

## The influence of international issues on the strategic choices of socialist parties during the political transition in France and Italy (1944-1948)

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The aim of this paper is to analyze the influence of the international factors on the strategic choices made by the Italian and French socialist parties during the period of political transition after the Second World War.

As is well known, the choices reached a peak in 1947, at the same time as the beginning of the Cold War. In both the countries, since 1944, political systems had been dominated first by an “antifascist” alliance, and then, after the first general elections, by a “tripartist alliance”, composed by the Socialists, the Communists and the Christian-Democrats. As each of these parties was not strong enough to govern alone, they allied to ensure a good end to the political transition. However, this alliance ended in 1947<sup>1</sup>. In France the Socialists broke away from the Communists and decided to go further with the Christian-Democrats. In Italy, the Socialists divided into two parts: the Social-Democrats of the Partito Socialista dei Lavoratori Italiani (PSLI) broke off from the Communists; the Socialists of the Partito Socialista Italiano (PSI) decided to maintain and then strengthen their alliance with the Communists and to break away from the Christian-Democrats.

The comparison between the French and Italian political systems then highlights how strategic choices influenced the pattern of Party systems in the two countries<sup>2</sup>. In Italy that choice contributed to the bipolarization of the political system, to the hegemony of Christian-Democrats on the political system, and to the hegemony of the Communist Party on the left. In France, the Socialists contributed to the formation of a weimarian schema with a centrist coalition that brought together the forces of the system and with two anti-system forces: Communists on the left and Gaullists on the right. In a short-term period, that choice made then possible a government changeover between center-right and center-left.

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<sup>1</sup> As is well known, in the Italian case, this alliance had been pursued in the Constituent Assembly, but not at the government level.

<sup>2</sup> From the crisis of the Italian political system in the 1990's, Italian historians insist a lot on the role of the socialist party in the pattern of the Italian political system, cf. P. Craveri *La Repubblica dal 1958 al 1992*, TEA, 1996; P. Scoppola, *La Repubblica dei partiti*, Il Mulino, 1991. M. Degl'Innocenti, *Storia del PSI. 3. Dal dopoguerra a oggi*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1993 e Id., « Sul paradigma socialista o del 'terzo' partito », in G. Nicolosi (a cura di), *I Partiti politici nell'Italia repubblicana*, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino, 2006, L. Cafagna, *Una strana disfatta. La parabola dell'autonomismo socialista*, Venezia, Marsilio, 1996; A. Riosa, *Rosso di Sera. Nascita e morte apparente dell'utopia socialista in Italia. Un secolo di storia, tradizione e cultura di un grande movimento politico*, Firenze, Ponte alle Grazie, 1996. G. Sabbatucci, *Il Riformismo impossibile. Storie del socialismo italiano*, Bari-Roma, Laterza, 1991,

So what about the influence of international issues on these choices? This paper will argue that the beginning of the Cold war was a necessary condition but not a sufficient explanation for the choices made since 1947 by the French and Italian Socialists. More specifically, this paper will show that choices had been made primarily in the field of internal affairs. In that context, international issues contributed indirectly to them because they represented the main political resource to contrast the hegemonic attempt of the Communists. In order to understand the way in which international issues determine different strategic choices, it is necessary to take into consideration three bound variables:

1. The ideological and cultural background of the parties and their analysis of the international situation: the growth of international tensions awakened an anti-Soviet sentiment in France, deeply rooted in the French socialist political culture, whereas in Italy, because of the heterogeneity of the socialist party, it had been an element of internal division.
2. The international status of both the countries: the international issues highlight the “anti-national” nature of the Communist Parties. This appeared clearest in the French case, not because the Italian Communist Party (PCI) was more attached to national interest (as its leaders and own historians try to demonstrate), but because French Communist Party (PCF) was more exposed to the critics, with first the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact and then with Germany and the Colonies.
1. The balance of political systems and the timing of the transition: All these elements do not explain the breaking-off that happened between mid-1947 and early 1948. They become essential when the growth of international tensions causes a strong polarization of the political system and obliged the Socialist parties to precise their position and their strategy.

### **1. The French Socialist party and the international issues**

The effects of the beginning of the Cold War were felt immediately by the French

Socialist Party (Section française de l'interantionale ouvrière - SFIO). First, as it became increasingly evident to French Socialists that the main aim of Soviet foreign policy was expansion and not peace, and as the USSR opposed French claims in Germany, the growth of international tensions awakened an anti-Sovietism, deeply rooted in the French socialist political culture. Second, as the beginning of the Cold War brought an alignment of the PCF to Soviet positions, often in contradiction with those of the SFIO, it awakened its usual anti-communism. However, these two elements alone do not explain the breaking-off that happened between mid-1947 and early 1948. The elements become essential, particularly in comparison with the Italian experience, when the gradual alignment of the PCF with Soviet policy causes a strong polarization of the political system. SFIO tried in vain to avoid such a polarization, which would oblige it to choose in favour of or against communism, and tried to pursue the “anti-fascist” alliance of the resistance.

From the entry of the USSR into the war in 1941 and for up to half of 1947, the French Socialists showed an unusual willingness towards the Soviet Union. It was unusual because the SFIO was traditionally anti-Soviet. The party survived in the early twenties by affirming its own identity against the myth of the October Revolution. It consistently denounced the "totalitarian" nature of the Soviet regime and it was not uncommon to see Communism compared with Nazism in socialist propaganda. This anti-Soviet sense progressively deepened as the PCF grew in French politics. It reached its peak with the episode of the Nazi-Soviet pact, and particularly with the Soviet invasion of eastern Poland on 17-September 1939. The anti-Soviet sense of socialists was both ideological and geo-strategic in nature, and this reminds us of the First World War when the Bolsheviks signed the separate peace agreement of Brest Litovsk<sup>3</sup>.

However from 1941, and with further evidence in 1943, analysis of the French socialist party shows, if not a favourable opinion at least a non-critical opinion. Thus, Blum writes in December 1944 that, “sincerely united to Russia, France would not have been dragged into the abdication of March 1936 and then into the betrayal of Munich. Sincerely united with France, Russia did not fear isolation nor sought in his pact with Hitler in August

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. M. Winock, *La Gauche en France*, Perrin, 2006. A. Kriegel, *Aux origines du Communisme français*, Flammarion, 1969, J.J. Becker, *Histoire de l'anticommunisme*, Orban, 1992, 1999 ; T. Judt, *La reconstruction du parti socialiste*, PFNSP, 1976.

1939 the way to gain time to perfect his armament"<sup>4</sup>. This willingness, however, should not fool anyone, because it is under no circumstances the basis for an exclusive alliance.

First, the French Socialist party did not entertain the hope that there will be a democratization of the Soviet regime after the war. This assumption has a direct consequence: they hope - as does the Italian Socialist party - to recover the entire labour movement in a single international organization. But this process - contrary to the Italian Socialist party - can be performed by the incorporation of communism within the structures of international socialism. As a point of note, the state of willingness of the SFIO reacted first to the international balance of time. The USSR, one of the major victorious powers of World War II, was a key decider in the peace settlement, especially in regard to Germany. Its actions have sometimes been useful in the face of the reluctance of Anglo-Saxons to recognize the government of de Gaulle. In addition, its prestige is great among liberated peoples in Europe. Last, for French Socialists, Soviet participation is a prerequisite for peace.

To understand this position, it is necessary to look at the ideas of Leon Blum, who asserted moral leadership in the field of foreign policy. The way in which the socialist party rebuilds during the resistance determines a marginalization of the most pacifist tendencies of the inter-war period. But Blum, from the mid thirties, and moving from an analysis of the international framework, had come to the conclusion that it was necessary to maintain a firm position toward Germany. He regarded positively, in the fight against fascism and Nazism, the strengthening of relationships with the USSR<sup>5</sup>. And that would open the door to a rapprochement with the PCF on domestic affairs. This line, which began to prevail within the party, had been interrupted previously by the pact, but Blum propone it again from 1941<sup>6</sup>.

As for international politics, Blum was convinced that the Allies would win the war but that the defeat of the Axis would not in itself ensure peace<sup>7</sup>, which was regarded as a necessary but not sufficient condition for the establishment of democracy. This is why his main concern was the establishment of an international organization, a "Super-State",

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<sup>4</sup> *Le Populaire*, 22 décembre 1944. cf. also the declaration of the executive committee of the SFIO : "au grand peuple russe, à son héroïque armée victorieuse, à son chef le maréchal Staline, la reconnaissante admiration des travailleurs et du peuple socialiste de la France », *Le Populaire*, 9 novembre 1944. The national day was the 7<sup>th</sup> November, anniversary of the October Revolution.

<sup>5</sup> cf. in particular its positive assessment of the Franco-Russian Alliance of 1935

<sup>6</sup> On the position of Blum and the internal debate, cf. M. Sadoun, *Les Socialistes sous l'occupation : résistance et collaboration*, FNSP, 1982 ; B.D. Graham, *Choice and Democratic order. The French socialist Party 1937-1950*, Cambridge University Press, 1994 ; S. Berstein, *Léon Blum*, Fayard, 2006.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Léon Blum, *A L'échelle humaine*, in *L'œuvre*, Vol 5, Albin Michel, 1955, p. 475

modelled after the League of Nations<sup>8</sup>. Blum considered the failure of the League primarily due to the fact that the governments did not delegate it as much power as was needed to ensure its efficiency. The second difficulty was that the major powers, especially the United States and Russia, were not committed enough<sup>9</sup>. In addition, Blum was convinced that the USSR, at least in the short term, would have changed its way of managing international relationships, with several motives. On one hand, the USSR emerged stronger from the war and, by participating in such an organization, it would receive the international recognition that it had been lacking before the war. On the other hand, the USSR needed to work together with Anglo-Saxon powers in order to receive the subsidies necessary to re-launch its economy. Last, the USSR did not ever wish to "be surpassed by anyone under the universal proletariat in the determination of peace"<sup>10</sup>.

This analysis and these objectives, designed by Blum in 1941, largely influenced the decisions of the SFIO, its programs and its propaganda. Without ever falling into an exalted pro-Soviet discourse, the Socialist Party maintained a neutral or a-critical official position on USSR actions because of an absolute necessity: the perpetuation of the War alliance as a presupposition for peace<sup>11</sup>.

However, when the USSR eventually carried out a policy contrary to the interests of France and more to those of peace, showing that USSR fell again into the traps of expansionism, the unrest of the SFIO grew. Many events testify to this matter of fact: the Soviet attitude towards Poland in the end of 1944<sup>12</sup>, towards Italy in June 1946<sup>13</sup>, the Soviet

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<sup>8</sup> Idem, p. 476. cf. Also « Schema d'une sorte d'instruction pour mes amis », 28 août 1942: "La France devra se prononcer aussitôt sur le caractère de l'organisation internationale, je veux dire sur les modes de sa souveraineté car l'échec de la Société des Nations de 1919 comporte des enseignements assez clairs et il s'agit bien de créer cette fois un super-Etat, une confédération politique»; and the Programme du parti, in *Le Populaire clandestine*, juin 1943.

<sup>9</sup> The League failed « parce que de grandes puissances indispensables comme la Russie et les EU lui ont manqué dès le départ » e « parce que ses fondateurs (...) n'avaient pas osé la doter des organes et de la et de la puissance vitale que sa fonction exigeait, parce qu'elle n'était pas une grande Souveraineté, distincte des souverainetés nationales et supérieure à elles », *A l'échelle Humaine*, p. 477 :

<sup>10</sup> Idem p. 481. He repeat these ideas to Felix Gouin in a letter of the 21th octobre 1942 « Je ne partage pas votre appréhension à cet égard, je suis persuadé que qu'au moins jusqu'à nouvel ordre, Staline jouera franc jeu avec l'Europe, qu'il intégrera largement les Soviétiques dans l'organisation internationale, qu'il conservera des rapports étroits avec les Alliés et par conséquent qu'il se gardera de tout ce qui pourrait les incommoder dans le jeu intérieur de leurs gouvernements respectifs. Cela ne sera peut-être pas éternel mais nous ne raisonnons pas en ce moment pour l'éternité ».

<sup>11</sup> cf. C. Dumas in *Le Populaire*, 20 décembre 1944, 18 janvier 1945.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. C. Dumas, « Politique extérieure, malaise international », 17 décembre 1944 : « Dans tous les pays anglo-saxons, le conflit polono-russe a créé une impression fâcheuse . On se demande où est le respect des principes démocratiques dans l'arrangement auquel on prétend contraindre les polonais (...) Nous ne poussons pas un cri d'alarme. Les choses sont loin d'en être là. Mais il est bon d'être averti. Que les forces démocratiques veillent, que partout elles imposent leurs solutions et les nuages seront vite dissipés »

<sup>13</sup> cf. L. Blum, « Le Discours de Molotov », in *Le Populaire*, 15 août 1946 : « Je ne doute pas qu'en le composant, Molotov ait eu en vue certaines incidences directes sur la politique intérieure de l'Italie (...) Serait-ce donc dans la soumission aux fins de la politique soviétique qu'il faudrait chercher la condition non écrite mais pourtant la condition suprême, de cette « politique extérieure vraiment démocratique ? » and Idem, « Le problème économique international », 16 août 1946 : « réduire les occupations militaires là où ce n'est plus l'URSS qui occupe, affecter l'économie réalisée aux réparations là où c'est l'URSS qui en profite, voilà ce qu'offre Molotov, pour le bien de l'Italie Nouvelle ».

attitude at the Moscow Conference of April 1947<sup>14</sup>. But the decisive breaking-off came with the refusal by the USSR of the Marshall Plan in early July of the same year, a refusal that revealed for those who doubted it the expansionist nature of Soviet politics after the war<sup>15</sup>.

SFIO was not excessively pro-American but the major part of Socialists had no doubt about the necessity and of the Plan for France and Europe. In August Congress of the SFIO, delegates needed to specify that the American assistance did not mean dependency but the Congress widely voted in favour of the Marshall Plan, confirming the decision of the National Council of July. Just two preliminary motions had displayed reluctance: one from the extreme left, while strongly criticizing the Soviet position, saying the Marshall Plan "represents an attempt by U.S. imperialism to extend its hegemony over the European economy" and called for the establishment of a third front, equidistant between the two blocs<sup>16</sup>. This tendency was relevant before 1940 but had been marginalized during the war. The other motion, from the *Bataille Socialiste* tendency that was trending towards recovery, asked not to join any bloc and called for the reconstitution of the International socialist organization. Such an organization will only be able to manage a U.S. recovery program. The specificity of this tendency was that they strongly assumed anti-American and pro-soviet positions, close to the theses of the PSI of these months that they quote extensively. But, and this is the great difference, it is just a minority faction and its members went out of the party in January 1948 to found the Mouvement Socialiste Unitaire et Démocratique that became the Parti Socialiste Unitaire in October<sup>17</sup>.

Anti-Soviet socialism is not necessarily synonymous with Atlantism. The Socialists welcomed the various American actions as signs of an end to their traditional isolationism<sup>18</sup>. We have seen that there was no way for them to espouse the cause of the USSR. However, French socialists did not want to have to constitute a western alliance.. Since the beginning of the year, they claimed that they would have never join a western or eastern side; and in June 1947, they greeted without enthusiasm Truman's speech<sup>19</sup>. They asked for the

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<sup>14</sup> cf the series of article by L. Blum, from the 27th of March to 31th of March and from the 16th of April to the 28th of April.

<sup>15</sup> On that point, cf. in particular the National council of SFIO of 6-7th July 1947.

<sup>16</sup> Cf Bulletin Intérieur, Juillet 1947

<sup>17</sup> cf. T. Hohl, *A Gauche ! La Gauche socialiste, 1921- 1947*, Editions universitaires de Dijon, 2004, B.D. Graham, Choice and democratic order, op. cit.,

<sup>18</sup> Cf C. Dumas, « alliance et sécurité collective », in *Le Populaire*, 20 décembre 1944 : « Ce geste est d'autant plus naturel que nous avons gardé un mauvais souvenir d'un précédent essai de sécurité collective où c'est précisément le concours de l'Amérique qui manqua ce qui fit tout échouer. Aujourd'hui c'est l'Amérique qui est à la tête du mouvement de sécurité collective. Et c'est là une garantie qui en fait prévoir le succès. (...) », L. Blum, in *Le Populaire*, Août 1945

<sup>19</sup> *Le Populaire*, 19 mars 1947, « le discours de Truman, une franche explication » de Blum « je n'ai goûté quant à moi ni l'argumentation, ni le vocabulaire du discours, et je souhaiterais en particulier qu'on rompit une bonne fois, de l'autre côté de l'Atlantique, avec la dangereuse

construction of a third international force, independent from the two great powers<sup>20</sup> and interacting with both the sides. In other words, facing the rise of the Cold War, the French Socialists have moved from a conception of the organization of peace based on an international organization of arbitration and control to a "regional" organization at a European level. The coup in Prague (March 1948) and more definitively the question of Berlin in the summer of the same year made that prospect disappeared from the plans of the French Socialists<sup>21</sup>.

So, the attitude of SFIO towards USSR (alleviation and resurgence of anti-Sovietism) was due to the Socialist's plans for Peace and for french foreign policy, and to the place that USSR had on the international stage. Anyway, this attitude was also due to internal politics and to the relations with PCF.

Indeed, the beginning of the Cold War brought an alignment of the PCF to Soviet positions, often in contradiction with those of the SFIO. In that way, it highlighted the problem of the national loyalty of the PCF and awakened the usual anti-communism of SFIO. The relations between Socialists and Communists had always been complicated and confrontational, even if the antagonism did not always prevent from incidental alliances. The anticommunism of SFIO was doctrinal, and fuelled by a long past of rivalry, from the Congress of Tours to the Nazi-Soviet pact, and that episodes as the exile of Mensheviks and the processes of Moscow constantly renewed. But the socialist anticommunism, contrary to the Italian case, also had a "nationalist" sense. More precisely, The anticommunism has an additional resource: the "evidence" of the dual and "anti-national" nature of Communism.

So what about SFIO and PCF after the war? According to Blum, the volunteer insertion of the USSR in an international community would make plausible the insertion of the Communist Party within its own national community. The peace would not be ensured if the risk of a revolution within European States "planned and engineered and controlled

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habitude de désigner par les mêmes épithètes le régime hitlérien et le régime soviétique », mais il justifie les décisions et les objectifs, et les manières américaines. Cf. le *Journal d'Auriol*, pp. 143-144.

<sup>20</sup> « une seule issue : l'Internationale » Mollet sept. In LP, affirmava che « le socialisme ne choisit pas et ne doit pas choisir ». « nous ne voulons être ni américanisés, ni soviétisés [...] ni des protégés américains, ni des sujets soviétiques » (Léon Blum 17 oct. discours au vélodrome d'hiver).

<sup>21</sup> Malgré l'échec de la conférence de Londres de décembre 1947 Blum, continua d'espérer tentent de proposer une solution internationale au problème allemand dans une sorte de conjuration à l'égard de la division du monde (*Le Populaire* 16 janvier 1948, p. 163. ; 17 janvier, p. 165.). Même au lendemain du coup de Prague, Blum espère encore : « Dira-t-on que le drame de Prague rend désormais cette entente [entre les Etats Unis et l'URSS grâce à l'Europe] irrémédiablement impossible ? Il la rend encore plus difficile, sans doute, mais encore plus nécessaire » (27 fév. 48, p. 167). Les Etats Unis et l'URSS ne veulent pas la guerre. Refuse les thèses du Général de Gaulle sur le fait que le Plan Marshall est une coalition antisoviétique. Refuse à la troisième guerre ne croit pas que l'URSS veuille attaquer l'Europe occidentale.

from outside by the Sovereign (USSR) continued to disturb each of them (the nations)". The goal outlined by Blum, therefore, was that the USSR cease to support "a foreign body in each nation" and that USSR ceased to "to behave like a foreign body towards the nations"<sup>22</sup>. What Blum was worried about was the Communist "dilemma": the fact that at the Liberation it would be impossible to not integrate communists into the interim government due to their involvement in the resistance, but it would be a great risk if the Communists continued to behave as a "foreign body" because it would inevitably awaken the anti-communism of public opinion and polarize the political system. That's why he called for direct negotiations between de Gaulle and the Soviet Union to reach an agreement<sup>23</sup>. Blum didn't believe in 1941 in a dissolution of the Komintern, which would mean breaking *de facto* the special relationship between PCF and USSR<sup>24</sup>. When it took place in May of 1943, it the relationships made easier between SFIO and PCF and open the road, for the SFIO, to a rapprochement.

Nevertheless, the memory of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact and doubts about the real intentions of the communists persisted and found a first justification in the debates on the organic unity. While the Communists answered favorably to the socialist proposal of talks, they triggered a strong anti-socialist campaign in December 1944. That's why André Le Troquer saw in the moderate policy of the PCF a strategy to promote the soviet expansion policy, recalling that "Bolshevism is the worst enemy of socialism"<sup>25</sup>. Le Troquer was one of the most anticommunist of the SFIO but it is not a case if, some days later, only 4 members still claimed for organic unity. The other members do not want it or do not believe in it anymore<sup>26</sup>. And then, when *L'Humanité* published the "Charter of unity" on 12 June 1945 without having first agreed upon the content and the publication of the document with the SFIO, and thus exposing the secrecy of negotiations, very few people disagreed with Auriol when he said that Communists « don't have changed and their tactic is the same in all the countries : in Belgium, in Italy (the affair of Trieste), in Yougoslavia where Tito cancelled the parties. So, we have to wait two or three months. The events in foreign policy and the

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<sup>22</sup> A l'Echelle humaine, op. cit., p. 480

<sup>23</sup> « note », 5 mai 1942, « note », novembre 1942, to de Gaulle ; « note », 15 aout 1942, to the Socialists in London. Cf to the letter to F. Gouin, 21 octobre 1942 and the letter to de Gaulle, mars 1943.

<sup>24</sup> Letter to Gouin, 21 octobre 1942 : « A moins qu'à cette époque Staline n'ait entièrement liquidé le Komintern, et par conséquent le communisme français (ce qui n'est pas impossible mais ce sur quoi on ne peut tabler) ».

<sup>25</sup> cf Comité Directeur, 19 décembre 1944

<sup>26</sup> cf Comité Directeur, 22 décembre 1944. Just four members still claim for organic unity (Bloncourt, Grumbach, Lambert, Tanguy Prigent)

Constituency would allow a serious discrimination”<sup>27</sup>. And from July 5 to August 18, Blum explained and justified in 18 articles in *Le Populaire* why the conditions of the unit were not yet realized. The national convention in August of that year finally put an end, unanimously, the prospect of organic unity. This episode is emblematic of the role of international issues in the strategic choices of the French Socialists. International issues are not involved directly: they don’t contribute to radical changes. But there are no doubts on the Communists objectives. And whenever it was necessary, they used the memory of the pre-war time as made Le Troquer during the campaign for parliamentary elections in 1946. In a speech on May 23 at Moulins, he did not hesitate to remember the desertion of Thorez, “the heartrending act of the nazi-soviet pact”, “the occupation of numerous territories by Russia that is not a way to prepare peace” and so on. After this speech, Daniel Mayer wrote a series of articles in *Le Populaire* (from the 16th to the 21th of May) in which he argued, for example, that no socialist would say anymore that the Communists were “at the command of Moscow” in 1946... even if, of course, nobody has forgotten the episode of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact.

A last example, from the national congress in August 1946, is useful for our demonstration. During the conference, the outgoing leadership was outvoted by a very heterogeneous coalition of dissatisfied socialists who regrouped behind Guy Mollet. Mollet presented a motion denouncing, among other things, the fact that relations with the PCF were not narrow enough. Nevertheless, the tone of the conference highlights how the distrust of the Communists was great and how the question of its relationship with the USSR was present in the mind. Thus Philip – who followed Mollet on this occasion - explained in a speech reprinted in *Le Populaire* that if the Communists were “probably” not paid, nor they were “probably” not taking orders from Moscow, instinctively their eyes were looking at Moscow and they continued to favour the interests of the Russian state. And in the same direction, Eugène Thomas considered that “For the Communists, the mother is Russia; for us it is France”<sup>28</sup>. And the final motion decided to abolish the socialist-communist committee as well as the Socialists now decided to abandon the “Internationale” as anthem. The three commissioners who were the most favorable to the unit (Bloncourt, Rivet, Marty Capgras) were not re-elected to the Board. For this reason, the interpretation of

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<sup>27</sup> Comité Directeur, 14 juin 1945

<sup>28</sup> cf also the discourse of Eugène Thomas: “Pour les communistes, la patrie c’est la Russie; pour nous c’est la France”, also reprinted in *Le Populaire*, 1-2- septembre 1946

the election of Guy Mollet at the head of the party as a turning point in relationships between SFIO and PCF is incorrect<sup>29</sup>.

Contrary to the Italian case, because of the international status of France, the interests of USSR were more often in contrast with the French one and obviously, the anti-communism, seen as the complement of the anti-soviet feeling, increased from the Spring of 1947, when the PCF aligned its position with the Soviet idea about the Saarland, which was in contrast to the positions of the French government, supported by Socialists and, in the same way, to the Marshall Plan. On that occasion, Socialists began to take into consideration that, because of the international situation and the attitude of the Communist party, it would be even more difficult to re-insert themselves into the government. Meanwhile, the SFIO at this time was still hoping that the split was not definitive<sup>30</sup>. Only the creation of the Kominform definitely close the chapter of a possible alliance with PCF.

However, as the anti-Soviet sense, the anticommunism of the SFIO does not explain single handedly the breaking-off, as evidenced by the debates surrounding the decision of the SFIO to support the decision of Ramadier in May 1947 to recast his government and expel communists. This decision was very difficult for the party. It had been reached with a very limited majority (a difference one member of the executive committee) and initially, the party decided that Ramadier had to resign, following the decisions of the congress: Socialists would never go to the Government without communists. In the debates that accompanied this decision, there is no record of international problems, but simply the impossibility to find an acceptable alternative to a government without Communists or Socialists. Moreover, the crisis of 1947 was primarily an institutional crisis in which anti-communism played a secondary role.

This episode testifies the fact that, at the very least, the main effect of international relationships was to polarize the political system and constrained socialists to deal with a deep rooted anti-communism of public opinion. The balance of the political system explains first why anti-Sovietism and anti-Communism was not enough to break apart and why, at another time, it was. In this context, clearly understood by French socialists, the main strategic aim was to avoid at all costs that anti-Communism replace the ideal unity of the

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<sup>29</sup> cf a full explanation on this debate in F. Lafon, *Guy Mollet*, Laffont, 2006

<sup>30</sup> cf the debate of the National congress of august 1947 and the articles of Blum in *Le Populaire*.

resistance; a fact that would be devastating for the Socialists.

The internal debate during and after all elections showed that this was the main problem of French socialists. For instance, after the elections of October 1945, after which the Socialist Party came in 3rd place, nobody was really in favor of a tête à tête with the Communists, however, possible. And it is not a coincidence that Mayer, insist to underline, in the case the party decide this agreement that “we disagree on foreign policy and on the method of government”<sup>31</sup>. Similarly, after the elections of June 1946, everybody agree with Philip when he analyzed the victory of the Christian-Democrats of the Mouvement Républicain Populaire (MRP) : “their victory (of the MRP) is due to their will to represent an anticommunist dam” ; and Boutbien confirmed that « the French elections has been influenced by international politics »<sup>32</sup>. This feeling grew up again after the November elections. And when Ramadier ask the trust of National Assembly on the colonial policy of the government, because Communists had opposed it, he stated “if you maintain your abstention, you will bring the French politics back to this basic opposition between communism and anticommunism that we do everything to avoid”<sup>33</sup>.

Especially in 1947, this danger was accentuated by the fact that, at the end of March, de Gaulle announced the creation of the RPF, and he presented it as a bulwark against communism. The affirmation of what they consider as a very strong threat from the right, became more important when, during the crisis of may, the main concern of socialists favorable to fasten Ramadier is that the lack of alternative majority will cause a return of de Gaulle and a risk to the institutions. The same fear appeared to municipal elections in October, and justify the continuation of the Ramadier’s government. The creation of the Kominform on the one hand, Duclos's speech to the Assembly and the Central Committee of Communist Party October 30 eliminates any possibility of reconciliation. And in December, after one month of great social troubles, the Socialists definitively accept the perspective of the third force.

As a last consequence, the entry into the cold war determine a strenghtening of the internal unity of the party. After the national congress of august 1946, there was a clear opposition between the executive commette and the parliamentary group. Anticommunism

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<sup>31</sup> Comité directeur, octobre 1945

<sup>32</sup> Comité Directeur 13 novembre 1946

<sup>33</sup> cf. Conseil national 19-20 mars 1947

and antisovietism had been one of the most common value of the french socialists until 1958.

## **2. The Italian Socialists and the international issues**

As in the French case, the choice of 1947 of Italian socialism – scission and alliances - are primarily some domestic policy choices, the result of the evaluation of internal balances of the Italian political system. By the way, rising tensions at the international level influences in two ways this process: first of all, unlike the French case, it contributes to upset the already precarious internal balance of the PSIUP and, on the other hand, as in the French case, it contributes to polarize the political system. Nevertheless, the division from one part and the timing of the transition in Italy from the other part made Italian socialism choose in part a different way than the one of French socialism.

Unlike the French case in which we point out that the party had a substantial identity of view in the analysis of the international framework, the situation of the PSIUP is very different, with various positions, often confused. And the analysis of the international context became gradually an important internal clivage, but clearly linked with the strategy to adapt with the PCI.

Since the revival of the activity of the Party, we can identify two main different way to analyze the international situation within the PSIUP. All the Italian Socialists hoped and trusted in the reunification of the socialist movement in a unique organization from Labourism to Communism. But the right of the Party considered the British Socialism as an example and imagine the new International movement under the leadership of the Labour. From the center to the left of the party they tended to place on the same level USSR and Great Britain. That means that they criticize both the countries and both the worker organizations, hoping in the construction of a new international organization. This difference within the Party about the international perspective became explicit in 1945 and from that date, became an important point of internal dissension.

The Congress of Florence is a good example to understand the different positions of the Italian socialist movement and their influence in the political party. Indeed, taking place in April 1946, the Congress was both at a time in which the internal dissensions are already

important in the party towards the political line, and at the same time, because it just before the general elections for the Constituent Assembly, it was easier to maintain the party unity around a more consensual topic: the Republic.

For Nenni, USSR did not represent a threat to Italy. Secondly, as the International Socialist movement is not neutral, because of the influence of the Labour, the international tensions should be managed by the ONU: «Noi dobbiamo rompere con questa politica alla quale si ricollegano coloro che vorrebbero oggi trascinarci in un blocco occidentale, dopo di averci legati alla Germania. Posti al limite fra occidente e oriente, noi non vogliamo essere le vittime di un nuovo conflitto, né vogliamo diventare una colonia. Non vogliamo essere una colonia sovietica, non vogliamo neppure una colonia inglese o americana. Vogliamo nell'ONU difendere i nostri interessi e difendere la causa della pace indivisibile». Without the participation of the USSR and the USA (and Asia) at this International, «il rischio è di apparire come una prefigurazione del blocco occidentale che respingiamo in sede politica estera nazionale». Nenni deduced from this point that “Quale è oggi la situazione nei confronti dell'URSS? I pochi osservatori onesti ed imparziali della stampa internazionale negano che la Russia abbia delle mire imperialiste, nel senso che questa parola ha avuto nella storia dell'imperialismo capitalistico. La sua politica, è oggi come ieri, in funzione della sua sicurezza. Nonostante gli ingrandimenti territoriali che essa ha realizzato in questa guerra (...), nonostante l'influenza che esercita sui governi (paesi dell'est...), la Russia si sente insicura. (...) Ha probabilmente torto. Però essa non può rascrare alcuni sintomi inquietanti. Il discorso di Fulton, la politica internazionale del Vaticano, lo sfruttamento reazionario che si fa in Italia, in Francia (...) Il discorso di Fulton è suonato come il grido di rancore di qualcuno che avendo fatto la guerra a Hitler per forza, rimpiange di non averla potuto fare a Stalin.” And he concludes that despite some points of disagreement with the Soviet Union, the Italian Socialists still have to support its cause because “la sua difesa condiziona l'avvenire della rivoluzione proletaria di tutto il mondo”.

For Saragat, however, the USSR represented a real threat because in his opinion, Socialism is the first enemy of Communism. He refuted the description of the Socialist International made by Nenni as the Socialist edition of the Western bloc against Russia. He insisted on the totalitarian characteristic of USSR. His criticism towards the Soviet Union was closely linked to the strategy towards the PCI. He emphasized the totalitarian nature of Communism in the countries of Eastern Europe to highlight what a unique party should

become: « Per i comunisti, non è questione di unità della classe lavoratrice autonoma ma di controllo totale della classe lavoratrice». Contrary to Nenni, he trusted in the Socialist international movement to ensure peace. They would be more able than anyone to ensure the security of Russia's borders and thus to escape the soviet nightmare of defense. He also refused to chose between two sides and hoped that the socialist international movement should represent a third bloc against war.

Finally, for Basso, very critical of Saragat, but from a very ideological point of view, the real threat was represented by the Anglo-Saxons: « si è detto qui anche dalla tribuna di questo congresso che l'alleanza col partito comunista ci farebbe strumento della Russia. Si è parlato della Russia come di una qualsiasi dittatura. Si è paragonata la dittatura comunista alla dittatura fascista (...) si è messo sullo stesso piano l'imperialismo ango-sassone e l'imperialismo russo. Ma noi abbiamo sentito in questa sala i compagni socialisti romeni che sono venuti a dirci che cosa hanno ottenuto dopo l'occupazione russa e viceversa abbiamo sentito oggi un telegramma dei socialisti greci, che ci hanno detto che cosa sia l'imperialismo anglo-sassone anche se al governo ci sono dei compagni laburisti».

These positions within the party, which reflect those adopted by the various actors since 1944, are very different from what happened within the SFIO. But as in the French case, the pro-Sovietism of an important part of the PSIUP is quite deep-rooted and is a legacy of the thirties. The main leaders of the PSI were not immediately fascinated by the Soviet experience during the years of Fascism, nor immediately critical. The conversions has been made gradually, but we can affirm that the antifascist tone of the Soviet foreign policy, that appeared, at that time, very different from the one of Western democracies and in accordance with the aspirations of the Italian Socialists, is the main contribution to the "relative promotion" of the USSR by the Italian Socialists<sup>34</sup>. It is on the base of this element that the major part of Italian socialist judge the USSR more than in the transformation of Soviet society. This allow us to consider that is more important to defend USSR as the land of révolution, even if they don' agree on everything and they have to accept some deviations. The anti-Sovietism and anti-communism was not absent before the war from the ranks of PSI. It was expressed primarily by Tasca, Faravelli, Modigliani. In the aftermath of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, they took over the party leadership, now joined by Saragat. But

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<sup>34</sup> Cf. on this point L. Rapone, *Da Turati a Nenni. Il socialismo italiano negli anni del fascismo*, Franco Angeli 1992. S. Colarizi, *Classe operaia e ceti medi*, Marsilio, 1976.

even Saragat position before and during the war is particularly ambiguous<sup>35</sup>. And while rebuilding the party in France had marginalized the most pro-soviet line, the same sort in Italy has been suffered by the most anti-Soviet line. Tasca joined Vichy, Modigliani was over 70 years-old in 1943 and, Faravelli was in Switzerland when the party rebuilt. And Nenni could exercise its own leadership on the party<sup>36</sup>.

And Saragat and Nenni agreed again since 1941 about the need for unity of the working class in the struggle against fascism. Yet their position in the summer of 1944, was different, both on the nature of the alliance with the Communists than on their equivalence on the international framework. Whereas according to Nenni, the reunification of the working class in Italy would find its international equivalent<sup>37</sup>, according to Saragat it was impossible to rally the USSR on this point. As a consequence, he asked for the formation of a third international force in a divided world<sup>38</sup>. However, the FGS and the old reformist leaders already denounced the prospect of the organic unity on the basis of the dependence of the PCI from the USSR<sup>39</sup>.

So, the Italian Socialism is more heterogeneous from a cultural point of view rather than the French one because of a different heritage and a different development of its culture during the thirties, but also because, contrary to France, there are few occasions to have a conflict between Italian and Soviet interests. In the Italian case, the Socialists tried first to use the international issue as a political resource, arguing that Socialism was the only political force that could avoid a direct conflict between the winners of the War. As the Labour won the elections in Great Britain, it was possible to imagine a reconciliation of both the sides of the worker international movement. Italian Socialists also tried to insist of the “national” character of the Party, in particular during the episodes of the reparations and Trieste. In other words they tried, and more specifically the right of the party, to obtain the same kind of political legitimacy than in France. But those were rare cases and as Italy could not decide because of its international status, they had not the same impact than in France.

And even the episode of Trieste and of the soviet position on the war compensations didn't change the pro-Sovietism of a lot of Italian socialists. Moreover, after

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. M. Gervasoni, « un miroir abîmé. L'anticommunisme dans le socialisme italien, 1917-1997 », in *Communisme*, n. 62/63, 2000.

<sup>36</sup> On the reconstruction of the party, cf. E. Di Nolfo, G. Muzzi, *La ricostituzione del PSI. Resistenza, Repubblica, Costituente*, in G. Sabbatucci, *Storia del socialismo italiano, Il Poligono*, 1981 ; F. Taddei, *Il Socialismo italiano del dopoguerra. Correnti ideologiche e scelte politiche, 1943-1947*, Angeli, 1984 ; S. Neri Serneri, *Resistenza e democrazia nei partiti : i socialisti nell'Italia del 1943-1945*, Lacaita, 1995.

<sup>37</sup> Since 1944, Nenni criticised in the same way the Labour and the socialist International movement than the PCUS and the communist international organisation.

<sup>38</sup> *Avanti!*, 10 juin ; 22-29 juin ; 14 juillet 1944

<sup>39</sup> *BI*, F2, n.9 ; circ. 8, FL, ISRT, 31 aout 1944

the breaking-off, the PSI proclaimed a neutral attitude but it criticized a lot the Marshall Plan (and socialists within the CGIL voted against) and in November of 1946, Nenni asked the soviet an economic assistance to balance the American one.

As in the French case, these positions are part of the problem of the relations with the Communists, but as the party is divided on this point, it became a part of the internal debate on this issue and not a strong political resource against the Communist Party. The first explicit polemical divergences appeared as the same time in which the debate about the fusion with the Communist party become important in the summer of 1945. And it follows the evolution of the discussion about the strategy. As we said, part of the party, the one that then went to the PSLI, tried to use, as in the French case, the anti-Sovietism as a political resource. But the other part of the Party, and first of all Nenni, did not agree to renounce to the alliance with the Communist Party.

As in the French case, however, these positions should not have consequences if they were not included in a growing polarization of the political system due to the cold war. The most anti-Soviet lines of the party came out in January 1947 and tried to adopt the same position as the SFIO, that is an internal « third force » without success and the creation of the Kominform ended this strategy. The PSI first tried to adopt a neutral position in international issue, hoping in a reconciliation until october 1947. Then the new situation and the perspective of the general elections make them hoping in a victory of the left and deepen the class alliance.

## **Conclusions**

The interrogation was on the influence of international issues on the socialist strategic choices during the transition and more precisely on if the international issues could explain the different choices made by the two parties.

First of all, the entry into the Cold War was a slow process. That means that if historiography used to consider may 1947 as a turning point (with the exclusion of the Communists from the government in France and the exclusion of the Socialists and the Communists in Italy), from the point of view of the Socialists (and of the main part of the political actors), the awareness of that matter of fact took some more months. As a

consequence, the entry into the cold war did not determine, by itself and directly, the strategic choice of 1947. Both the parties tried to avoid it. At the same time, the choice was not predictable. To remind of an expression of Annie Kriegel on the breaking-off of 1920, the strategic choices of 1947 could be considered an accident of history and not a determined process due to a necessity of history or just to a cultural or ideological predisposition.

What appears from this study is that the international issues had been more than any other thing, the strongest political resource used by the French socialist against the Communist Party, a resource that Italian Socialists could not and did not use with the same result for different reasons :

First of all, because there was actually a cultural difference between the two parties : there was a widespread consensus among the French Socialists about the USSR whereas the Italian Socialists appeared much more divided. That is the result of a different past and memory : the SFIO fought for twenty years with a big Communist party whereas the PSIUP discovered that kind of concurrency in 1944 ; second, the incident of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact highlights the strong dependency of the French Communist party on to the interests of the Soviet Union.

There was also a different international status of the two countries : in France, there have been so many occasions to remind public opinion of the duality of the Communist party (about the future of Germany, about the Colonies, about the Marshall Plan and before about the War) ; in Italy, there has been just one occasion, Trieste, and it was a occasion in which Italy did not have a strong decisional power.

Finally, as mentioned before, the strategic choices of the socialist parties were more the result of an internal calculation. In sum, the international issues were often exploited to justify or not the alliance with the Communists and not just as a question of ideology or political choice. In the Italian case, the breaking off of January 1947, the maintain of the antifascist alliance within the Constituent Assembly and the perspective of general elections in 1948 contributed to petrify the positions of both the parties (PSI and PSLI).

