to condemn the actions of the “reseau Jeanson.” On the morality of opposing the Algerian War, Aron pointed out that much depended on how one judged the Algerians’ aspirations to independence, or the likelihood that the FLN would establish a democratically representative regime:

These questions and many others arise, but the fact is that many Frenchmen answer them in a way that makes the Algerian War appear to them unjust rather than just, contrary to the values that France embodies, contrary even to the long-term interest of the country. In the name of what are the Frenchmen who believe this — and I am among them — going to condemn Francis Jeanson [the leader of the network of militants] or the objectors, those to refuse to serve?¹⁰⁵

The problem was not to deny the existence of Algerian nationalism, but that the French perceived the FLN as an anti-French foreign force rather than one of the sides engaged in a civil war. Even those in favor of independence were nonetheless shocked by the fact that some Frenchmen were actively fighting for such an organization. Discussing the belief that supporting the FLN was politically and morally wrong, because a breakup of the national community, Aron drew a comparison with the Gaullist resistance to the Vichy regime between 1940 and 1944. He deemed it a more serious act to break the national discipline of a democratic State than a totalitarian one, because the former was more fragile due to its pluralism and respect for dissenting positions. The situation, moreover, was not as dramatic as after the German invasion: the political liberties were still essentially in place, newspapers and political opposition were legal, and there was no

¹⁰⁵ Raymond Aron, “De la trahison,” *Preuves* X n. 116 (October 1960), 11. My translation.

sign that the government was acting against the will of the majority. “The breakup [of the national community],” Aron continued, “would not be a reaction to a government unfaithful to the will of the country or manipulating that will, it would be with the nation. Does the Algerian War justify such breakup? Personally, I don’t believe so.”¹⁰⁶ An evolution toward independence was probably inevitable, he concluded, but one must avoid persecutions and a mass exodus of the Europeans in its wake; the Frenchmen supporting the FLN were making such an outcome more difficult. Overall, Aron acknowledged, the situation was too complex to fit into neat categories such as “just” or “unjust” war.

In Italy, on the other hand, the manifesto of the 121 was received with enthusiasm. *Tempo Presente* was one of the two magazines – none of them in France – that printed it in its entirety.¹⁰⁷ Chiaromonte called it the attempt to place, through the consensus of civil society, an absolute limit on the “jus imperii, the unconditional right not only of life and death, but of dishonor, abjection, and barbarism that the modern State has not yet ceased to claim over its citizens.” The citizen’s refusal to obey was becoming a duty, and a founding principle of the legitimacy of the State.¹⁰⁸ Silone and Chiaromonte, together with other Italian intellectuals, undertook a series of initiatives to draw the public opinion’s attention to the alleged persecution of the signatories of the letter by the French government. Those included a telegram to Malraux, writer and

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 14. My translation.

¹⁰⁷ “Dichiarazione sul diritto all’insubordinazione nella guerra d’Algeria,” *Tempo Presente* V n. 9-10 (September-October 1960), 707-09. The editors also noted that freedom of expression was unquestionably in serious danger in France. See also Pierre Vidal-Naquet, “Une fidélité têtue,” *Vingtième siècle* 12 (April-June 1986): 3-18; Paola Carlucci, “Intellettuai nel ‘900: il confronto di Nicola Chiaromonte con Hannah Arendt,” *Ricerche di Storia Politica* XIV n. 1 (April 2011): 3-28.

¹⁰⁸ Nicola Chiaromonte, “Rifiuto d’obbedienza,” *Tempo Presente* V, n. 9-10 (September-October 1960), 715-18. My translation.

minister for Cultural Affairs, and a declaration of solidarity with the French intellectuals, for which they requested signatures inside and outside the CCF circles.

Silone wrote to Bondy that the Congress should urgently discuss a common position *vis-à-vis* the events, and even prepare to respond to a hypothetical arrest of Sartre. He was greatly disappointed, however, by a statement the organization released in early October 1960. According to the Italian writer, the statement was ominously reminiscent of the Francoist or Hungarian authorities' claims that artists and intellectuals were subject to the same laws as other citizens. He argued that the protest did not concern the personal safety of the dissenters, which was not threatened, but their spiritual freedom to object: it was their intellectual function that was in danger in France, and it affected the whole world. If the Congress were unwilling to take a stand on that issue, it would be better if it remained silent altogether and let speak those who wanted to.¹⁰⁹ The reply from CCF Executive Secretary John Hunt, however polite, marked a sharp disagreement on the way in which the Rome and Paris offices viewed the question. He assured Silone that all the members of the Secretariat and the prominent French affiliates had signed off to the statement – adding that, “for evident reasons,” it had been paramount to obtain Aron’s assent on it. As far as the crux of the dissent was concerned, Hunt claimed the need for the CCF to present a completely different position from the manifesto of the 121, which only represented part of the French intellectuals. In a democratic state – unlike in Spain or Hungary, where the law was perverted by and subjected to the political authorities – intellectuals, too, must face the same consequences for violating the law.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ Ignazio Silone to François Bondy, 19 September 1960, s. VII, b. 11, f. 12, IACF Records; Ignazio Silone to John C. Hunt, 7 October 1960, s. II, b. 290, f. 7, IACF Records.

¹¹⁰ John C. Hunt to Ignazio Silone, 14 October 1960, s. II, b. 164, f. 9, IACF Records.

The actions of the Italian committee represented an exception to the general response of the CCF members, and a mild embarrassment for an organization based in France. In fact, Silone and Chiaromonte met with mixed results when they tried to gather signatures for their declaration of solidarity with the 121 French intellectuals. The document called on intellectuals to reaffirm the dictates of conscience over the *raison d'état*, and the right to disobedience. Michael Polanyi, a prominent member of the CCF Executive Committee, declined to sign because, as he wrote Silone, he believed de Gaulle to be the only power that could avoid massacres; disobedience to the State, he added, did not help the cause they both supported.¹¹¹ Hannah Arendt and Isaiah Berlin also expressed their perplexities at the definition of the Algerian War as “unjust,” and at the call of the signers of the manifesto of 121 to support the FLN actively. While Silone clarified that his and Chiaromonte’s intention was not to go that far, he reaffirmed the belief that the *raison d'état* could not trump conscience and humanity.¹¹² Macdonald, on the other hand, strongly supported the initiative and helped gather signatures among British and American intellectuals.¹¹³

The officers of the Congress could not prevent its Italian members from conducting their own campaigns, since they lacked instruments to impose their will or curb their involvement. The clash around the manifesto, however, poisoned the relationship between the two sides for months after the events. Silone and Chiaromonte, in their private correspondence, repeatedly hinted at the “rage” of the Paris office for the

¹¹¹ Michael Polanyi to Ignazio Silone, 3 November 1960, Ignazio Silone Papers, Archivio Centro Studi Ignazio Silone, Pescina (hereafter Silone Papers).

¹¹² Isaiah Berlin to Ignazio Silone, 3 November 1960, Silone Papers; Ignazio Silone to Isaiah Berlin, 8 November 1960, Silone Papers. For a discussion of Arendt’s correspondence with Chiaromonte on the subject, see Carlucci, “Intelletuali nel ‘900,” 16-21.

¹¹³ Dwight Macdonald to Ignazio Silone, 10 November 1960, b. 48, f. 1164, Macdonald Papers.

campaign of its Italian members, although Bondy and others denied that the issue was still a delicate one. Even the cooperation between *Tempo Presente* and *Preuves* seemed to grow very cold in the first months of 1961.¹¹⁴ The episode showed that the efforts by the CCF officers to create a network of connected magazines that could cooperate among themselves, while largely successful, did not prevent them from asserting their independence from time to time. In the case of *Tempo Presente*, it could also find ideological affinities in magazines that, on a host of domestic and international issues, expressed a different line from *Preuves* and the other CCF journals.

Conclusion

In his autobiography, Sidney Hook offered a scathing assessment of the Congress, particularly its evolution toward less directly political activities since the mid-1950s. The only exceptions were the magazines, of which Hook spoke highly even after decades: those periodicals “were far and away the most valuable contributions [by the CCF] in the continuing struggle for cultural freedom.”¹¹⁵ The NYU philosopher, it should be pointed out, seemed to be mostly referring to *Encounter*, by far its most successful magazine in the English-speaking world. It is not hard to imagine that he would have been much less satisfied with *Preuves* and *Tempo Presente*, which had a very different character.

¹¹⁴ See for example the tense exchange between Silone and Bondy on a meeting including many of the magazines who had expressed their support for the manifesto. The editor of *Preuves* stated that the magazine would not participate if the condition was to agree on the manifesto, and Silone reassured him that its scope was broader. See Ignazio Silone to François Bondy, 13 February 1961, s. VII, b. 11, f. 12, IACF Records; François Bondy to Ignazio Silone, 17 February 1961, s. VII, b. 11, f. 12, IACF Records; Ignazio Silone to François Bondy, 20 February 1961, b. 25, f. 2, Josselson Papers. Another member of the editorial board of *Preuves*, Bloch-Michel, similarly wrote to Silone after *Tempo Presente* turned down an article of his, to regret that their views on the recent events in France had become at odds, and wonder whether they should not terminate their collaboration. See Jean Bloch-Michel to Ignazio Silone, 25 May 1961, s. VII, b. 3, f. 7, IACF Records.

¹¹⁵ Hook, *Out of Step*, 450.

Discussing a proposed anthology of the magazine, *Preuves*' editor François Bondy voiced the difficulty in effectively representing the “great turning points” in the history of the past years, which had marked the evolution of *Preuves*. He listed Stalinism and destalinization, colonialism and decolonization, European integration and the Atlantic dialogue, and the emergence of the Third World.¹¹⁶ Without a doubt, the magazine evolved and changed significantly during the 1950s. Born at the height of the Cold War, its early issues clearly reflected the heated debates going on in France about the new world order and the country's place in it. *Preuves* placed itself firmly in the Atlantic camp, and opposed the Communist and neutralist positions with a good dose of polemical gusto. Nonetheless, it also pursued themes that did not touch directly on the confrontation between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, and more characteristically cultural ones: the nature and meaning of European identity, the collapse of France's colonial empire, or the dialogue with Eastern European intellectuals. It is true that, while the magazine received generous subsidies from the CCF throughout its existence, its circulation never went beyond a few thousand copies. However, Giles Scott-Smith and others have noted that an assessment of its quality and long-term impact on the French cultural and political milieu should not stop at circulation figures. *Preuves* – but the same consideration applies to *Tempo Presente* – provided an important venue for dialogue and debate, and despite its early unpopularity ultimately provided “the ‘crystallisation point’ for the emerging anti-totalitarian intellectual scene in France.”¹¹⁷

Although founded only a few years later, *Tempo Presente* reflected a very different time and phase of the Cold War. While pursuing an unmistakably anti-

¹¹⁶ François Bondy, Draft proposal of *Preuves* anthology, undated (but 1962), s. VII, b. 2, f. 4, IACF Records.

¹¹⁷ Scott-Smith, *The Politics of Apolitical Culture*, 126-27.

Communist line, it refused to be constrained by the bipolar logic of the Cold War. The Italian magazine, in fact, consistently placed itself to the left of the other publications and of the CCF itself, and was the least vulnerable to a leftist critique.¹¹⁸ Relying on the prestige of Silone and on the respect that Chiaromonte enjoyed, the magazine guarded its independence fiercely. *Tempo Presente* distinguished itself for a special attention to the character of modern life, probing in particular the meaning of mass society and its related issues.

Both magazines dealt extensively with America, and touched on similar topics – racism, McCarthyism, consumerism. They made a sustained effort to move beyond the stereotypes and simplifications, both positive and negative, to describe the complexity of American life, but their view of the superpower was mixed at best. Both *Preuves* and – to an ever greater extent – *Tempo Presente* expressed their reservations about certain aspects of U.S. society, and seldom did their articles provide an uncritical celebration of it. In fact, the two journals were more than mere mouthpieces for the Congress and its sponsors. As Grémion has suggested, the network of CCF magazines constituted a pressure group able to influence the decisions of the organization itself. Its editors had the advantage, compared to the Executive Committee, of greater continuity in their work and an immediate commonality of interests.¹¹⁹ As this and the next chapter illustrate, the Paris Secretariat would be repeatedly reminded of this reality in its dealing with *Preuves* and *Tempo Presente*.

¹¹⁸ Grémion, *Intelligence de l'anticommunisme*, 514; Teodori, *Storia dei laici*, 156.

¹¹⁹ Grémion, *Intelligence de l'anticommunisme*, 407-08.

CHAPTER 7

“WAS BEING ANTISTALINIST TANTAMOUNT TO BEING A CONFORMIST?": THE 1960S, THE CIA, AND THE END OF THE MAGAZINES

Since the beginning of the 1960s, according to historian Pierre Grémion, *Preuves* and its staff tried to claim greater autonomy from the CCF and establish a closer relationship with its readers through bulletins, clubs, and other initiatives.¹ The timing was not coincidental, but reflected developments both in France and within the organization. After the Berlin Congress of June 1960, the CCF had emphasized its focus on the developing world, where the competition with Communism was now more pressing than in Europe. Its activities also reflected the increasing role that the social sciences played, with an approach centered on political and economic modernization and the end of ideology. *Preuves*, on the other hand, was responding to the evolution of the French scene after the Hungarian crisis of 1956, and to its greater legitimacy in the Parisian intellectual circles. For its part, *Tempo Presente* had always claimed a high degree of autonomy from the Paris Secretariat, due to both the personalities involved and the need to speak effectively to other Italian magazines and intellectuals.

These pushes for greater independence, however, were in contrast with the fact that, both in practice and in the public's perception, the two magazines continued to be affiliated with the CCF and to act, in a sense, as its ambassadors. The Secretariat provided them with the funding to operate, and it was reluctant to do so without at least making its opinions known to the editors. While there is no evidence of attempts to plant or remove articles due to their political content, the Paris office exercised a constant

¹ Grémion, *Intelligence de l'anticommunisme*, 403.

vigilance on the work of the two magazines, and at times did not conceal its dissatisfaction. An analysis of the tensions between the actors involved, and of the competing “uses” of the magazines as the different sides viewed them, is therefore necessary. It complicates a simplistic dichotomy between CIA control over the magazines, which critics have suggested, and the absolute independence the editors claimed to have enjoyed. Neither of those opposites accurately describes the relationship between the actors involved, nor do they capture the essence of their partnership. European intellectuals enjoyed significant autonomy, but their membership in an international network required them to respond to concerns from CCF officers and justify their views on cultural freedom and anti-Communism.

Such a membership became particularly controversial during the second half of the 1960s, and the reason was, once again, the delicate position of the CCF *vis-à-vis* America. The European members of the Congress watched with increasing dismay the evolution of U.S. foreign policy, especially the escalation of the Vietnam War. In their writings, as well as in their participation in the activities of the CCF, Frenchmen and Italians were among the most vocal critics of the Johnson administration, and condemned American policies in no uncertain terms. In some cases, they pointed to their membership in the CCF and their record to stress that their criticism was not to be confused with the reflexive anti-Americanism of parts of the European Left. In other instances, this very aspect added a touch of bitterness, almost betrayal, to the protestations. Many of them, finally, linked their views on American foreign policy with their long-standing perception of U.S. society, in particular its most negative features. In the light of the napalm that its

planes dropped on the Vietnam countryside, America's mass society, consumerism, and industrial power acquired a different, more disturbing appearance.

This chapter blends the history of the magazines with that of the Congress in the 1960s, as the two were intimately connected. As rifts and misunderstanding increasingly emerged in the Atlantic community, in fact, a succession of revelations exposed the involvement of the CIA in founding and subsidizing the CCF for almost two decades. Its members initially tried to deny the allegations, protesting their ignorance of any improper connection. Later on, they pointed to the record of the organization to claim absolute independence from pressures of any sort. The damage was, however, significant. Paradoxically, given their strong currents of anti-Americanism, the public outrage in Italy and France was very limited, and the magazines – as well as the national committees – emerged relatively unscathed. The repercussions were more severe elsewhere, in particular in the United States and Great Britain, also due to the closer ties in the two countries between the intelligentsia and the political establishment. In the end, however, the scandal affected most of the intellectuals who had associated with the CCF, and compounded a sense of fatigue and self-satisfaction that some observers had already noted. Some intellectuals – most notably Raymond Aron – publicly resigned from the organization and suspended their collaboration altogether. Many others, including Silone and Chiaromonte, gradually decreased their participation and eventually withdrew. All of them, though, had to face the uncomfortable question of their original involvement with the CCF and – more or less willingly – the CIA. In doing so, they were forced to undertake a difficult reappraisal of the nature and justification of their anti-Communism over the previous two decades.

The Conflicting Uses of the Magazines

Among the officers of the CCF, Michael Josselson and John Hunt – both of them Americans and aware of the CIA funding – were mostly in charge of maintaining regular contacts with the staff of the two magazines. The Paris Secretariat showed its interest both in the more practical aspects of the magazine and in the content of its articles. Josselson repeatedly chided the two editors, François Bondy and Nicola Chiaromonte, for the appearance of the journals (too “severe” in the case of *Tempo Presente*), the type of paper chosen, and the number of advertisements.² The Secretariat also requested regular updates on circulation, channels of distribution, and other administrative issues that touched on the economic viability of the enterprise. In at least one instance, Silone and Chiaromonte complained that such requests burdened too much a limited staff, but met with Josselson’s sharp reply. It was in everyone’s interest, he wrote, to find ways to increase the circulation, otherwise even the best-edited magazine could have little effectiveness. Moreover, “it was never my intention that we would just provide the funds for the editorial work and not interest ourselves in the marketing of the magazine.”³

Josselson demanded a say especially on the financial aspects of the magazines, which received part of their funding from the CCF.⁴ He expressed “uneasiness” over the handling of the finances of *Tempo Presente* – or *Preuves*, for that matter – and constantly

² Michael Josselson to Nicola Chiaromonte, 4 May 1956, s. II, b. 172, f. 1, IACF Records.

³ Ignazio Silone to Michael Josselson, 29 November 1959, s. II, b. 290, f. 6, IACF Records; Michael Josselson to Ignazio Silone, 9 December 1959, s. II, b. 290, f. 6, IACF Records. My translation.

⁴ Giles Scott-Smith reports that the subsidy that *Preuves* received from the CCF ballooned from about \$30,000 in 1955 to a little less than \$80,000 in 1959 (via the Fairfield Foundation). See Scott-Smith, *The Politics of Apolitical Culture*, 126-27. Macdonald recalled Chiaromonte telling him that *Tempo Presente* had turned to Italian sources for half of its subsidy because its editors did not want to be too involved with the CCF, which represented American money. Dwight Macdonald to Nicola Chiaromonte, 10 October 1967, b. 10, f. 244, Macdonald Papers.

urged its editors to find new sources of income or reduce their costs. Low circulation plagued the Italian magazine throughout its existence, and continued to occupy Josselson's mind. While the intellectual reputation of the review quickly established it as an influential voice in Italy, its sales remained disproportionately low in relation to its quality. *Tempo Presente* never went beyond a circulation of about three thousand copies, a figure that its editors claimed was respectable for the Italian market, but could not guarantee its financial viability. Josselson repeatedly complained about this aspect of the magazine and the apparent indifference of Silone and Chiaromonte to it, urging them to work on the "prehistorical" level of its distribution.⁵

The remarks from Josselson also concerned, however, the choice of articles and contributors, or the general line of the magazines. The Paris office regularly suggested pieces published in other CCF magazines that could be relevant to the audiences of *Preuves* or *Tempo Presente*, although it never imposed their publication over the editors' will. Conversely, it manifested its dissatisfaction when certain themes were absent from their pages. A significant difference was that *Preuves*, being based in Paris and published in French, was under a much more direct scrutiny than *Tempo Presente*, which also benefited from Silone's prestige to shelter it from unwanted interferences.

Fewer contrasts, thus, emerged about the contents of the Italian magazine – or they were brushed aside by the editors. One of the few remarks that Josselson voiced publicly was, paradoxically, of being "too international," and not paying enough attention to the Italian scene. Silone replied, however, that the original goal when creating the magazine had been to "deprovincialize" Italian cultural life, which, due to its peculiarities, had remained isolated from the larger intellectual currents. There was no

⁵ Michael Josselson to Vittorio Libera, 6 March 1962, s. II, b. 189, f. 2, IACF Records.

longer an exclusively national point of view that did not end up in folklore, he argued, as every problem had an international dimension. Silone defended, for instance, the decision to follow closely the events surrounding the fall of the Fourth Republic in France, which had had strong implications for Italy.⁶ In fact, the editors were so concerned about the perception of the independence of *Tempo Presente* that they continued to turn down Josselson's request to appear under the auspices of the Congress for Cultural Freedom. While the Administrative Secretary argued that formal affiliation had not prevented *Preuves* from tackling the most controversial issues that had come up in French national life, especially the Algerian War, the two Italians simply refused to budge. Silone even wrote on multiple occasions to the Paris Secretariat to complain when CCF's bulletins and publications referred to *Tempo Presente* as a magazine published by the Congress, asking that they describe it as merely affiliated to it.⁷

Preuves, on the other hand, came under more direct scrutiny and criticism. Possibly because of the importance of French intellectuals for the Congress, or for the potential to reach a much broader audience worldwide than *Tempo Presente* – or because he spoke French fluently but not Italian – Josselson paid special attention to Bondy's work. In at least one circumstance, he expressed his concern about the publication of an article by a former collaborator of the Vichy regime. Such a decision appeared to him in contradiction with *Preuves'* goal to attract the French leftist milieu, but, Josselson added, he would leave the final decision to the editors.⁸ Josselson's complaints included

⁶ Minutes of the CCF International Executive Committee, 23-25 January 1959, s. II, b. 5, f. 2, IACF Records; "The Third Year of 'Tempo Presente'," Report for the International Executive Committee, s. II, b. 5, f. 2, IACF Records. On the position of *Tempo Presente* on the French constitutional crisis, see chapter 6.

⁷ Ignazio Silone to Michael Josselson, 12 December 1959, s. II, b. 290, f. 6, IACF Records; Michael Josselson to John C. Hunt, 27 January 1960, s. II, b. 187, f. 3, IACF Records.

⁸ Michael Josselson to Jacques Carat, 4 September 1956, s. VII, b. 25, f. 13, IACF Records.

an alleged unwillingness by the Swiss editor to acknowledge the larger implications of *Preuves*' role within the CCF structure, to privilege instead an exclusively French perspective. While discussing Bondy's choice of topics, for example, Josselson chided him for ignoring Lasky's recommendations about a reportage on Portugal that might have interested *Encounter* as well. Since the English magazine was the most successful and influential of the CCF network, Josselson argued, *Preuves* was expected to choose its articles with *Encounter*'s interests in mind as well. On another occasion, he complained about the magazine's failure to deal with the problems of French-speaking Africa, an issue that was increasingly sensitive for the global work of the CCF. Regarding the choice of an article on Cuba for potentially all CCF magazines, Josselson had to remind Bondy that he was the one responsible for the political line of the magazines with the Fairfield Foundation, which sponsored the enterprise, and that in the future he should make sure to clear such decisions on "sensitive issues" with him.⁹ It should be noted here that Josselson later claimed that the correspondence with his CIA contacts mostly happened through the conduit of the Fairfield Foundation. Although there is no conclusive evidence to suggest that this was the case here, it is legitimate to wonder whether the concern about the magazines' political line reflected dissatisfaction from the patrons of the Congress in Washington.¹⁰

Josselson was especially incensed at the publication of an article by journalist Emmanuel Berl, spurring a correspondence with Bondy that touched on the nature of the

⁹ Michael Josselson to François Bondy, 18 April 1962, s. II, b. 171, f. 4, IACF Records; Michael Josselson to François Bondy, 9 August 1961, s. II, b. 187, f. 8, IACF Records; Michael Josselson to François Bondy, 16 October 1962, s. II, b. 187, f. 8, IACF Records.

¹⁰ Michael Josselson to Edward Shils, 26 December 1973, b. 30, f. 7, Josselson Papers. The letter was one of the rare instances in which Josselson wrote down any details about the practical aspects of his involvement with the CIA.

relationship between the CCF and its magazine, and on the latter's credibility. The article in question, published in the October 1962 issue, was the report of a trip to the Soviet Union that, according to Josselson, was of a low intellectual level and too celebrative of Soviet society.¹¹ Since several of Berl's past articles had been questionable, according to the CCF Administrative Secretary, it was time for his regular collaboration with *Preuves* to turn into a sporadic one. Bondy warned him that a journal could afford to lose a contributor over an article that its staff had turned down, but not over one that it had accepted and published. Such a move, with the possibility of accusations from Berl himself, could be sufficient to cause the collapse of the reputation for independence that the magazine had slowly built over the years. Bondy also responded to Josselson's accusation of "softness" on the part of the editorial board by defending the record of *Preuves* over the previous decade, and argued that to challenge it questioned his own role and political judgment.¹² An irritated Josselson nonetheless confirmed his previous statement, adding that "the "softness" manifests itself in another way as well: in the careless manner in which the financial side of the magazine is dealt with. You act as if money grew on trees and you had nothing left to do but pick it. Hell, I would love to see just one of you collect the funds that you need. Do you realize that since its foundation the magazine has cost us a million dollars !!!"¹³ The exchange showed once again that Josselson and the other members of the Secretariat could rely only on indirect pressure to force the magazines to follow their directives, which caused considerable frustration.

¹¹ Emmanuel Berl, "Impressions de voyage à Helsinki, Leningrad et Moscou," *Preuves* XII n. 140 (October 1962), 52-58.

¹² Michael Josselson to François Bondy, 10 October 1962, s. VII, b. 8, f. 3, IACF Records; François Bondy to Michael Josselson, 13 November 1962, s. VII, b. 8, f. 3, IACF Records.

¹³ Michael Josselson to François Bondy, 29 November 1962, s. VII, b. 8, f. 3, IACF Records. My translation.

Bondy and others could also use the reputation of the magazine as an argument to claim their independence, playing on the perception of the CCF as an “American” organization and on the need to be especially careful. At any rate, Bondy seems to have prevailed over Josselson – at least on this issue: Berl remained a regular contributor until 1969, when the magazine underwent a radical overhaul and Bondy lost his editorship.

Another recurring cause for Josselson’s dissatisfaction, as far as *Preuves* was concerned, was his complaint that the magazine was too oriented toward a European audience – or even the small Parisian circles – and not toward readers all over the world, especially in francophone Africa. That resulted for instance in its tendency to speak to the “insiders,” who were already familiar with the people and themes discussed – without even providing, Josselson complained, brief biographical notes on the contributors to an issue.¹⁴ When Bondy observed that a special issue on Algeria would be mainly in the interest of the Congress’ position in the Arab countries, and raise little interest in France, Josselson pushed back strongly: “Anyway, since when do we make Preuves only for readers in France? Are French-speaking readers in Africa and North Africa not as important as the readers in Metropolitan France?”¹⁵ The remarks suggested Josselson’s frustration at his inability to obtain complete correspondence between the articles in *Preuves* and the CCF’s interest in expanding its geographical scope, and in drawing readers from the developing world as well as Western Europe.¹⁶

¹⁴ Michael Josselson to François Bondy, 7 January 1963, s. VII, b. 8, f. 3, IACF Records.

¹⁵ François Bondy to Michael Josselson, 19 March 1963, s. VII, b. 8, f. 3, IACF Records; Michael Josselson to François Bondy, 27 March 1963, s. VII, b. 8, f. 3, IACF Records. My translation.

¹⁶ A cursory survey of the articles in the first half of the 1960s shows that *Preuves* devoted an average of seven articles per year to the developments in the non-Western world (not including the shorter notes in the recurring features, and not counting Algeria), with a peak in the years 1960-62. The magazine focused in particular on Africa and the French-speaking former colonies (Congo, Cameroon, Togo), but also addressed general problems such as decolonization and the establishment of viable political systems in the continent.

Another potential source of tensions was the relationship between CCF magazines and the United States. One of the most controversial episodes in the history of the organization had to do, in fact, with the rejection by *Encounter* of an article by Dwight Macdonald on U.S. society. “America! America!,” which the writer sent to the British magazine upon his return to New York after a year in Europe, was a scathing attack on American mass society.¹⁷ After initially accepting it, the editors of *Encounter* later requested such radical changes that Macdonald refused to publish it, accusing them of caving to pressures from the Paris Secretariat and its sponsors. Several scholars have already told the story of the controversy, detailing the likely involvement of the CIA in the decision and the impact that it had on the U.S. and British scene.¹⁸ Highlighting its significance, Hugh Wilford has remarked that “this properly notorious incident shows that the editorial freedom supposedly enjoyed by the CCF’s magazines was in fact mythical.”¹⁹ Such a conclusion, however, illustrates once again the tendency in the literature about the CCF to assume the British experience as paradigmatic, and indicative of similar dynamics everywhere else. What is usually glossed over is that *Tempo Presente* did publish Macdonald’s article in its April 1958 issue, in the form of a “letter from New York,” without causing much of a stir. The piece did not include the controversial conclusion on American prisoners of war in Korea, which the editors of *Encounter* had found especially problematic.²⁰

¹⁷ Macdonald had served as “contributing editor” of *Encounter* itself for a year, after having been considered by Josselson and others as potential replacement for Kristol. For more details on how the decision was made see Wilford, *The CIA, the British Left and the Cold War*, 275-82.

¹⁸ Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*, 314-26; Wilford, *The CIA, the British Left and the Cold War*, 279-81.

¹⁹ Wilford, *The Mighty Wurlitzer*, 113.

²⁰ Dwight Macdonald, “Lettera da New York,” *Tempo Presente* III n. 4 (April 1958), 299-303. For a comparison, see the article as it was published in *Dissent*: Dwight Macdonald, “America! America!,” *Dissent* 5 (Fall 1958), 313-23. The *Tempo Presente* version cut some parts of the piece that were included in the *Dissent* one and lacked later additions.

There are no traces in the CCF archives of any attempt from Josselson or others to suppress or edit the article in the Italian magazine. Privately and publicly, Congress officers in fact pointed to the publication in one of the CCF magazines to deny the allegations of undue pressures coming from Paris, and to claim that the final choice depended on the editors alone. Macdonald, however, rejected this argument and turned it on its head in a letter to Kristol: it showed that Silone and Chiaromonte were “fiercely independent” from the “dime-store Metternichs” of the Secretariat, and that the piece should not have been rejected on journalistic and literary grounds.²¹ In a letter to the editor of the British *Universities and Left Review* Macdonald broadened the discussion, and called the CCF officers “disingenuous” for pointing to the publication of the article in

Tempo Presente:

True it shows that another Congress mag did publish the piece, BUT my very good friend, Nick Chiaromonte of TP, printed the piece precisely because (1) he - and Silone - are most recalcitrant to Paris and love to show their independence (and indeed their contempt) of Josselson, Nabokov, et al. and (2) they are much more critical of America (and of other aspects of the status quo, including De Gaulle) than the Encounter boys and certainly far more so than the Paris office. Last I heard, Tempo Presente raised half its very modest budget in Italy from sources not connected w. the Congress, and did this precisely because the editors don't want to feel too beholden to the Paris boys. So if Nabokov brings in TP, I'd like to say a few words on THAT.²²

It is not possible to reach a conclusive verdict on the controversy from the documents available, but the inclusion of *Tempo Presente* at least complicates the picture of the relationship between the CCF, its magazines, and their American sponsors. First, the fact that an editor like Chiaromonte, who could not be suspected of excessive deference to the United States or hostility to Macdonald, edited the article along similar lines to *Encounter's* recommendations suggests that the latter must at least be taken

²¹ Dwight Macdonald to Irving Kristol, 19 December 1958, b. 15, f. 377, Macdonald Papers.

²² Dwight Macdonald to Norman Birnbaum, 13 January 1959, b. 15, f. 377, Macdonald Papers.

seriously.²³ Also, the row over “America! America!” showed the complexity of the network of CCF magazines, and the risk of oversimplifying their differences and peculiar roles. What was publishable and relatively uncontroversial for Italy and *Tempo Presente* could be deemed unsuitable for Great Britain, and vice versa. While the magazines shared a fundamental outlook on cultural freedom and anti-Communism, the ways in which they interpreted such outlook were by no means identical. Finally, the degree of autonomy that the Congress left to its Italian outfit, while a source of tensions in some cases, could also be turned to its advantage in other instances. In the case of Macdonald’s article as in others, the presence of magazines like *Tempo Presente* or intellectuals like Silone gave the CCF some credibility, and even “cover,” on its left flank.

The Mid-1960s: Financial Constraints and Reorganization Plans

The changing priorities of the Congress for Cultural Freedom over time also affected its magazines, and the way in which the Paris Secretariat looked at their operations. The organization’s shift toward a truly global scope of activities, and its emphasis on a sociological and economic approach, changed its budget priorities and distribution. Already at the end of the 1950s, the European committees were warned that the sums at their disposal would be gradually reduced, which in turn concerned the magazines associated with them. The suggestion from the Secretariat was to increase the efforts to raise money on their own, and to try to reach financial independence from the CCF. The decision to cut the funding to the magazines met with strong criticism from

²³ After the publication of the article, Chiaromonte informed Macdonald that he had received a call from Kristol “to tell me that he was worried about the effect your article would have in England and to ask me what cuts I had made...” Nicola Chiaromonte to Dwight Macdonald, 8 May 1958, b. 15, f. 376, Macdonald Papers.

within the Executive Committee, but the trend was irreversible.²⁴ While *Encounter* was able to secure a deal with a British publishing house that ensured its survival without support from the Congress, *Preuves* and *Tempo Presente* never reached a circulation that allowed them to sustain themselves or made them economically appealing to other publishers. Josselson repeatedly expressed to the members of both editorial boards the concern that, without some alternative source of funding, the two magazines would have to close down. He also reminded them that both *Preuves* and *Tempo Presente* were very expensive in comparison to some of their competitors or even other CCF magazines, hinting that they had taken advantage of the Congress' generosity for a long time. In this context, the discussions about the financial situation juxtaposed with the projects for the future of each magazine, possibly following a profound transformation, and with long-standing arguments between the Secretariat and the journals.

The tensions had been mounting for years around *Preuves*, with disagreements on the editorial line of the magazine mixing with personal frustration between Bondy and Josselson.²⁵ The Administrative Secretary had already complained about the magazine's "apathy," and Bondy's unwillingness to modify a course that was leading not to success, but to lose subscriptions every month. Josselson pointed out that the CCF did not demand that *Preuves* reach massive circulation, but it nonetheless had the right to expect it to do its best for its readers, "if not for its patron." He also restated his dissatisfaction with the French and Italian magazines: "In this regard, let me tell you that you and Chiaromonte are wrong in believing that you can simply be satisfied with a small circulation. Neither

²⁴ Minutes of the CCF International Executive Committee, 18-19 January 1958, s. II, b. 5, f. 1, IACF Records.

²⁵ An exasperated Josselson once burst out against the *Preuves* editor, who had allegedly failed to mention to Jelenki the project of a planned collaboration with *Encounter*: "Honestly, François, can one ever rely on you for anything?" Michael Josselson to François Bondy, 27 June 1963, s. II, b. 189, f. 5, IACF Records.

Preuves nor *Tempo Presente* are what one calls “little magazines,” i.e. avant-garde reviews exclusively about literature or poetry, and I repeat that this kind of “little magazines” are made with infinitely smaller resources than those made available to *Preuves* and *Tempo Presente*.²⁶

This “chronic discontent,” as Josselson described it, culminated in a long letter to Bondy in December 1964, in which he listed his critiques of the magazine. The first was the “cliquish” character of *Preuves*, which also emerged in the way in which Bondy judged its quality: “I have the impression that your criteria for the magazine’s quality are based first on what you personally think, and second, on the expressions of appreciation that a certain number of friends don’t cease to manifest. [...] The result is that ultimately the magazine is made for the satisfaction of a small group. It also results in a lack of self-criticism. The staff gives me the impression of falling too quickly for flattery.”²⁷ The weaknesses of the magazine were, in fact, numerous: its regular features were unimpressive and lackluster in comparison to those of its competitors, and a few good articles were not able to compensate for that. *Preuves* continued to face the hostility of the Parisian press, in part for its own failure to establish good relations with it, and had shown “unbelievable timidity” in publishing special issues dealing with current French debates. From an administrative standpoint, Josselson brought up once again the inability of the magazine to cut its costs and secure independent funding, which was especially grievous because *Preuves* was by far the most subsidized magazine within the CCF network. Finally, its esthetic and artistic side continued to be woefully insufficient, which

²⁶ Michael Josselson to François Bondy, 10 June 1964, s. VII, b. 8, f. 3, IACF Records. My translation.

²⁷ Michael Josselson to François Bondy, 7 December 1964, s. II, b. 190, f. 7, IACF Records. My translation.

explained the difficulty in expanding its readership.²⁸ Josselson had in fact repeatedly urged the editors to increase the space devoted to poetry and to stress the literary and artistic side, not to turn *Preuves* into a purely literary and artistic magazine, but to help with its circulation: “it is not the articles by Souvarine or David Rousset, nor, I’m afraid, those by Raymond Aron himself, which are likely to enlarge your readership abroad.”²⁹ In response, Bondy rejected the accusations of “permanent self-satisfaction” and defended the magazine’s record in attracting new contributors and milieux, claiming that it had a chance to become the only organ of an independent Left. He also concluded, however, that it would be better for the Congress to decide once and for all whether it wanted to support *Preuves*, rather than condemn it to a “slow asphyxia.”³⁰ For his part, Josselson declared himself “entirely disgusted” and tired of “preaching in the desert,” claiming that he would wash his hands clean about the magazine’s chances of survival without some radical changes.³¹

While the French magazine thus occupied the Paris Secretariat, the Italian one also offered its officers reasons to worry, although of another sort. Given the jealously guarded independence of its editors, the CCF risked that factors beyond its control could threaten its interests and the success of the magazine. At times, this meant that its officers could only observe as the conflicts took place between its affiliates, and try to mediate between them. On at least two occasions, Silone and Chiaromonte had some serious clashes that came close to the resignation of one of the two, which would have dealt a serious blow to the Italian magazine. The first had been at the end of 1957, when Silone

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Michael Josselson to François Bondy, Jean Bloch-Michel, and Jacques Carat, 29 March 1962, s. VII, b. 2, f. 13, IACF Records. My translation.

³⁰ François Bondy to Michael Josselson, 8 January 1965, s. VII, b. 8, f. 2, IACF Records.

³¹ Michael Josselson to Denis de Rougement, 5 January 1965, s. II, b. 190, f. 11, IACF Records.

announced his intention to resign claiming that the co-editorship had not worked out, and complaining about his scarce involvement in the activities.³² Even more serious was the crisis that broke out in December 1963, which pitted Silone and one of the magazine's staff members against Chiaromonte. The issue concerned mainly the way in which the latter ran the magazine, and the lack of participation in the decisions. Josselson and Hunt, as in the previous instance, were only able to mediate between Silone and Chiaromonte, and to encourage them to find a compromise to keep the magazine running.³³

The Paris Secretariat maintained some leverage, however, through its financial support for *Tempo Presente*. As the crisis took place at a time when negotiations for a new publisher were already under way, the problems between the editors became inseparable from the discussions about the survival of the magazine itself. Following a conversation with Josselson, Silone explicitly informed Chiaromonte that the CCF would not be able to subsidize *Tempo Presente* due to its limited resources. If Silone were to withdraw from the editorial board, the Congress would most likely lose interest in the magazine altogether. Chiaromonte, too, confessed to Macdonald that the people in Paris had been made to feel "rather cool" to the fate of the magazine by the troubles between him and Silone, which were complicating the search for a new publisher.³⁴ The two men eventually reached a compromise that kept *Tempo Presente* running, to the satisfaction of the Secretariat. The episode showed that the latter played an important role of mediator and advisor, when conflicts emerged between members of the CCF. It also highlighted,

³² Ignazio Silone to Michael Josselson, 4 December 1957, s. II, b. 290, f. 4, , IACF Records; Ignazio Silone to Nicola Chiaromonte, 6 December 1957, Silone Papers.

³³ Ignazio Silone to John C. Hunt, 21 December 1963, s. II, b. 171, f. 4, IACF Records; Nicola Chiaromonte to Ignazio Silone, 29 December 1963, s. II, b. 171, f. 4, IACF Records.

³⁴ Ignazio Silone to Nicola Chiaromonte, 29 January 1964, b. 3, f. 77, Chiaromonte Papers; Nicola Chiaromonte to Dwight Macdonald, 10 March 1964, b. 10, f. 243, Macdonald Papers.

however, the limits of its influence over these intellectuals, and the need to react to their own dynamics and controversies that could threaten the activities of the Congress. *Tempo Presente* would not have been so influential in Italy without Silone and Chiaromonte, and their rift came close to ending one of the most successful magazines the CCF sponsored.

In addition to that, CCF officers also had to worry about the susceptibility of its affiliates, who were quick to react to anything raising doubts on their complete independence. Josselson was reminded of this reality following an article in the French daily *Le Monde* in April 1964, which reported an interview he gave to *The Guardian* discussing the new financial arrangements for *Encounter*. Having found another publisher, he was quoted as saying, freed the English magazine from any formal association with the CCF, which could be “embarrassing” for certain leftist groups. He also referred to the different situation of *Tempo Presente* and *Preuves*, whose financial stability was less secure and whose prospects were uncertain.³⁵ Within a few days, the interview had spurred a flurry of letters from the two magazines, both to Josselson and among themselves. Chiaromonte and Silone for *Tempo Presente*, Bondy, Carat, and Bloch-Michel for *Preuves* all wrote to the Administrative Secretary to protest. The immediate problem was that to imply that the magazines were in financial difficulties might jeopardize their negotiations to find new publishers. Chiaromonte also complained about the funding priorities of the CCF, which seemed to believe that only seminars in underdeveloped countries were worth millions. Mostly, however, the editors resented the implication that the association with the Congress and the U.S. foundations sponsoring it was something embarrassing. On the contrary, they claimed their complete independence

³⁵ ““ Encounter ” passe sous le contrôle du groupe King,” *Le Monde*, 30 April 1964. Josselson’s denial appeared a week later: see “Le sort d’“ Encounter ”,” *Le Monde*, 7 May 1964.

and even pride for the record of their magazines. Josselson hastened to reassure them that the article in *Le Monde* had distorted his words. The incident provided nonetheless an example of how carefully Italian and French intellectuals regarded the issue, and how essential they perceived their reputation for autonomy to be for an effective work.³⁶

In the mid-1960s, the question of how to find the means for the survival of the two magazines had become central to any discussion about *Preuves* and *Tempo Presente*. The attempts to find new publishers that could replace the CCF financially were strictly connected to the need to reorganize and revive the magazines. Josselson privately anticipated to both editorial boards the possibility that the publications might have to turn to a quarterly format to cut their costs, and stressed the need to improve their circulation to help the Congress officers plead their case with the foundations.³⁷ Even more important was the continuing support of the leading figures of the CCF, whose prestige was necessary for the success of the magazines. As far as *Preuves* was concerned, Aron was the key figure. The Sorbonne professor had also, in late 1966, agreed to become the president of a reorganized Congress for Cultural Freedom, signaling his centrality in the intentions of its officers and of the Ford Foundation.³⁸ In a conversation with Bondy, Aron posed as a condition to his involvement with *Preuves* that CCF operations in France be reduced to a minimum: the country was the main adversary of the U.S., he claimed, and it would make no sense to undertake American-sponsored political and cultural activities there. The magazine itself, however, suffered from some fundamental

³⁶ Nicola Chiaromonte to François Bondy, 4 May 1964, s. VII, b. 5, f. 3, IACF Records; Ignazio Silone to Michael Josselson, 6 May 1964, s. II, b. 290, f. 10, IACF Records; François Bondy to Michael Josselson, 8 May 1964, s. VII, b. 8, f. 3, IACF Records.

³⁷ Michael Josselson to Nicola Chiaromonte, 4 June 1964, s. II, b. 190, f. 8, IACF Records; Michael Josselson to François Bondy, 22 January 1965, s. VII, b. 8, f. 2, IACF Records.

³⁸ Grémion, *Intelligence de l'anticommunisme*, 467-70. Following the revelations on the CIA funding Aron withdrew his participation to the new organization.

weaknesses: in the first place, it did not represent a specific cultural or political milieu in France, but rather depended exclusively on American funds. Moreover, it no longer had ideological wars to wage in the country, as the new generations were oriented toward more practical debates. While Aron remained open about the continuation of the magazine, he suggested the need for *Preuves* to renew itself and to sink deeper roots into the French scene.³⁹

By February 1967, on the eve of the latest round of revelations in the *New York Times* about the CIA links, the negotiations were in fact at an advanced stage with the French publisher Fayard. As Josselson acknowledged, such an agreement would probably be the last hope for the survival of *Preuves*, and it revolved around the guarantee of a central role by Aron in the magazine.⁴⁰ Still in May, Josselson wrote to Shepard Stone, Director of International Affairs at the Ford Foundation, that Aron wanted to see him urgently because he was interested in playing a key role in the magazine. The reason, he explained, was the “ever increasing success” of *Preuves* among the younger generation of French intellectuals, and especially among those who considered themselves Aron’s disciples. He added: “I think that Mac [McGeorge Bundy, former Kennedy advisor and president of the Ford Foundation] would be interested in learning of these developments, because he was so sceptical about Preuves’ role in France, due to the fact that it was backed by American money.”⁴¹ Whether Josselson was deluding himself or Aron suddenly changed his mind, his expectations turned out to be completely wrong: at the

³⁹ François Bondy, “Conversations avec R.A. au sujet de “Preuves”,” 24 October 1966, b. 20, f. 1, Josselson Papers.

⁴⁰ Michael Josselson to Konstantin Jelenski, 10 February 1967, s. II, b. 192, f. 4, IACF Records. The agreement included the arrival of one of Aron’s protégés as co-editor alongside Bondy. See François Bondy to François Furet and Konstantin A. Jelenski, 6 February 1967, s. II, b. 200, f. 1, IACF Records.

⁴¹ Michael Josselson to Shepard Stone, 3 May 1967, b. 31, f. 7, Josselson Papers.

extraordinary meeting of the CCF Executive Committee a few days later, Aron stormed out after Josselson's report on the CIA involvement, and all but severed his connections with the CCF.⁴²

The situation was even more difficult for *Tempo Presente*, which had unsuccessfully tried to secure its funding from other sources during the previous years. Silone and Chiaromonte wrote to Josselson to argue that the question of the survival of a magazine like theirs should go beyond economic considerations, also given the general crisis common to all Italian publications. They reminded him that the original goal of the CCF in sponsoring *Tempo Presente* had not been a large circulation, but the influence on the intellectual milieu and the fight against "ideological and political provincialism." At the same time, they added that the CCF funding had always been accompanied by a degree of autonomy that would have been impossible with any Italian sponsor, and that they would accept any decision.⁴³ In March 1967, Josselson informed them that the CCF had indeed decided to phase out its subsidies to *Tempo Presente*, but encouraged them to ask some American and Italian foundations for help.⁴⁴ Although the two editors vowed to increase their efforts to find an alternative publisher, therefore, the situation of *Tempo Presente* appeared desperate even before the press made public the connections between the Congress and the CIA. It should be pointed out, however, that Chiaromonte and Silone – much like Bondy in France – were still striving to keep the magazines running even after the first rumors had circulated. Evidently, the editors considered the review to

⁴² Grémion, *Intelligence de l'anticommunisme*, 471.

⁴³ Ignazio Silone and Nicola Chiaromonte to Michael Josselson, 18 February 1967, b. 25, f. 2, Josselson Papers.

⁴⁴ Michael Josselson to Ignazio Silone and Nicola Chiaromonte, 15 March 1967, s. II, b. 192, f. 5, IACF Records. Chiaromonte thanked him again for his aid and his generosity, and never showed any sign of resentment for the decision. See Nicola Chiaromonte to Michael Josselson, 31 March 1967, b. 25, f. 2, Josselson Papers.

have acquired enough independent standing and credibility to be worth preserving despite the allegations.

“This Other America Is Everywhere”: The Kennedy Assassination and Vietnam

In the mid-1960s, the majority of articles dealing with America had begun to shift from an analysis of its society to an appraisal of its foreign policy, and in particular the Vietnam War. *Preuves* and *Tempo Presente* continued to cover a wide range of domestic issues, however. The French magazine followed more closely the Civil Rights Movement and the problem of racism, with an interview of James Baldwin by Bondy and a long excursus on race relations in American history by novelist and essayist Marguerite Yourcenar. By the mid-1960s, the tone of the articles appeared more pessimistic than in previous years, in light of the violent actions by both white segregationists and black radicals. Yourcenar, in fact, hoped that this “outrageous minorities” would be seen in the end as negligible vestiges of the mistakes of the past. She also wondered, however, whether they could portend new majorities steeped in violence and intolerance, and a society in which a lack of understanding was compounded by “human masses more and more enormous, amorphous, and slave to propaganda.” It ultimately fell on everyone to make sure that injustice and prejudice would not prevail, she concluded in an uplifting coda. In her analysis, however, the worst outcome had acquired an air of urgency and reality that had previously been largely absent in *Preuves*.⁴⁵ Other recurring topics were the character of American labor, which appeared very different from its European

⁴⁵ James Baldwin, “« Pour libérer les blancs... »,” *Preuves* XIII n. 152 (October 1963), 3-17; Marguerite Yourcenar, “Le problème noir aux États-Unis 1619-1964,” *Preuves* XIV n. 160 (June 1964), 3-12. My translation.

counterparts, and the nature of the U.S. political system – especially with the rise of Barry Goldwater as the Republican candidate in 1964.⁴⁶ Jelenski commented on the relationship between American intellectuals and the Cold War, prompted by a survey in *Partisan Review*. Having recovered from the “surprise” of having rediscovered their belonging to America – a reference to another *Partisan Review* survey ten years earlier – they now seemed to feel now more comfortable in criticizing its political, economic and social system.⁴⁷ Dwight Macdonald also addressed the issue of widespread poverty alongside the unprecedented wealth of the “affluent society,” which Michael Harrington had exposed in *The Other America* (1962).⁴⁸ In the second half of the decade, the two magazines also discussed Johnson’s Great Society and the U.S. educational system, especially the country’s universities.⁴⁹

In November 1963, however, these issues paled compared to the shock of the assassination of President Kennedy in Dallas, which made an enormous impression in Europe. In a hastily written tribute placed in the December 1963 issue of *Preuves*, Pierre Emmanuel explained why the news had touched people all over the world. Kennedy, he wrote, had embraced his country’s historical mission to be the world’s conscience, and had placed it in a global framework. The young president had questioned U.S. “great power imperialism,” and refused to let America “remain prisoner of its might.”

⁴⁶ See Furio Colombo, “Lettera da New York. Dubinsky e Anastasia,” *Tempo Presente* VII n. 9-10 (September-October 1962), 704-07; Mauro Calamandrei, “La crisi dei sindacati americani,” *Tempo Presente* VIII n. 11 (November 1963), 9-20; Richard Hofstadter, “Le parti de Goldwater,” *Preuves* XIV n. 165 (November 1964), 50-59; Seymour Martin Lipset, “L’avenir de partis américains,” *Preuves* XV n. 168 (February 1965), 32-45.

⁴⁷ K.-A. Jelenski, “L’intelligentsia américaine et la guerre froide,” *Preuves* XII n. 136 (June 1962), 89-92.

⁴⁸ Dwight Macdonald, “L’altra America. Note sulla povertà negli Stati Uniti,” *Tempo Presente* VIII n. 7 (July 1963), 1-19.

⁴⁹ Alessandro Silj, “I figli dell’Europa. Diciotto giorni con un gruppo di studenti americani,” *Tempo Presente* IX n. 7 (July 1964), 45-52; Mauro Calamandrei, “Lettera da New York,” *Tempo Presente* X n. 2 (February 1965), 50-54; Alessandro Silj, “Lettera da Harvard,” *Tempo Presente* XI n. 9-10 (September-October 1966), 57-60; Alessandro Silj, “Lettera da Harvard,” *Tempo Presente* XI n. 12 (December 1966), 49-56.

Ultimately, “his presence engaged the American people on the path of a revolution of the soul, at the end of which all racism, all McCarthyism eventually would have been overcome (*dominés*). All over the world, one followed his efforts, knowing what moral significance they had for the whole planet.”⁵⁰ In the following months, both *Preuves* and *Tempo Presente* continued to reflect on the assassination itself and the role of Lee Oswald, on the symbolic nature of the U.S. Presidency, and on the myth of Kennedy as a function of the larger myth of America.⁵¹

The two magazines also printed contributions from American intellectuals reflecting on the consequences of the event for their society.⁵² The Italian one, however, prefaced them with a long introduction – presumably written by Chiaromonte. The editor claimed that, far from the opposite stereotypes that dominated the European conversations about the U.S., the Kennedy assassination had shown the real America and the tragedy that, rather than tear it apart, was constitutive of its society. There were two Americas fundamentally opposed, he wrote: one, which Kennedy aimed to represent, was the most democratically (*civilmente*) and morally sensitive part of the country, which felt oppressed by the mass society surrounding it. The other America was not confined to the South, nor was racism the main issue of the time:

Dallas, the brutality, the stupidity, the sinister and smug sordidness that fully revealed itself in Dallas and in general in the South, is not the capital of the « other America ». This other America [...] is everywhere. It is, in particular, in this chaotic, violent and blind America, in all

⁵⁰ Pierre Emmanuel, “Un homme manque au monde,” *Preuves* XIII n. 154 (December 1963), 96. My translation.

⁵¹ Manès Sperber, “L’attentat,” *Preuves* XV n. 169 (March 1965), 3-22; Mauro Calamandrei, “Dopo Kennedy. Riflessioni sulla sacralità della Presidenza,” *Tempo Presente* IX n. 1 (January 1964), 25-28; Enzo Forcella, “Il mito di Kennedy,” *Tempo Presente* IX n. 5 (May 1964), 12-18.

⁵² Hannah Arendt, Norman Mailer, Dwight Macdonald, and Irving Howe, “Kennedy e dopo. Testimonianze di intellettuali americani,” *Tempo Presente* VIII n. 12 (December 1963), 1-11; Irving Howe, “Après Kennedy,” *Preuves* XIV n. 156 (February 1964), 59-62. The contributions were reprinted from the *New York Review of Books*.

the great metropolises: higher up, among rich and smug people who only worry about the power they can wield and the objects they can buy with their wealth; down below, among the masses of the dissatisfied who worry, them, only of what they *don't* have and of how to obtain it.⁵³

Due to the “paralyzing effect” of the Cold War, American democracy looked more and more like a machine, working by its own impulse beyond the control and understanding of the average citizen. Two factors in particular abetted the triumph of “mass civilization”: the growing role of television – an “enormous apparatus of simplification and persuasion” – and the disappearance of the groups of nonconformist intellectuals, radicals or socialists, who until the end of World War II had been the salt of U.S. democracy. However, the author continued, mass society was at home in America – it was America itself, in a sense – and the Kennedy assassination had revealed more starkly the need to separate the good aspects from the bad, and react to them. Ultimately,

Democracy cannot be a machine. Industrial society cannot exist without democracy. This is the fundamental issue, if not the dilemma, which faces American society today [...]. But it is precisely in this fundamental issue, in this dilemma, in the harshness (*crudezza*) of this light, that a true and profound solidarity forms between the United States and Europe. Because the problem of our collective existence certainly has different proportions and aspects from that of America. But, at the bottom, it is no different.⁵⁴

The jump from this view of American society to its foreign policy was, therefore, quite natural. The “other America” of violence and power seemed to be increasingly on display in the foreign policy of the 1960s, which *Tempo Presente* – and *Preuves* – harshly condemned. The tensions began to emerge more clearly after the crisis in the Dominican Republic, in the spring of 1965. Following the assassination of dictator Rafael Trujillo in 1961, the country had gone through a period of internal conflicts and political instability. A military coup by forces tied to the old regime, and backed by the Catholic hierarchy

⁵³ “Kennedy e dopo,” 1-2. My translation.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 3. My translation.

and the economic elite, had deposed the democratically elected government of Juan Bosch in 1963, in opposition to his plans of economic and social reforms. In April 1965, armed clashes broke out between the forces loyal to the ruling junta (“Loyalists”) and Bosch’s Dominican Revolutionary Party (“Constitutionalists”), which gained control of the capital Santo Domingo. When the Loyalists requested America’s help, Lyndon Johnson ordered U.S. forces to restore order. While the stated reason was to protect the lives of foreigners in the country, the U.S. commander was instructed that the “unannounced mission [was] to prevent the Dominican Republic from going Communist.”⁵⁵ The American intervention accelerated the negotiation of a cease-fire; a small but continued U.S. military presence, together with the overt support of the Johnson administration, helped the anti-Bosch forces win the 1966 elections and remain in power for more than twenty years.⁵⁶

Following the intervention, Jean Bloch-Michel drafted the text of a protest that he circulated to other intellectuals, CCF members and not. The statement claimed that the desire to protect “indefensible material interests” was the only reason to suppress a democratic revolution. It also pointed out the hypocrisy in such a policy, when Americans had reacted with outrage to the repression of democratic movements elsewhere – as in the Eastern bloc, for instance. The U.S. intervention used the country’s military power to prevent a small country from re-establishing the democratic legality, and forced its leaders to lie and disavow those international organizations that they had helped create. Bloch-Michel took pains to distinguish the protest from the reflexive anti-

⁵⁵ U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968*: XXXII, Editorial Note (Document 43), 102.

⁵⁶ Both *Preuves* and *Tempo Presente* printed a long essay by Theodore Draper that analyzed the steps that had led to the intervention, and criticized U.S. policy. For the original, see Theodore Draper, “The Roots of the Dominican Crisis,” *The New Leader* 48 n. 11 (24 May 1965), 3-18.

Americanism widespread among Communist and neutralist intellectuals. The statement, in fact, invoked the signatories' fights against "demagogic anti-Americanism" to add poignancy to their protest. Their indignation was all the greater in light of the friendship and gratitude toward the U.S., and its sacrifices for the cause of democracy.⁵⁷ Not all the signatories, actually, agreed entirely with Bloch-Michel's wording: Chiaromonte and Silone, in particular, questioned the reference to the material interests. The former noted that, even if the intervention had been prompted by "the fear of the Communist phantom," it would have still been indefensible. Silone found instead the formulation excessive, noting that collective statements gained from being as "sober" as possible. He added sardonically that the allusion to the material interests "does not shock my socialist beliefs, but is maybe a bit rhetorical on the part of other signatories." Finally, he suggested that, together with the reproach, the statement might have recognized to the democratic forces in America the merit of forcing the White House to change its policies.⁵⁸

Their reservations, however, paled in comparison to Josselson's reaction. The Administrative Secretary fired off an angry letter to Bloch-Michel, asking why the *Preuves* staff member had felt the need to take such an initiative behind his back. "Where you afraid that my American nationality would have prevented me from expressing solidarity with this initiative?," he asked. "In this case evidently you know me little, and a telephone call would have reassured you, because I fully share the general indignation."⁵⁹ He nonetheless disagreed with the reference to American material interests, which he

⁵⁷ Jean Bloch-Michel to Michael Josselson, 24 May 1965, b. 23, f. 10, Josselson Papers. Among the signatories were Silone, Chiaromonte, Rougemont, Emmanuel, and Sperber.

⁵⁸ Nicola Chiaromonte to Jean Bloch-Michel, 26 May 1965, s. VII, b. 2, f. 6, IACF Records; Ignazio Silone to Jean Bloch-Michel, 26 May 1965, b. 25, f. 2, Josselson Papers. My translation.

⁵⁹ Michael Josselson to Jean Bloch-Michel, 28 May 1965, s. VII, b. 2, f. 13, IACF Records. My translation.

considered a trite cliché with no actual correspondence with reality. He then offered an alternative explanation: “The reason of the intervention, which, I repeat, I find inexcusable and unjustifiable, is the panic in Washington at finding itself vis-à-vis a new Cuba, with all the consequences that it might entail.”⁶⁰ Bloch-Michel replied that the statement had been a purely private initiative, and therefore he had not deemed it necessary to inform Josselson and the Congress.⁶¹

As the episode shows, American foreign policy was one of the most controversial issues for the CCF during the 1960s, and one that brought fault lines and different positions into stark relief. As Peter Coleman has noted, Josselson made a special effort to move the Congress away from a Cold War perspective during the 1960s, and was consistently critical of the U.S. – he defined the Vietnam War “the most regrettable diplomatic, political, and moral failure in our national history.”⁶² No simplistic distinction between apologetic Americans and critical Europeans would therefore do justice to the range of positions within the organization. Nonetheless, the increasingly vocal opposition to the policies of the Johnson administration made it more difficult to define the boundaries of the “Atlanticist consensus” that the CCF had been created to promote. On the other hand, the Congress could also take advantage of the more critical stance of the two magazines to rebuff the criticism that its alleged apolitical nature, in fact, disguised a clear tilt in defense of the U.S. Thus, for instance, Nicolas Nabokov responded to the criticism from the British *The Tribune*, which had called out the CCF for not speaking out against the Cold War, and Johnson’s policies in particular. Nabokov explicitly mentioned

⁶⁰ Ibid. My translation.

⁶¹ Jean Bloch-Michel to Michael Josselson, 31 May 1965, s. VII, b. 2, f. 13, IACF Records.

⁶² Coleman, *The Liberal Conspiracy*, 221-22. John Hunt also expressed scathing remarks about American foreign policy in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

the efforts of *Preuves* and *Tempo Presente* promote contact between artists and intellectuals in the East and the West, and listed the actions that the Congress had taken to protest the invasion of Santo Domingo.⁶³

To be sure, the magazines – especially *Preuves* – did not abandon their support for an Atlanticist policy, arguing that Europe’s interest continued to lay in a close partnership with America. Journalist François Fontaine, for instance, wrote in May 1964 about the “impossible schism” between the two sides of the Atlantic. The article, written at a time when de Gaulle’s France was increasingly defiant of U.S. leadership and European integration,⁶⁴ seemed a not-so-implicit rebuke of the General’s policies. Europe’s increasingly close economic independence, argued Fontaine, did not mean that it should also pursue a political one, or that there was no longer need for, or interest in, a close partnership with America. He drew a direct connection with the battles that *Preuves* had fought since the early 1950s:

Nationalism, driven out of the land borders, has taken hold on the maritime ones. In the end, the nationalism that had failed to seduce a disarmed Europe thinks to have a chance promising a purely European defense. In short, we will face the well-disciplined front of our old adversaries we thought we had defeated. This time, we will wage a naval battle, because at stake is the Atlantic, living center of Western civilization, whose fate cannot be dissociated from that of European unity.⁶⁵

Fontaine claimed that Western civilization was no longer exclusively located in Europe, and criticized the kind of “neo-nationalism,” especially strong in France, which translated into a sense of cultural superiority. The attempts to create an artificial fissure between the two parts of the same civilization, he warned, would have damaging

⁶³ Nicolas Nabokov to Editors of *The Tribune*, 23 June 1965, b. 23, f. 1, Josselson Papers.

⁶⁴ During the 1960s, de Gaulle pursued a policy of French *grandeur* that included the opposition to the transfer of French sovereignty to the European Community, the withdrawal from NATO’s integrated military command, and a more independent foreign policy with the recognition of Communist China.

⁶⁵ François Fontaine, “Le schisme impossible,” *Preuves* XIV n. 159 (May 1964), 4. My translation.

consequences. Merging two of the causes that *Preuves* had championed throughout its existence, the article discussed the efforts to block European integration and a closer Atlantic partnership as intimately connected. Their opponents, however, failed to grasp a fundamental truth: “it is no longer a question of knowing whether we will remain purely European or we will become Americans: the blending is already well under way.” The two sides of the Atlantic belonged to a common civilization, whose defense rested on the “moral and physical interpenetration of the two continents.”⁶⁶

The escalation of the Vietnam War in the second half of the decade, however, only compounded the problem of how to talk about American foreign policy. The conflict put the Congress on the defensive, forcing it to walk a fine line between the desire of many of its members to condemn a policy that they considered reckless at best, and the need – that some of its officers felt more acutely than their affiliates – to avoid alienating the U.S. government. A communiqué issued in April 1965 showed the difficulty to do so in a convincing way. The statement refused to cast the blame on one of the two sides alone but rather protested against both – the implication being, in this case, that the Communist regimes were as responsible as America for the continuation of the conflict. The CCF also rejected the idea that the Vietnam War was nothing but a colonial conflict, and claimed that U.S. actions, despite the discrepancy between the “jargon about preserving democracy” and the facts, had brought hope to those in Asia who feared Chinese power. The communiqué criticized the American notion that all Communist regimes were alike and “worse than death,” but at the same time claimed it was impossible, for intellectuals in particular, to ignore the effects that a Communist takeover in South Vietnam would have on the freedom of expression. It also challenged the belief

⁶⁶ Ibid., 5-9. My translation.

that the Viet Cong movement was an independent organization expressing the will of the people of Vietnam, and that forcing Americans out of the country would ensure self-determination. In conclusion, the CCF condemned American bombings in the North from a moral standpoint, calling them “an escape from the problems on the ground.” It also, however, held the Chinese and North Vietnamese equally responsible for the continuation of the war, for insisting that the Viet Cong were the only forces involved in the conflict.⁶⁷

It is not difficult to see how such a statement could hardly satisfy those CCF members who were appalled at the escalation of the American intervention in Vietnam. In a way, Hunt admitted as much in response to the request by an Australian member to clarify the organization’s stance on the war. Asked whether a recent statement by Arthur Schlesinger should be taken as the Congress position, Hunt replied that “there is no Congress policy on Vietnam. There cannot be when there are so many conflicting opinions on the subject among Congress friends and supporters. [...] I frankly suspect,” he added, “that the majority of people associated with the Congress regard American involvement in Vietnam as a tragedy.”⁶⁸

Preuves and *Tempo Presente*, however, considered the war more than just a tragedy. According to Paola Carlucci, the conflict struck Chiaromonte in particular as one of the most acute symptoms of the crisis that the world – and the U.S. – was going through. The Italian magazine thus devoted to the war in Indochina an attention equal only to that reserved to the Algerian conflict a few years earlier.⁶⁹ Both magazines

⁶⁷ CCF Press Release, 15 April 1965, s. II, b. 9, f. 4, IACF Records.

⁶⁸ John C. Hunt to Richard Krygier, 2 November 1966, s. II, b. 169, f. 10, IACF Records.

⁶⁹ Carlucci, “Intellettuali nel ‘900,” 21. In the introduction to a series of reportages on the war, Chiaromonte wrote that “in this time of madness (*dissennatezza*), the war ravaging Vietnam is one of the most foolish episodes”: see “Sulla guerra nel Vietnam,” *Tempo Presente* X n. 11 (November 1965), 6. My translation.

reprinted critical pieces written by American commentators such as Theodore Draper or Irving Howe, which had appeared in *The New Leader*, *Encounter*, or *Dissent*.⁷⁰ They also reprised the reportages that Mary McCarthy wrote from Vietnam for the *New York Review of Books*, which the *New York Times* defined as “the most provocative and disturbing analytical indictment” of America’s role in Vietnam.⁷¹ McCarthy confessed from the outset that she had gone to Vietnam “looking for material damaging to the American interest,” having already expressed clear opposition to the war. What she found there only confirmed her in the belief that the conflict was a moral catastrophe for the U.S., leading her to advocate for a unilateral withdrawal. In Saigon, she remarked on the physical Americanization of the city, and on the ubiquitous signs of mass production and mass society that the U.S. presence created. Outside the city, the sheer destructive force of the U.S. military struck her the most, as well as the hypocritical language behind which its spokesmen masked it. Finally, McCarthy turned her scorn against the intellectual and academic community, which shared a significant degree of responsibility in the Americanization of Vietnam and of the war.⁷²

In explaining to Macdonald why he had chosen McCarthy’s article over his, Chiaromonte also provided a glimpse of the deep connection that he saw between American society and its foreign policy. Macdonald’s piece was not the best for an Italian

⁷⁰ For the original essays see Richard Löwenthal, “America’s Asian Commitment” *Encounter* XXV n. 4 (October 1965), 53-58; Joseph Buttinger, “Notes on the Colonial Heritage in Vietnam,” *Dissent* 12 n. 4 (September 1965), 405-09; Irving Howe, “The Politics of Disaster,” *Dissent* 13 n. 6 (November 1966), 660-75; Mario Rossi, “U Thant and Vietnam: The Untold Story,” *The New York Review of Books* 7 n. 8 (17 November 1966), 8-13; Theodore Draper, “The American Crisis: Vietnam, Cuba & the Dominican Republic,” *Commentary* 43 n. 1 (January 1967), 27-48. See also Mauro Calamandrei, “Lettera da New York. La politica estera di Johnson,” *Tempo Presente* X n. 8 (August 1965), 59-65.

⁷¹ Eliot Fremont Smith, “Report on America in Vietnam,” *New York Times*, 1 September, 1967.

⁷² Her reports, published in three consecutive issues of the *New York Review of Books* in April and May 1967, were later collected in Mary McCarthy, *Vietnam* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1967). The publication of her reportage in *Preuves* even earned a mention from the Italian Communist daily *L’Unità*.

audience, which did not need to be convinced to oppose the war: “from here the Vietnam war looks ghastly even to the right wing [sic] people who otherwise support it for “Atlantic” reasons.” McCarthy’s reportage offered something more, which no Italian correspondent could provide: it described Americans “at work” in Vietnam from a U.S. perspective. “And the effect,” he assured his friend, “is devastating, I think. One is left with the suggestion that what the Americans are really trying to do down there - and cannot help trying to do, if they stay - is to fabricate a completely synthetic Vietnam. Not horrible: just artificial.”⁷³ Privately, Chiaromonte was even more explicit with Macdonald about his disgust for the U.S. policy in Vietnam: “all I can say,” he wrote, “is that I wish to God the Americans get a real trouncing there. Unfortunately it is unlikely. [...] They are indeed too strong. Throwing money and bombs out there is just getting rid of part of the excess. There is something quite specially nauseating about American brutality. Not only because it is accompanied by so much double talk about democracy liberty and peace, but because it is so naked, so crude, so much a kind of end in itself, a sport, a technical affair.”⁷⁴

Chiaromonte linked, once again, the kind of society that in his eyes America was becoming with the foreign policy that it pursued:

There is a question of principle involved in the Vietnam war, and it is what kind of America one wants. If one wants America to be the all-powerful, overrich, overmechanized, utterly technological and electronically calculated country some people seem to dream of (and possibly more than just “some”), then Johnson is right [...]. But if one thinks that American power has an utterly different meaning and destination, and that imperialism is utterly foreign to its nature,

⁷³ Nicola Chiaromonte to Dwight Macdonald, 18 July 1967, b. 10, f. 244, Macdonald Papers.

⁷⁴ Nicola Chiaromonte to Dwight Macdonald, 10 July 1965, b. 10, f. 244, Macdonald Papers.

because it is entrusted to “natural expansion”, not to military force, then one has to be quite firm, and quite opposed to any kind of talk about “national prestige” or “savefacing,” or expediency.⁷⁵

Preuves and *Tempo Presente* continued to look carefully at the evolution of American society until their very last issues. Vietnam, in fact, appeared as only one of the symptoms of a society that seemed to be coming apart at the seams. European observers reported on the racial tensions that, by the 1960s, had replaced the optimistic portrayal of the nonviolent Civil Rights Movement at the beginning of the decade. Yet, Chiaromonte wrote upon returning from New York, the real problem for American minorities was not racial discrimination *per se*. Rather, it was the sense of being surrounded by an affluent society that they saw everywhere, and yet would never reach them. “The feeling of exclusion from the unanimous march forward, toward an ever better future, which is the animating myth of American society, turns into a veritable social rabies that one cures only with money, i.e. a good job or a bargain.”⁷⁶ Other observers also remarked on the feeling of crisis and “malaise” that dominated the country: poverty, violence, the war in Vietnam, citizens’ mistrust in their government, racial discrimination, drug problems, and political divisions, all seemed to plague a society that had lost its way.⁷⁷ Europeans could hardly rejoice, however: the issues that America was facing were common to them as well, and in fact touched them at a much deeper level. As writer Alessandro Silj argued, if America were to fail in its attempt to assimilate its non-white populations, it would be a failure of the whole Western system of values, and of its economic and social model.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Nicola Chiaromonte to Dwight Macdonald, 20 February 1966, b. 10, f. 244, Macdonald Papers.

⁷⁶ Nicola Chiaromonte, “Lettera da New York,” *Tempo Presente* XII n. 1 (January 1967), 40. My translation.

⁷⁷ Jean Bloch-Michel, “Le malaise américain,” *Preuves* XVII n. 197 (July 1967), 52-58.

⁷⁸ Alessandro Silj, “Lettera da New York. America anno zero,” *Tempo Presente* XII n. 12 (December 1967), 56-70.

Yet, looking forward, both magazines presented an ambivalent picture of the United States, which also emphasized the hopes for a renewal of its society. The “real America” was a country in perennial transformation, “boundless,” “ultramodern,” and continuously shifting. In this sense, the Vietnam War could represent the sparkle awakening the passions of a country that was bound toward the “comforting hibernation of well-being” (*letargo del benessere*). From the moral and ideological challenges stemming from the conflict, a new conscience and a new sense of the country’s duties could emerge: “the debate on Vietnam goes well beyond the war; it has now turned into a public and piercing soul searching about what America wants to be and what role it wants to play in today’s world.”⁷⁹ In the closing sentences of his reportage, Bloch-Michel captured this tension and the eternal contradiction that America represented in the eyes of European intellectuals:

What seems to me characteristic, certainly less of America than of New York, is that one feels that nothing is stable there, that everything is still being made. No one knows what this city and this country will be tomorrow. [...] The extreme frailty that American society, threatened from all sides, manifests today, seems to be offset by the existence of this confused mass that has not yet found its place there. [...] I think I have seen America’s power especially there. Not in its immutable skyscrapers, nor in the vicious pleasure that those who take advantage of it show towards the *free enterprise*, nor in the legendary ability of its diplomats and secret services, but in the reserve of strength, untouched and violent, in these men ready for everything, because they have come to a country that promised them everything but has not given them what they expected. All in all, the American man inspires in me a confidence full of hope. But I know he is not born yet.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Silj, “Lettera da New York,” 69; Chiaromonte, “Lettera da New York,” 40. My translation.

⁸⁰ Bloch-Michel, “Le malaise américain,” 58. My translation. Chiaromonte, too, commented on the centrality of the immigrants to the American identity and democratic impulses.

“They’re Out for the Kill This Time”: The CIA Revelations and the End of the Magazines

As the discussions about the reorganization of the magazines were taking place, and as U.S. foreign policy drew increasingly scathing criticism from them, the pace of the revelations about the sources of CCF funding began to increase. The *New York Times* mentioned the CIA involvement in the founding of the Congress in April 1966, prompting a response from Nabokov and prominent American members of the organization, including Schlesinger and Oppenheimer. They denied the rumors and claimed that the resources for the organization had always come from private American and European philanthropy. The record of the CCF, they added, proved the independence of its policy, and the fact that the organization was responsive only to the wishes of its members. The past and current editors of *Encounter* also wrote to the newspaper to that effect, while the other magazines did not take a position on the issue.⁸¹ The real blow came the following year, though, when the magazine *Ramparts* published a thorough exposé of the CIA’s covert operations and network of front organizations. An alarmed Josselson wrote to Macdonald that “they’re out for the kill this time” – only to be rebuked by Macdonald for his attempt to evade the question of the CIA involvement.⁸² The impact of the revelations was especially strong in the United States and Great Britain, as several historians have described in detail.⁸³ Their echo, however, was also discussed elsewhere through the transatlantic connections that characterized the CCF. Chiaromonte

⁸¹ Coleman, *The Liberal Conspiracy*, 223.

⁸² Michael Josselson to Dwight Macdonald, 15 March 1967, b. 26, f. 4, Josselson Papers; Dwight Macdonald to Michael Josselson, 15 March 1967, b. 26, f. 4, Josselson Papers.

⁸³ Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*, 381-90; Coleman, *The Liberal Conspiracy*, 219-32; Grémion, *Intelligence de l’anticommunisme*, 430-44. Michael Warner has also suggested that the “Ramparts flap” (as the CIA remembers it) was a watershed also in the agency’s history, influencing the way it conducted operations and its interactions with private groups. See Warner, “Sophisticated Spies,” 426.

and Macdonald, in particular, exchanged their impressions on the controversy, and occasionally found themselves at odds on its interpretation.

In April 1967, with the consequences of the scandal still unclear, Chiaromonte asked for advice on whether to continue with *Tempo Presente* or give up. Part of the reason was the “devastation” to the Italian cultural landscape that the proliferation of illustrated weeklies was causing – he used an image that would have found immediate resonance in a critic of American mass society like Macdonald: that landscape “looks more and more like what you see from the New Jersey Turnpike.” There was also, however, some resentment for the “falsification of historical perspective” that he observed in a significant part of the press. Referring in particular to a series of articles in the *New York Review of Books* on the CIA and anti-Stalinists in the 1940s and 1950s, he asked Macdonald something that probably troubled other members of the CCF as well: “was being antistalinist tantamount to being a conformist?” Macdonald recommended Chiaromonte to decide on the future of *Tempo Presente* solely on the basis of his enthusiasm for continuing, suggesting that part of the reason for his doubts lay in the revelations that he and Silone were involved with the CIA.⁸⁴ Chiaromonte defined the CIA controversy a “false issue,” however, except for the “two or three people” he knew – but did not name – who had profited directly from that money. As far as *Tempo Presente* was concerned, he claimed that he had never received any pressures from the CIA about what to publish or not, and that he would have resisted them anyway. Macdonald took issue with such a view, arguing that the question of the funding was important regardless of whether or not the CIA had exercised any direct pressure. He also added, though, a

⁸⁴ Nicola Chiaromonte to Dwight Macdonald, 7 April 1967, b. 10, f. 244, Macdonald Papers; Dwight Macdonald to Nicola Chiaromonte, 6 May 1967, b. 10, f. 244, Macdonald Papers.

distinction between the different magazines of the CCF that acknowledged his friend's unique status: "I do NOT think you or Silone shd. resign from TP, by the way, since you both have been defiantly, overtly antagonistic to Congress line – unlike Lasky and also, alas, Spender (though I think latter was innocent and former...not)."⁸⁵

Macdonald was, on the other hand, much less forgiving in judging *Preuves* and its editor. Although he admitted to have the usual "writer's limited view," he blasted Bondy in a letter to Schlesinger:

What I remember of my contact with Preuves mainly is that the editor, Francois Bondy (and if you think Mel [Lasky] is a bit of an operator and power-conformist, as he is, as he is, intentional repetition, you shd. get a load of Francois!) was adamant, in the most reasonable, serpentine, and infinitely Franco-Swiss discussable way – we did discuss it infinitely, as I recall – against printing my rather "critical" report in his magazine [...]. But Bondy's Preuves never ran it at all – if he wasn't on CIA take it was because he wasn't around when the \$\$\$ were being doled out and the secret grips and passwords explained.⁸⁶

He went on sarcastically to conflate the policy of the CCF with the symbol of the U.S. Cold War establishment responsible for what, in 1967, increasingly appeared to Macdonald as a failed policy:

Bondy was right in general – my cavilings [sic] could only weaken the resistance of Free Western Culture against its Totalitarian Communist Enemy, on the Dean Rusk principle that any expression of the different opinions of a Free Society, intrinsic as one might think them logically if the Society is to be called Free, in the real or actual world inhabited by Secretaries of State and editors of CIA-financed magazines, is in practice, as we are reminded daily, merely encouraging the deadly, dedicated enemies of our freedom to persevere longer in their historically – and logistically, much easier to demonstrate – hopeless struggle.⁸⁷

Chiaromonte, too, associated the turmoil surrounding the CCF with the larger question of American foreign policy and the power struggles within its establishment.

⁸⁵ Nicola Chiaromonte to Dwight Macdonald, 13 June 1967, b. 10, f. 244, Macdonald Papers; Dwight Macdonald to Nicola Chiaromonte, 21 June 1967, b. 2, f. 53, Chiaromonte Papers.

⁸⁶ Dwight Macdonald to Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., 20 April 1967, b. 45, f. 1109, Macdonald Papers.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

Relating rumors that had apparently reached intellectuals in Europe, he asked Macdonald whether he knew “what the funny thing is, about this whole business”:

You probably do: it is the fact that most likely the “revelations” were started by the rightwing CIA to eliminate the “leftwing”. What I have heard, for example, is that the policy of the Ford Foundation is going to be (if and when they take over the Congress) much more pro-government and conformist than the CIA’s (or rather Josselson’s). These might be rumors, but then they might not. And there is an “aura” of credibility about them. America is a crazy country, isn’t it?⁸⁸

A month later, Macdonald was among the signatories of an open letter that appeared in the Summer 1967 issue of *Partisan Review*, which criticized CCF magazines for their involvement with the CIA and expressed a loss of confidence in their editors. The letter argued that the explanations were not satisfactory, and the attempt to downplay the issue inappropriate. If it was inevitable that a magazine would need to accept donations and funding from various sponsors, they should be of a kind that its editors would not be “ashamed to make public,” and not raise doubts about the independence of its editorial line.⁸⁹ Bondy wrote to Chiaromonte to express his “astonishment” at the initiative, and wondered whether they should point out the hypocrisy in the fact that, at the time, *Partisan Review* was receiving financial support through the American Committee for Cultural Freedom.⁹⁰ Chiaromonte advised against a public reply, but was equally incensed. He called the statement “arrogant and incomprehensible,” and questioned the credentials of “this court of journalistic morality suddenly constituted.” Chiaromonte refused to respond in either *Preuves of Tempo Presente* because he felt that it would be absurd to “account to William Phillips, Philip Rahv & Co. for what we have

⁸⁸ Nicola Chiaromonte to Dwight Macdonald, 18 July 1967, b. 10, f. 244, Macdonald Papers.

⁸⁹ “A Statement on the CIA,” *Partisan Review* 34 n. 3 (Summer 1967), 463-64.

⁹⁰ François Bondy to Nicola Chiaromonte, 22 August 1967, s. VII, b. 5, f. 3, IACF Records. The ACCF had effectively suspended its activities in 1957, but it nominally sponsored *Partisan Review* to allow it to receive a tax exemption.

or have not done.”⁹¹ He did write Macdonald, however, with evident disappointment for the lack of distinctions in the statement between the different magazines involved.

Speaking as an “unwitting victim of CIA operations,” he asked his friend if his signature meant that he lacked confidence in *Tempo Presente* and its editors, despite having stated that the magazine had shown its independence by publishing views critical of American policies. Once again, Macdonald made an exception for *Tempo Presente* but reiterated his disagreement on the principle of the covert funding: they were in themselves bad and corrupting, even if the magazine was independent.⁹²

In the meantime, the increasing pace of revelations had forced the CCF to face the issue of its connections with the CIA, which no one could ignore any longer, and of Josselson’s role in the cover-up. On May 13, 1967, the General Assembly met in the Congress offices in Paris, and its members – including Aron, Silone, Daniel Bell, Pierre Emmanuel, Manès Sperber, Edward Shils, Denis de Rougemont, and Nicolas Nabokov, heard Josselson’s side of the story. He offered a thorough report on the origins of the CCF, beginning with the Berlin Congress of 1950. The “brainchild” of Josselson, Lasky, and Berlin mayor Ernst Reuter, the event spurred in its participants the desire to create a permanent body to carry out the opposition to all totalitarianisms. The idea also received, Josselson said, the “enthusiastic encouragement” of several branches of the U.S. government (State Department, office of the Marshall Plan, CIA).⁹³ When the initial plans to fund the organization through the Marshall Plan fell through, the CIA “came

⁹¹ Nicola Chiaromonte to Konstantin Jelenski, 4 September 1967, s. II, b. 200, f. 1, IACF Records. My translation.

⁹² Nicola Chiaromonte to Dwight Macdonald, 4 September 1967, b. 4, f. 123, Chiaromonte Papers; Dwight Macdonald to Nicola Chiaromonte, 10 October 1967, b. 10, f. 244, Macdonald Papers.

⁹³ Michael Josselson, “Report on the Financial History of the Congress for Cultural Freedom,” undated (but May 1967), b. 27, f. 2, Josselson Papers.

directly into the picture, [...] their interest being in helping set up an autonomous group of intellectuals who were opposed to the Stalinism and to Communism in general.”

Josselson then tried to justify, to the people he had – allegedly – deceived, why he had accepted the money, and the conditions he had imposed:

I was also assured that there would be no interference on the part of the CIA with any of the activities, and that there would be no attempt ever made to use the new organization for any intelligence or penetration [into Communist organizations] purposes [...]. These promises have been kept. The CIA was primarily alarmed by the inroads which the Communist World Peace Council was making among the intellectuals at that time. The only condition which I had to accept was that I was not to disclose to any one the true source of the funds.⁹⁴

Josselson’s two major objectives, he added, had been from the beginning to secure other funding for the CCF that would free it from any need from CIA support, and to protect the reputation of all those associated with it. He then described in detail the mechanism through which the Congress received its funding, which in most cases involved a bona-fide foundation genuinely interested in the organization’s goals. In conclusion, the long-time driving force of the CCF expressed his “profound apology” for what had happened and offered his resignation, adding to his report a hint to his personal drama: “the conditions of secrecy imposed on me,” he said, “has been a grievous one to bear, since it placed me in the position of having to deceive the people I most respected, admired, and liked, and who gave me their trust wholeheartedly.”⁹⁵

In a letter to Pierre Emmanuel, Konstantin Jelenski provided a description of the atmosphere in the room at the end of Josselson’s intervention. The report had been a “true psychological shock” for all the members but the two or three who had been informed a few weeks earlier (he did not specify which ones). Aron declared that he had merely lent

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

his name and ideas to the Congress, and drew a distinction between those whom the Paris Secretariat employed directly, and those who had associated with the CCF without receiving a stipend.⁹⁶ Soon afterward, Aron stormed out of the room without a word slamming the door behind him, not to return. Others – Silone, Sperber, Nabokov, Polanyi – protested their ignorance of the CIA involvement, but nonetheless spoke up for Josselson and Hunt and defended the record of the Congress.⁹⁷ Jelenski, however, noted that the scandal had left a visible mark on the members of the organization: they had behaved “with varying degrees of dignity and wisdom, but the fatigue, the dejection were general: their heart was no longer in it.”⁹⁸

The General Assembly accepted the resignation of Josselson and Hunt, but the larger problem of what to do with the Congress remained open. It did not help that, a week after the General Assembly, Thomas Braden wrote an article for the *Saturday Evening Post* that provided damning details of the original CIA involvement. He claimed the intention of correcting the inaccuracies that had circulated on the subject, but in fact volunteered previously undisclosed information that all but made any further denial impossible. Saunders speculates that the Johnson administration and factions within the CIA in fact authorized Braden’s initiative and even instructed him to do it. These elements opposed the strategy of relying on the Non-Communist Left on which underlay the existence of the CCF, and decided to “blow” the operation.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Konstantin A. Jelenski to Pierre Emmanuel, 22 May 1967, s. II, b. 75, f. 5, IACF Records. The distinction provoked a piqued reply from Emmanuel himself, who told the sociologist: “If I understand you correctly, Raymond Aron, I am an American spy, but you are not.” Grémion, *Intelligence de l’anticommunisme*, 471. My translation.

⁹⁷ Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*, 392. Saunders also quotes John Hunt’s assurance that Aron had known of the CIA connections, having learned it from the French government.

⁹⁸ Jelenski to Emmanuel, 22 May 1967. My translation.

⁹⁹ Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*, 397-404.

Throughout the summer, CCF members debated among themselves whether the record of the organization would justify an attempt to revive it under a different name, or whether it was now compromised in the eyes of the rest of the world. Josselson and Hunt tried to justify their actions, and to assuage the outrage of some of the intellectuals involved. In response to a letter by the Indian politician Jayaprakash Narayan, who declared himself “shaken [...] deceived and misled” by the revelations, Josselson tried to convince him that the Congress had not been a mere front for American propaganda. First, he reiterated that he had agreed to receive CIA money only in exchange for absolute freedom for the CCF. He did not stop there, however. Josselson, in fact, claimed that he had been “primarily responsible for easing out” the American members who were more favorable to the policies of the U.S. government, for the disaffiliation of the American Committee for Cultural Freedom, and for constantly opposing pro-U.S. government influence from any source.¹⁰⁰

Despite his and Hunt’s efforts, and the optimism of a few members, a clear divide emerged between American and European intellectuals on the issue. Jelenski addressed this problem directly in his letter to Emmanuel. Any attempt to justify the CIA ties with the positive record of the CCF, he claimed, ignored the extent to which the scandal had compromised the people associated with the organization. Jelenski acknowledged that the Congress had never exercised any pressure on its members to change their positions, and credited Josselson and Hunt for it: “I am convinced that, if we waged a fight against all forms of totalitarianism, Mike Josselson had to wage another tough fight to prevent the

¹⁰⁰ Jayaprakash Narayan to Michael Josselson, 20 July 1967, b. 26, f. 4, Josselson Papers; Michael Josselson to Jayaprakash Narayan, 9 August 1967, b. 26, f. 4, Josselson Papers.

CIA from demanding the Congress to align itself entirely to American policy.”¹⁰¹ Having said that, though, “it is indisputable that no non-American, whatever the nature of his association with the Congress [...], would have ever accepted to collaborate with the Congress if he had known its true source of funding.”¹⁰² Jelenski confessed that, upon hearing the plans for a revived organization from Shepard Stone, he had exploded: maybe the former Director of International Affairs of the Ford Foundation did not realize what the “real situation” was. The reputation of the CCF had been ruined by a campaign of “American revelations,” each one contradicting the reassurances that its members had given to their friends all over the world. A significant number of prominent intellectuals, who belonged to those leftist circles not prejudicially anti-American, had been deceived first, and compromised later, by Americans. He singled out in particular Arthur Schlesinger and McGeorge Bundy, who had recently admitted their knowledge of the CIA involvement since their time in the Kennedy White House – Jelenski ignored that Schlesinger was, in fact, a “witting asset” since the early 1950s.¹⁰³ Clearly, European intellectuals had a very different take on the seriousness of the scandal, and greater reservations about the continuation of the CCF.

While these discussions were taking place, *Tempo Presente* and *Preuves* tried to salvage their reputation from the scandal. In addition to the polemical exchanges with American intellectuals, there was also concern for how their domestic competitors and peers would react to the news, given the potential liability of being seen as American agents. Paradoxically – in light of the currents of anti-Americanism in France and Italy – the backlash was very limited compared to what was taking place in the Anglo-American

¹⁰¹ Jelenski to Emmanuel, 22 May 1967. My translation.

¹⁰² Ibid. My translation.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

press. According to Grémion, the shock in France was extremely limited. The only critical voice was that of a *Le Monde* journalist who defined the CCF a tool to corrupt intellectuals in service of U.S. imperialism, but no political party or media reprised the accusations.¹⁰⁴ In a memorandum assessing the situation of the different magazines, Bondy remarked nonetheless that *Preuves* was in danger of losing the gains it had made in recent years among the new generations and previously hostile milieux. Initially, the magazine had relied on Aron's prestige among the intellectual Left to weather the storm. The Sorbonne professor, however, had abandoned his neutrality on the issue during the CCF Executive Committee meeting in May 1967, when he had left the session and marked his rupture. The groups that had previously been willing to collaborate with *Preuves*, therefore, knew that continuing to do so would not be viewed favorably by Aron, and might withdraw.¹⁰⁵

Similarly, the controversy had left *Tempo Presente* surprisingly untouched. As Chiaromonte informed Hunt, he and Silone had decided not to publish any statement because nothing had been publicly said or printed about the magazine. To answer rumors that had only reached few people would simply risk spreading them further, and create ambiguity.¹⁰⁶ The Italian Communist daily *L'Unità*, paradoxically, ran a scathing article on the revelations about *Encounter* without once mentioning *Tempo Presente* or the Italian Committee.¹⁰⁷ According to Mary McCarthy, this lack of reactions could be explained by the peculiar obsession of Italian intellectuals with “the intrigues of politics and money,” and by their suspicions toward America. When the cover was blown for

¹⁰⁴ Grémion, *Intelligence de l'anticommunisme*, 438-39.

¹⁰⁵ François Bondy, “Le Congrès et les revues,” 6 June 1967, s. VII, b. 16, f. 11, IACF Records.

¹⁰⁶ Nicola Chiaromonte to John C. Hunt, 4 July 1967, s. II, b. 72ADD, f. 4, IACF Records.

¹⁰⁷ See “Cola a picco «Encounter» rivista del «Congresso per la libertà della cultura,” *L'Unità*, 11 May 1967.

Tempo Presente, “Italians had been accusing everybody of being in the pay of the United States for so long that they were not surprised.”¹⁰⁸ McCarthy wrote to Chiaromonte that the publisher Feltrinelli, a Communist sympathizer, had abruptly turned down her book on Vietnam, excerpts of which had appeared in *Tempo Presente*, because the CIA possibly still financed the magazine. She urged the editors to protest the decision publicly, but the boycott that she feared never took place.¹⁰⁹ In fact, Chiaromonte confessed to Macdonald that he felt “a little poisoned” by the CIA story and “completely disarmed” by the impossibility to do something about it. A public protest like the one by Spender in England, who had polemically resigned from *Encounter*, was impossible in Italy for several reasons. The first, Chiaromonte claimed, was that he and Silone knew nothing about the “behind-the-scene dealings,” and had never received “the slightest sign of pressure to do things one way rather than another.” Moreover, although rumors had privately circulated, not even the Communist press had mentioned the magazine in connection with the CIA. Other journalists had advised the two editors not to publish a short statement they had drafted, as it would only bring negative attention, but that left them without an alternative course.¹¹⁰

In September 1967, the Congress for Cultural Freedom formally ceased to exist, only to be replaced by the International Association for Cultural Freedom (IACF), which inherited much of its previous structure and affiliates.¹¹¹ The decision on whether to continue or not under a new name saw some of the most important figures of the old CCF

¹⁰⁸ Carol Brightman, *Writing Dangerously: Mary McCarthy and Her World* (New York: Clarkson Potter, 1992), 500-01.

¹⁰⁹ Mary McCarthy to Nicola Chiaromonte, 8 June 1967, b. 2, f. 52, Chiaromonte Papers.

¹¹⁰ Nicola Chiaromonte to Dwight Macdonald, 16 October 1967, b. 10, f. 244, Macdonald Papers.

¹¹¹ On the IACF, see Coleman, *The Liberal Conspiracy*, 235-42, and Grémion, *Intelligence de l'anticommunisme*, 460-566.

on opposite sides. Francis Sutton, of the Ford Foundation, reported on his conversations with some of the members of the Executive Committee in a memorandum for McGeorge Bundy. Some, like Silone or Shils, felt that an organization like the Congress could still serve an important function in Western society, but agreed that its mission and character were in need of redefinition. On the other hand, Sutton wrote, “the sharpest view that I encountered that the Congress should be discontinued was Aron’s”:

He said he had doubts about the continuing utility of the Congress even before the arrangements for its foundation financing last year. Now he is persuaded that the Congress cannot continue as it was, nor can it be effectively transformed. It cannot continue under its old name or persuade people that it is a new organization under another name. “It cannot continue with Josselson or without him.” The loss of a clear political, anti-Soviet role is to Aron a reason to doubt the desirability of continuing the Congress. No definite political position flows from a devotion to intellectual freedom and as long as the Congress is American financed, it cannot be justly representative of the existing diversity of intellectual opinion. Anti-Americanism is now an important intellectual phenomenon in Western Europe. An American-financed organization cannot readily cope with this phenomenon; either it is actively pro-American or it bends unnaturally and awkwardly to be “fair.”¹¹²

The IACF would eventually be established, but Aron refused to associate to its activities. *Preuves* and *Tempo Presente* continued to be part of its network, but their fate still depended on their ability to find a private publisher and alternative sources of funding. The task proved to be impossible for *Tempo Presente*, despite the editors’ interest in keeping the magazine alive. Josselson, who had resigned from his post but remained in touch with many IACF members, and the new president of the organization, Shepard Stone, hoped that it could secure some support from Italian foundations, but by

¹¹² Francis X. Sutton to McGeorge Bundy and David Bell, 21 September 1967, box 18613, folder 78757, Report #2784, Unpublished Reports, International Relations, Ford Foundation Records, Rockefeller Archive Center.

mid-1968 any such prospects had disappeared.¹¹³ With a final double issue in December, *Tempo Presente* announced its suspension after thirteen years.¹¹⁴ The editors wrote that they took pride in having held true to the initial program of informing and freely discussing the cultural and political problems of their time, without ideological or nationalistic prejudices. Ultimately, they claimed, the dismal condition of the publishing industry in Italy made it impossible to find a new publisher for a magazine like *Tempo Presente*. In his last article, Silone imagined a metaphorical town hall meeting, in which the speakers touched on a wide range of domestic and international issues. Among them were the meaning of leftist politics and identity in the current world, the economic and social differences between Eastern and Western regimes, the dogmatic and pragmatic approaches to the old principles, and the ambiguous departure of the two main religious institutions of Italian society – the Catholic Church and the Communist Party – from their old orthodoxies. Then,

At this point, the light is turned off and soon turned on again, while a voice announces: « We are closing ». The room quickly empties. On the street, a friend walks to the Cynic [one of the debaters] to tell him: « These would be themes for a decade ».

« Why not? »

« The thing is, the Circle will be evicted at the end of the month ».

« We could continue on the street – says the Cynic – with those who want to ».¹¹⁵

As the last issue reached the newsstands, Chiaromonte also wrote Josselson to renew his gratitude and appreciation – for the second time in a little more than a year, since he had also reached out to him after his resignation from the CCF. He thanked

¹¹³ On Stone's presidency of the IACF and the "demise of the CCF empire," see Berghahn, *America and the Intellectual Cold Wars in Europe*, 250-83.

¹¹⁴ The reactions in the Italian press generally lamented the loss of a significant contributor to the country's intellectual landscape. See for example "Addio alla rivista di Silone," *Corriere della Sera*, 29 December 1968.

¹¹⁵ Ignazio Silone, "Temi per un decennio," *Tempo Presente* XIII n. 11-12 (November-December 1968), 4. My translation.

again Josselson for his support, without which *Tempo Presente* could not have existed, and especially for having enjoyed a complete freedom of expression: “over all these years – I want to tell you once again – not only have we not received the smallest pressure regarding the line of the magazine, but we have never had reasons to think that we might receive them.”¹¹⁶

Preuves followed a different path, in part because its negotiations to find a new publisher were at a more advanced stage than *Tempo Presente*'s when the CIA scandal broke out. A confidential memorandum sent in September 1967 to the president of the Ford Foundation, McGeorge Bundy, defined it the most controversial of the CCF journals. Despite its limited circulation, the memorandum continued, it was read in French intellectual circles and especially notable for its emphasis on Eastern European culture. However, its impact was not considered to be of major importance, and Aron “flatly saw no case for the subsidization of a French periodical by American money at the present time.”¹¹⁷ Over the course of the following year, the magazine tried to explore different options to revive its appeal, including an opening to the new generations of intellectuals and an attempt to bring new faces into the editorial board. Bondy's efforts, however, yielded little result, and the prospect of the end of the magazine was a real possibility by the beginning of 1969.¹¹⁸ Around this time, Jelenski drafted a memorandum discussing the implications of the disappearance of *Preuves* for the IACF and for French life. It would be important to keep alive the only French-language

¹¹⁶ Nicola Chiaromonte to Michael Josselson, 9 October 1967, b. 32, f. 5, Josselson Papers; Nicola Chiaromonte to Michael Josselson, 8 January 1969, b. 32, f. 5, Josselson Papers. Josselson was evidently touched by these tokens of appreciation, as he included them in a selection of letters for his daughter's viewing.

¹¹⁷ Sutton to Bundy and Bell, 21 September 1967.

¹¹⁸ Grémion, *Intelligence de l'anticommunisme*, 514-15.

publication associated with the organization, he argued, but the magazine could hardly count in France on the kind of solidarity that *Tempo Presente* had received in Italy.

Despite its intellectual prestige and a number of friends, “it has many more enemies who cannot forgive Preuves for having constantly defended - between 1951 and 1956 - the truths which they have accepted only gradually after 1956.”¹¹⁹ Jelenski also reflected on the possible reactions to the journal’s disappearance, showing how the obstacles that *Preuves* had faced due to its association with the U.S. were still likely to come up after almost twenty years:

One may predict the type of obituaries which Preuves is likely to get; recognition of its intellectual level with implications of “loaded” objectivity ascribed to a particularly Machiavellian operation of “American cultural imperialism.” The conclusion will be that the “Nixon administration” decided to liquidate Preuves in order to a) please the Soviets on the eve of the summit talks; b) please de Gaulle by suppressing a magazine often critical of gaullist policies and financed by “American money.”¹²⁰

Stone, who had left the Ford Foundation to become the president of the reorganized Association, eventually insisted that *Preuves* be taken up by a French publishing house at the end of 1969. The transition prompted a profound overhaul in the magazine’s staff, themes, and format – including the switch to a quarterly publication. In the last issue of the old format, Bondy penned an appraisal of the nineteen years of the magazine that, if not formally a farewell to its readers, sounded like the end of an era. The editor opened by reminding the readers the original goal of *Preuves* to “fight fanaticism, ignorance, and fear,” as its first issue read. He claimed with pride that the magazine had constantly defended pluralism and opposed the conscious falsifications of Communists and their sympathizers. Its defining legacies, according to Bondy, were the

¹¹⁹ Konstantin Jelenski, “Reflections on the role of IACF,” March 1969, s. II, b. 370, f. 7, IACF Records.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

dialogue with Eastern European intellectuals, the debates over decolonization and European integration, the “desacralization” of politics and the literary and artistic contributions.¹²¹

The new *Preuves*, whose first issue came out in the spring of 1970, had little in common with its predecessor in terms of staff and contents. As Grémion detailed, although its transition had seemed apparently smooth and the magazine had avoided the polemics surrounding *Encounter*, there had been significant tensions behind the scenes. The “purge syndrome” characterizing the Secretariat of the IACF in Paris had intertwined with the fact that the leadership of the Ford Foundation had not appreciated *Preuves*’ criticism of the American engagement in Vietnam, including the publication of Mary McCarthy’s reportage. The first victim was Bondy, who lost his editorship as well as the apartment in Paris that the CCF had granted him. Thematically, the new *Preuves* lost its literary and inter-European dimensions, and was aimed more at influential circles nationally and internationally.¹²² Simultaneous to the transformation of *Preuves* into a quarterly was the appearance of a new magazine, *Contrepoint*, which gathered part of the old network of the CCF magazine. There were some continuities between the two, the fundamental one being a similar intent to go against the ideological fashions dominant in Paris – in 1951 Marxism, in 1970 the aftermath of the student movements of 1968. *Contrepoint* also shared *Preuves*’ interest in the developments within the Soviet system, the importance given to international relations, and the analysis of the evolution of liberal societies. Also significant were the differences, however: a much colder approach toward the European movement and a greater role of the academic world distinguished

¹²¹ Editorial, *Preuves* XIX n. 219-220 (July-September 1969), 2; Grémion, *Intelligence de l’anticommunisme*, 515-16.

¹²² Grémion, *Intelligence de l’anticommunisme*, 518-19.

Contrepoint from its predecessor. Finally, the two magazines were expression of very different political and intellectual milieux: *Preuves* had placed itself close to the socialist SFIO and firmly in the camp of the *Troisième Force*, while *Contrepoint* was mainly the product of a meeting between liberal groups and the right-wing Action Française.¹²³

Conclusion

With the closing of *Tempo Presente* and the reorganization of *Preuves*, the IACF lost much of the influence it had previously enjoyed over the intellectual circles in Italy and France. The magazines had played an important role in speaking to and engaging intellectuals in the two countries, and even some of their adversaries regretted their disappearance. As Josselson had confessed to Spender only a few years earlier, the Congress had gradually undertaken a policy of dismantling the national committees to center more and more its activities on the magazines.¹²⁴ The analysis of their role is central, therefore, to understand fully the impact of the CCF in the two countries, especially in the 1960s. *Preuves* and *Tempo Presente* probably had the most similarities among all the Congress magazines, in their character, tones, and relatively small circulation. They also shared, in their respective national landscapes, the opposition to the dominant intellectual currents of the time. The differences were also significant, however: much more than *Preuves*, *Tempo Presente* rejected a close affiliation with the CCF and followed a more ostensibly independent editorial line, which at times put it at odds with the broader direction of the organization.

¹²³ Ibid., 571-76, 601-02.

¹²⁴ Michael Josselson to Stephen Spender, 8 November 1962, s. II, b. 189, f. 4, IACF Records.

From a political point of view, each magazine consistently opposed the Communist message, and denounced the Soviet Union and its foreign policy as the greatest threat to cultural freedom. They also, however, turned a critical eye toward the shortcomings of Western society and its superpower, the United States. Their significance also went beyond the political realm, though, as they offered important contributions to the cultural scene in their countries and in Europe. In their relation with the Congress for Cultural Freedom, the French and Italian magazines mirrored some of the patterns that had emerged in the organization's dealings with the two countries' national committees and intellectuals in general. Their cooperation was mostly successful, and the two magazines represented one of the success stories of the Congress throughout their existence. Their editors were members of the organization who shared its fundamental mission, and that translated into an affinity between the themes of the CCF and the contents of the two journals. The Paris Secretariat left a significant degree of autonomy to the magazines – although that was truer for *Tempo Presente* than for *Preuves*, given the physical proximity of the latter and the weight of the personalities involved. Its presence was felt more at the administrative level, with the constant monitoring of the finances of the magazines and the request to work on circulation and revenues.

At times, however, conflicts emerged on the contents of the articles, as Josselson and others expressed their disagreements to the editors. Rather than imposing their authority, in those cases CCF officers had to navigate carefully between the competing agendas of the Congress and the magazines. Both *Preuves* and *Tempo Presente* needed to be seen by their peers as independent subjects, and any sign of external pressure could

undermine their legitimacy. This fact, of which the International Secretariat was aware, also gave them leverage to increase their autonomy and resist pressure from Paris. Moreover, their editors could respond to stimuli and initiatives over which the CCF had no control, or which ran contrary to the interests of the organization. In such instances, personal mediation and compromise were often necessary to resolve the most delicate situations. Ultimately, therefore, the relationship between the Congress and the two magazines was a complex and multi-faceted one. Neither a narrative of complete control from Paris – or Washington – over the editorial content of the magazines, nor one that analyzes them as entirely disconnected from the larger dynamics and context of the CCF, can describe such a complexity.

Their relationship was also characterized by a mutually understood ambiguity on the line of the French and Italian magazines, which proved beneficial to both sides. As the Congress was never able to shake off entirely the rumors of American sponsorship, some intellectual circles continued to view its activities and affiliates with suspicion. *Tempo Presente* and *Preuves* played a useful role as critical voices from within, forming the “left flank” of the organization on issues such as American foreign policy or the Algerian War (in the case of *Tempo Presente*). They also provided the Congress with an opportunity to broaden its audience to include former Communists, or groups and individuals who would not have otherwise been accessible – for instance Albert Camus, who agreed to publish only in the magazine of his friend Chiaromonte.¹²⁵ The autonomy of the two magazines, finally, allowed CCF members to deny the allegations of any control attached to the CIA sponsorship, pointing to the independence of their editors as evidence of the boundaries between Washington and Paris.

¹²⁵ Grémion, *Intelligence de l'anticommunisme*, 401-02.

By the time they ceased their publications, the two magazines had survived both the national committees in France and Italy and CCF itself. The International Association for Cultural Freedom would never be able to match the influence of its predecessor, or to associate to its activities equally prestigious figures. With their disappearance, *Tempo Presente* and *Preuves* thus virtually signaled the end of an era. Their experience mirrored the broader efforts of the Congress for Cultural Freedom to reach European intellectuals and speak to them effectively. The magazines had obtained general recognition for their cultural value, and the architects of the CCF could legitimately boast about having provided the conditions for their existence. At the same time, the local intellectuals that had agreed to edit them had demonstrated to be much more than unwitting assets. They had stubbornly pursued their own vision for what their magazines would look like, shaping them in distinctive ways that reflected their personalities and interests. In dealing with the U.S., they had opposed the negative stereotypes that the Communist press circulated, and familiarized their readers with the contradictions of American society. They had not renounced, however, the prerogative to express their dissent, or even scathing criticism, when they had deemed it appropriate. The magazines, just like the national committees and the intellectuals that animated them, had espoused their own notions of anti-Communism and cultural freedom, at times ignoring or running counter to the expectations of their sponsors.

Faced with the outrage over the CIA revelations, the crisis of the Atlantic partnership, and the apparent chasm between them and the younger generations, many intellectuals must have wondered, like Chiaromonte, whether being anti-Stalinist in the early 1950s was tantamount to being a conformist. Most of them responded negatively,

arguing that those who had not been there could not judge, with the benefit of hindsight, the difficult decisions made at the time. In France and Italy, the figures involved found comfort in the fact that, throughout the existence of the Congress for the Cultural Freedom, they had striven to preserve their independence, and to chart a course that reflected the peculiarities of their national contexts. Nonetheless, their experience was an essential part of the broader phenomenon of anti-Communism and the cultural Cold War in the West. A more detailed look at these intellectuals, therefore, can complicate our understanding of that period, and continue to answer that lingering question.

CONCLUSION

“IT MAY BE A DULL STORY”: THE LEGACY OF THE CCF

At a personal level, no one was hit as hard as Josselson by the collapse of the Congress for Cultural Freedom after the revelations of its ties to the CIA. The former Administrative Secretary, who had been the driving force of the CCF since its establishment in 1950, had resigned in May 1967, but he continued to struggle with its legacy until his death a decade later. As one of the CIA operatives who had been aware of the agency's involvement, he bore the responsibility for having deceived those intellectuals who had affiliated with the Congress. Moreover, the scandal that had engulfed the organization seemed to have obscured the accomplishments of the previous years, and to have reduced the CCF to nothing but a tool of American Cold War propaganda. Clearly, how the Congress would be remembered was a question that had personal implications for him.

In February 1972, Josselson wrote to Polish émigré Konstantin Jelenski to discuss the news of the sudden death of Nicola Chiaromonte, the former editor of *Tempo Presente*. Chiaromonte's widow, he told Jelenski, had once more thanked Josselson on behalf of her late husband “for having given him the possibility to write fully and freely for so many years - the deepest satisfaction he could have.” Such acknowledgments, however, brought further pain to Josselson: “Isn't our inability to set the record of the CCF straight for posterity,” he asked his friend, “tantamount to a betrayal of some of our closest friends? I am tormented by the thought of it.”¹ A few years later, his distress had only increased with the revelations of extent to which the CIA had participated in

¹ Michael Josselson to Konstantin A. Jelenski, 16 February 1972, b. 30, f. 6, Josselson Papers.

numerous covert operations and “dirty tricks.” In writing to a former agent who had worked for the Fairfield Foundation, Josselson asked: “Could you or I even think - even at moments of dark pessimism - that the agency we were connected with was as filthy as it has turned out to be? How could we have fallen for it! I wake up at nights screaming.”² Eventually, his disgust had become so deep that he claimed that he “never want[ed] to hear the name of the choco factory [Josselson’s disparaging nickname for the CIA] again or even think about it.” He sounded hopeless about the possibility of dispelling what he thought were the distortions of the CCF’s record. If, he said, people were interested “in the story of the Congress as such with only minor reference to the chocos, that would be different thing altogether, but obviously from a publishers [sic] point of view it may be a dull story as compared to what he really had in mind.”³

This dissertation has attempted to write such a “dull” story, from the perspective of two of the crucial countries in the history of the Congress for Cultural Freedom. France and Italy were uniquely important for the organization’s mission to counter Communist propaganda in the years after World War II – they were, in fact, its “first priority.” The influence of Communist and neutralist intellectuals in the two countries made them particularly vulnerable to the Soviet cultural offensive, whose goal was to undermine their membership in the Western bloc. Intellectuals, even when they did not have direct political responsibilities, were influential opinion-makers, especially in countries like France or Italy. The CCF, thus, served American interests in providing money and connections to those writers, artists, and academics who were willing to counter Communist propaganda and denounce the totalitarian nature of the Soviet Union.

² Michael Josselson to John Thompson, Thanksgiving (27 November) 1975, b. 30, f. 4, Josselson Papers.

³ Michael Josselson to Frank Platt, 7 February 1977, b. 30, f. 3, Josselson Papers.

It did so through large international events – conferences, seminars, research projects – managed directly by its International Secretariat in Paris. These initiatives allowed its affiliates to put in place a transnational network of intellectuals who, while disagreeing on many issues, shared a fundamental interest in the defense of cultural freedom. Such a network relied and expanded on pre-existing connections that had been forged in the previous decades, especially in opposition to fascist and Communist regimes.

Alongside the international side of the Congress' work, however, were the activities that its affiliates carried out at the national level through a variety of means. The first was the personal interaction between intellectuals, and the attempt to draw undecided individuals or groups into a dialogue or a collaboration with the CCF. This aspect relied heavily on the prestige and credibility of the intellectuals involved, who reassured their peers that the Congress was not a mere front for American propaganda. Another important aspect of the work in France and Italy were the two national committees, which were responsible for the mobilization and education of a larger segment of the public opinion. By organizing meetings or providing financial assistance to local groups, the committees ensured that the Congress would have an operational base in each country, and a more effective way of reaching its elites. Finally, *Preuves* and *Tempo Presente*, the two magazines that the CCF sponsored, were aimed at providing venues for debate and discussion on political and cultural issues, both national and international. They belonged to a network of similar publications promoted by the Congress, and placed intellectuals in conversation with a transnational community of discourse. If all of these aspects contributed to the effectiveness of the CCF's work in

France and Italy, none of them could have been accomplished without an active participation of local intellectuals.

Several historians have emphasized the importance of this struggle for the “hearts and minds” of the world’s intellectuals, and the centrality of the CCF in this task. High Wilford has described the organization as “the US’s principal weapon in the Cultural Cold War,” while Frances Stonor Saunders has called it the “centerpiece” of the CIA’s covert campaign to counter Communism.⁴ Yet, the literature on the Congress has concentrated overwhelmingly on its cultural Cold War in the context of the United States and Great Britain, relying mostly on English-language sources. British intellectuals were central to American cultural diplomacy, but their experience was by no means representative of the relationship between the CCF and Western European intellectuals. Many historians have instead more or less implicitly taken the record of the Congress in Great Britain to be paradigmatic, without accounting for the differences in the political, social, and intellectual conditions. This dissertation addresses the imbalance existing in the current historiography – especially on the American side – about the distinctive experience of intellectuals in France and Italy, and the challenges facing American policymakers and intellectuals who tried to associate them to their efforts.

In doing so, it also aims to contribute to placing American intellectual history in a transnational framework of analysis. Several scholars have pointed to the significance of the cultural Cold War in relation to the development of postwar American thought, from Cold War liberalism to neoconservatism. This history, however, was only part of the chaotic and at times contradictory “brainstorming” that characterized leftist politics on a global scale after World War II. European intellectuals brought their own distinctive

⁴ Wilford, *The CIA, the British Left and the Cold War*, 103; Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*, 1.

traditions and worldviews to the Congress for Cultural Freedom, and helped shape its positions. They commented upon, influenced, and challenged the liberalism that the CCF aimed to promote, participating in their own way to the American intellectual discourse.

The result was a nuanced interplay of competing interests and agendas, cooperation and tensions, successes and misunderstandings. French and Italian intellectuals came to the Congress for Cultural Freedom with their own background of experiences, and clearly defined sets of ideas and positions. They were united by their concerns over the threat of Communism, at both the political and the intellectual level, and by the belief that it should be forcefully opposed. They also agreed on the value of cultural freedom, and on the central role that intellectuals should play in society. Besides that, however, they often disagreed on how they viewed their societies, the United States, and the developments on the international scene. The French and Italian affiliates considered themselves part of a common enterprise, but that did not translate into the acceptance of guidelines or policies with which they did not agree. In fact, as Wilford has concluded, “it might well have been the case that the CIA tried to call the tune; but the piper did not always play it, nor the audience always dance to it.”⁵

Ignazio Silone summarized this apparent contradiction in a letter to François Bondy in June 1958. The two men were discussing the latest events in France, with the fall of the Fourth Republic and the return to power of Charles de Gaulle. Silone and other Italians were strongly critical of the General, an issue on which they would repeatedly clash with their French counterparts and the CCF offices in Paris. In his letter to Bondy, Silone did not conceal their disagreement, but asked nonetheless where he could reach Josselson, the Congress’ Administrative Secretary. “We respect the principle of

⁵ Wilford, *The CIA, the British Left and the Cold War*, 301.

autonomy diligently and write and say what we think;” Silone wrote, “but we are interested in knowing what our friends think.”⁶ Without knowing it, the Italian writer had highlighted a fundamental irony in the activities of the CCF: ultimately, and for all its economic and military power, American cultural diplomacy often had to rely on a category – friendship – that remained frustratingly elusive and hard to control.

⁶ Ignazio Silone to François Bondy, 27 June 1958, s. VII, b. 11, f. 12, IACF Records. My translation.

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