

Gorizian heretics of 1956: Euro-communism starts here?

Fiona Haig

1956 proved to be not only a landmark for the international communist movement but a turning point in the Cold War. By the autumn of that year, the bi-polar world order that had been steadily forming since the second world war, had consolidated into diametrically opposed camps whose conflicting interests would dictate the course of history for the next three decades. Stalin's death three years earlier had unleashed a desire for change across Eastern Europe. However, it was the 'revolutionary' content of the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in February that triggered the unforeseen train of events that culminated in the Hungarian Revolution in October and November, coinciding dramatically with the Suez Crisis. And it was this last episode that was to mark a decisive shift in the balance of powers from Europe to the superpowers.

The main themes of the Congress included 'different roads to socialism', the possibility of 'peaceful coexistence of the socialist and capitalist systems' and the 'cult of personality' that had grown around Stalin, which the former leader had used to destroy the internal democracy of the party. If all that were not enough, there were rumours soon to be confirmed of a 'secret' speech Khrushchev had made on the last night of the Congress, destroying Stalin's legacy once and for all. The new Soviet leader had clearly not envisaged the repercussions all this would have in the satellite states. In June a democratic uprising ensued in Poland that was put-down swiftly by Soviet troops causing fifty three fatalities. This was followed by the Hungarian Revolution in October and November that gave rise to the Soviet interventions resulting in 2500 dead, 13,000 wounded and 200,000 fleeing to the West as refugees.

Images of Red Army tanks shooting into what appeared to be crowds of rank and file communists in the streets of Budapest were beamed around the globe, causing consternation across the non-communist world and turmoil within the international communist movement. However, the vast majority of Western communists closed ranks instinctively at that moment to support the interventions in line with national party stances and in the face of fierce criticism from the political mainstream. As they saw things, the Soviet Union was taking the necessary measures to prevent a counter-revolution in its own backyard.

Quite apart from the palpable rush of support for the Soviet actions on the part of ordinary communists in the West that the dramatic nature of the situation had elicited, it would be logical to suppose that their responses would have been largely consistent in any event given the democratic centralist model of internal organisation in operation in all national communist parties at the time, that linked all levels of these entities to the highly centralised, highly disciplined international communist movement. Yet evidence from this research reveals that that was not always the case in practice, at least not as regards responses to the Soviet interventions in one of the Italian party's newest affiliations, the PCI Federation of Gorizia, which had become part of the national party structure in 1947. There, in a case that stands alone in the national context, reactions were divided between those of the rank and file and others of a similar mind who defended them (although not entirely for the same reasons as those articulated in the national party stance, as will be explained below), and those of the regional party leadership and its supporters who, deliberately disregarding the official party line at that moment, opposed them formally, publicly and unequivocally. This article explores the reasons for this anomaly in its regional setting, and then situates the phenomenon in its national and international explanatory frameworks.

Intrinsic to such questions are those concerning the political and ideological orientation of the Italian Communist Party (PCI)¹ as a national organisation at the time, insofar as this affected responses to events in Gorizia. The idea that the PCI was the most autonomous party within the international communist movement, with an essentially 'national' orientation, a flexible infra-structure designed to create and maintain a

mass membership, and a relatively democratic approach to everyday politics, has largely prevailed in the historiography. This is especially the case when it is compared to the other most important communist party in the West, the French Communist Party (PCF), considered to have been a Leninist-Bolshevik organisation closely attuned to Soviet interests, with a marked centrist tendency designed to retain ideological, political and organisational integrity which automatically demanded selective recruitment practices and a strict observance of party discipline. The historical comparative research model as applied to the study of these two parties has, and continues to, facilitate deeper understandings of the social, cultural and political phenomena at play in the self-awareness and practices of these *frères ennemis* in the post-war era by revealing similarities, differences and specificities where they exist, allowing these to be interpreted in their rightful context.

Nevertheless, the 'dichotomy theory' (PCF vs PCI) has undergone challenges in recent years that question the notion that the PCI was a national-societal organisation and suggest instead that it was in fact internationalist, oriented towards Eastern Europe rather than grounded in its western European context. This alternative reading of the PCI has much to do with new evaluations of the motives and policies of the then Italian party leader Palmiro Togliatti who, to a much greater extent than his French counterpart Maurice Thorez, decreed party policy. Key contributors to this debate are Elena Aga-Rossi and Victor Zaslavsky who have examined the relationship between the PCI and the Soviet Union during the war years and in the critical early post-war period. On the strength of their empirical research exploiting newly available sources from Soviet archives, they direct new focus to the importance of PCI General Secretary Togliatti's close and in many ways determinant relationship with Moscow, if not his a priori pro-Soviet tendencies.²

There have also been challenges to the classical historiography that dispute its conceptual rigor. It has been suggested that historical dichotomy debate is misconstrued and overstated, and that more nuanced analyses of the issues are required. Stéphane Courtois and Marc Lazar³ are amongst those to have explored the notion that the national-societal and/or internationalist tendencies visible in these two parties were effectively dimensions or internal tensions present in *all* communist

parties functioning in western democracies at this time, and they recommend in place of what they see as an ultimately reductive paradigm, a bi-dimensional version. They claim that these dimensions and demands, which they describe as national-societal and 'teleological', coexisted to differing extents in the non-ruling communist parties, vying for primacy at strategy and policy level at any one time according to circumstances and conditions, reflecting the contradiction that lay at the core of these parties as national-democratic *and* revolutionary organisations. This contradiction was in fact particularly evident in the PCI's modus operandi of 'double-dealing' or *doppiezza*; a fundamentally contradictory but arguably necessary approach to national and international politics that was often associated with PCI party leader Togliatti, and therefore with the party itself in the post-war decades.

This study takes the existing theories forward in key ways. By considering the responses of ordinary communists in locations far removed from national centres of power to a pivotal moment in their movement's history, it tests the extents to which both the national societal vs. internationalist and bi-dimensional interpretations of the PCI held at regional and local levels. It concludes that in the context of this research, whilst both the PCI Federation of Gorizia and the PCI as a national organisation displayed bi-dimensional traits, a national-societal dimension ultimately prevailed in both instances, but for very different reasons.

The research was predicated on new oral testimony from a core sample of over twenty-five former party members who in 1956 fulfilled roles and functions at all levels of the regional party structure, plus an extended sample of those with close family ties with such people. Not all of the informants knew each other, the regional membership running at just over 5000 at the time, therefore the potential problems linked to networks of informants and the coordinated responses this can produce, however unwittingly on their part, was minimised. None of the informants had previously been interviewed in relation to the subject matter in question (although a small number had been interviewed with regard to their experiences of second world war resistance), and therefore the potential problem of rehearsed responses was similarly minimised.

Also central to the original research project is an extensive and varied corpus of documentary evidence that features local and regional sources,

many *inedita*, in addition to national and international examples. This location-specific documentary evidence features extracts from the communist and mainstream local and regional press; police intelligence reports; official letters and internal missives pertaining to the PCI central committee in Rome and the PCI Federation committee in Gorizia; local and regional trade union General Confederation of Labour (CGIL) documentation including posters, pamphlets and minutes of meetings; hand-written conference notes, personal correspondence, photographs and artefacts provided by informants. These localised sources were exploited not only for triangulation purposes but also as *aides mémoire*. The cross-fertilisation of oral and written evidence was also extremely productive; at times directing lines of questioning in interviews, at others directing or redirecting the focus of archival searches.⁴

The case study for the original project represents the regional party membership of the PCI Federation of Gorizia, in the province of Gorizia, in the then Venezia-Giulia region of Italy on its north-eastern border with Yugoslavia in 1956. In terms of its geographical characteristics the federation was amongst those in the PCI national party structure situated at the furthest points from the Rome-based party establishment and therefore from its possible influence on routine politics at regional and local levels. The provincial capital and border town (technically a city) of Gorizia has a unique and eventful history. Governance by different foreign powers at different times, consequent reconfigurations of its territorial boundaries along with economic and political migrations, meant that it evolved over centuries as multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and plurilingual hub. It had also evolved, by 1956, as a predominantly middle-class, public sector economy, due largely to its function as the administrative and political capital of the Princely Country of Gorizia and Gradisca (1754-1919) under Hapsburg rule and then as provincial administrative capital for the fascist regime (1921-1943).

In the post-war period the population of the province of Gorizia (and of the region as a whole) was majority Italian and minority Slav-speaking, with the largest concentration of Slav speaking communities in and around the town of Gorizia due to its border location. At that time it was situated on a major fault-line of the Cold War; one of the key intersections between Italy, firmly located within the Western sphere of influence, and Tito's New

People's Republic of Yugoslavia, with the town of Gorizia itself partitioned Berlin-style between eastern and western Europe.⁵ Despite the historical shifting of borders that had interrupted communications at different moments, economic, social, cultural and in many cases familial links between Italians and Slavs and their Slav neighbours to the 'east' (wherever that demarcation fell at a given time) remained intact. Whilst a true Italo-Sloveno understanding or *fratellanza* was more germane to and visible on the political left, which in Gorizia was the minority political perspective due to its socio-economic demographic, relations with the Istrian peninsula informed *all* political perspectives in the region, and not least during the turbulent post-war decades when everything had to do in one way or another with Yugoslavia. Relations with Yugoslavia were also key to responses within the PCI Federation of Gorizia to the Soviet interventions of 1956, in that particular understandings of the Yugoslavian position i.e. independence vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, had a direct bearing on timely questions of de-stalinisation. However throughout the post-war era, the Yugoslavian connection made the PCI Federation of Gorizia, in its own way, qualitatively different to any other.

The seat of the federation was automatically located in the provincial capital of Gorizia, nevertheless its strongest showing of support in both numbers and in militancy came from Monfalcone, twenty-five kilometres to the south west, which together with its surrounding areas comprised the largest administrative division in the province. It was one of the region's largest industrial centres, home to the major Italian shipyards and shipbuilding conglomerates, the *Adriatic Shipbuilding Corporation* (CRDA) and its feeder industries. The Monfalcone workforce was highly politicised, as would be expected. However, the politicisation and militancy associated with the Monfalcone workforce was due not only to the concentration of male workers in a heavy industrial environment and the political awareness and radicalisation this results in, but also to its legacy as a nexus for communist-led resistance. This was firstly the clandestine resistance to the Fascist regime following the outlawing of the Communist Party of Italy (PCd'I) in 1926, and then the region's WW2 resistance activity.⁶ Naturally, the Monfalcone shipyards along with its red-belt of commuter towns continued to be a communist bastion after the war.

This article looks at a number of critical historical and geopolitical factors that informed communist identity and party culture, and thus political understandings of events in this region of Italy. It then considers the 'revolutionary' nature of the federation committee's condemnation of the Soviet interventions and the support it received by those of a similar persuasion based on what might be termed a progressive understanding of international communism at that conjuncture. It goes on to examine the way in which the rank and file and others in the region who were of a Stalinist persuasion reacted to their regional cadres' progressive stance. Next, it explores the ways in which this divergence of opinion was accommodated, mediated and finally resolved within the federation, and at how the senior cadres' act of indiscipline was eventually handled by the national party leadership. In conclusion, it evaluates what light all of this sheds on the state of Italian communism at that point, given the fundamentally contradictory understandings that clearly existed across the national party structure of communist militancy *per se*.

Historical Experience and Geopolitics

'The frontier here was one not only one between two states, but two worlds ...'⁷

As previously mentioned, the region had long been contested territory, and one of the results of that history was that its population had evolved as a resourceful, adaptable but resolute people. In the twentieth century alone it had known five different flags.⁸ The region's physical location also meant that the consequences of certain macro events and developments were felt there immediately and directly. In the post-war period the most significant of these had been firstly the dispute between the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia and the Italian government concerning its sovereignty from 1945 to 1947. This predicament had at once prompted the region's Italian and Slovenian communists to form the Communist Party of the Giulian Region (PCRG)⁹ which functioned under the auspices of the Yugoslavian Communist Party (PCJ), in order to lead a determined but ill-fated campaign to transform the region into the seventh Republic of Yugoslavia. When that campaign failed in 1947

it was a moral, as well as a political defeat, for the communists. Added to which, they had been obliged to transform their sectarian party of cadres with a firm orientation towards international socialism, into a federation of the PCI, a 'national' party of mass participation, with all the political, ideological and organisational shifts that entailed. Nonetheless, they undertook this task with characteristic pragmatism, as former partisan, life-long party activist, mid-level cadre and trade union official Renato Papais recalls: 'We kept the pole but changed the flag ...'.¹⁰ And it is at that point and in that political act that the communists in Venezia-Giulia felt able for the first time to subscribe to the Italian national identity, or rather, to a particular understanding of it.

The second development to have impacted directly and negatively on this community post-1945 were the crucial government-backed demographic shifts between 1946-8 that transformed the electoral landscape thereabouts in favour of establishment politics. During that period there had been large influxes of 'white' Istrians coming into the region from Tito's new republic.¹¹ Former party activist and union representative Elda Soranzio explains the situation:

The exiles damaged us a lot round here – when they came they were given a job and a house...and these people were extremists – they threw a bomb in front of my house because we were communists ...?¹²

At the same time there was a counter flow of approximately 3000 communists, mostly from the shipyards in Monfalcone and therefore some of the most militant activists in the region, who chose to go to Yugoslavia directly instead of remaining to participate in what they considered to be a doomed campaign to shift the borders westward.¹³ Life-long communist activist and former shipyard worker, Dino Zanuttin, recalls: 'We went to give a hand to the comrades building socialism over there.'¹⁴ These factors, transnational forces and dynamics, touched ordinary lives in concrete ways, shaping the contemporary realities of those in our community and consequently their perspectives.

Nonetheless, the development that had the most substantial and long-term impact on this communist community in the post-war

period was the Tito-Stalin Split that occurred in June 1948, often referred to by informants as *la rottura* (the break) or *il Cominform* (the Cominform Resolution). It is testament to the micro political climate of Venezia-Giulia that it is this episode that takes precedence in informants' recollections of that time rather than, for example, the attempted assassination of Togliatti on 14 July 1948 (in fact there is less evidence of an adherence to 'a Togliatti cult' in this community, adding to a general sense of its notional independence from the national party hierarchy). The immediate outcome of the split was a corresponding if reluctant split in the Federation of Gorizia between those who supported Tito, *i titini*, who were mostly but not exclusively Slovenian, and those who supported the Stalin's Cominform Resolution, *i cominformisti*, who were mostly but not exclusively Italian. This resulted in approximately 600 of the former category (80% of that collective membership) instantly leaving the sections and cells in and around the town of Gorizia, along with smaller numbers taking similar action across the province. Italo Chiarion, regional secretary of the Italian Communist Youth Federation (FGCI) in 1956, describes the extraordinary repercussions of the split on his community: 'The break in relations determined by the Cominform Resolution – it was like an ideological knife – it destroyed us',¹⁵

The other major consequence of the Tito-Stalin Split for communists in these parts was the imprisonment and in some cases torture in Yugoslavia and/or expulsion from Yugoslavia of the Italian migrant workers who had gone there post 1946, who in the vast majority supported the Cominform Resolution of June 1948 and who were subsequently seen by the Tito regime as a fifth column. This automatically triggered a return *en masse* of these *cominformisti* to Monfalcone and its surrounding areas, only adding to the already high unemployment figures that existed within this community due to anti-communist discrimination on the part of the national and regional political-industrial establishment. Many of these returning workers were obliged to leave Venezia-Giulia once again, mostly for abroad, either temporarily or permanently, whilst others stayed in the region and endeavoured to find work. Life-long communist Danilo Verginella had gone to Yugoslavia just before the Paris Treaty in 1947 and was expelled along with thou-

sands of others a year later describes the conditions: 'There was no work – and no-one would give us any work ... it was hard'.¹⁶

The political and ideological effects of the Tito-Stalin Split on this community should not be underestimated; they were unique, diverse, far-reaching, and not surprisingly they informed, in different ways, reactions to the Soviet crackdown in Budapest that occurred just eight years later. Findings indicate that the split and its aftermath engendered amongst the party faithful thereabouts, attitudes that fall essentially into the two categories (although overlaps existed in this regard due to personal historical experiences, choices, trajectories, family and community ties). The first category was the majority position of an automatic mistrust of and often a deep enmity towards Yugoslavia, an increased aversion to political indiscipline per se, a greater tendency towards ideological integrity and an even stronger commitment to 'true' internationalist politics as opposed to what was seen by this constituency as Tito's nationalism. The second category was the minority view that constituted a recognition that the Soviet system was fallible, and which can (arguably) be said to have brought about in this constituency an enhanced degree of critical awareness and a corresponding political detachment.

Shipyard worker and mid-level cadre at the time, Alberto Clemente, gives voice to the first perspective: 'For Budapest – we'd gone through the Split no? – so we were all on the side of the Soviet Union ... after 1948 there were numerous people who had suffered torture over there – but they kept their ideology – no-one remained in Yugoslavia ...';¹⁷ whilst Zanuttin summarises the second (the tense shift in this extract is perhaps indicative of the continued presence of this episode in the informant's memory): 'The Split is the first step for us – that made us a bit different to others – you have to take into account that we had already had a precedence of a split in the Socialist Bloc ... a stand-off between powers that ended in a split – so we could confront certain things with a bit more objectivity ...'.¹⁸

In spite of these conflicting attitudes, by 1956 (before the Soviet interventions in Budapest forced comrades to nail their colours to the mast), the distinctions between them were showing signs of diminishing in certain quarters due to Khrushchev's 1955 rehabilitation of Tito. The Soviet leader's new direction in foreign policy was starting to have visible effects regionally and locally in the form of a steady stream of those

comrades who had left the party in 1948 as a result of the Split, returning to the fold. It also meant that negotiations could get underway to free those migrant workers who had gone to Yugoslavia from Monfalcone and who were still imprisoned there. Whilst those at the base of the party and others of kindred sentiment were hardly inclined to forsake the image of Stalin and all it stood for at that point, in the name of progress, especially given their support for the Cominform Resolution eight years earlier, that had cost individuals and their party dearly, there were those in this constituency who were not blind to the fact that the party was steadily regaining its membership in the province and therefore its political influence in the region as a result of the improved relations between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. Politics in this region was complex, multi-faceted, as Clemente remarks: 'It's a complicated tune around here you see.'¹⁹

The federation committee and its supporters had been following closely Khrushchev's 'thaw', which, since the death of Stalin in 1953, had included the reversal of a catalogue of repressive measures, censorship and exclusions. These comrades had been finely attuned to this turn in Soviet policy because it mirrored their own political perspective. This is perhaps indicative of these individuals' wider perspective as a political elite in an inherently problematic border region; their instinctive interest in, understandings of and responsiveness to change and renewal at macro levels and its likely effects 'on the ground'. This mindset also explains the federation committee's readiness in 1956 to take the swift action it did in response to the Soviet interventions in Budapest that threatened to derail the revisionist project (see below), as opposed to the rank and file who had been caught to all intents and purposes 'on the back foot'. As far as the regional political elite was concerned, this crisis would not be a missed opportunity. Silvino Poletto (future *Cavaliere della Repubblica*)²⁰ was secretary of the Federation of Gorizia in 1956. He was widely respected within the federation (and indeed in the region by all but anti-communists) due to his outstanding resistance record, but also because of his proletarian credentials; son of a local factory worker, a former factory worker himself who had become a journalist after the war due to his particular experience the field before accepting an invitation to join the regional party hierarchy. Here he provides the perspective of those who welcomed Khrushchev's new politics:

The condemnation of Tito had been a grave error ... Stalin dies in 1953 two years later Khrushchev and Bulganin go to Belgrade and 'Dear Comrade Tito' – it was Beria that led us down the wrong road – when this thaw happened it was exasperating because it highlighted the bad politics that had brought it about, but good because we were back on track ... it was Stalinism that had done all that²¹

In 1956, as far as the region's progressive contingent was concerned, the forward-looking policy changes discussed at the Twentieth Congress linked directly back to the Tito-Stalin Split and at the same time, forwards to new possibilities.

Reactions to the Soviet interventions 23 October- 10 November 1956

The PCI leadership

PCI General Secretary Togliatti handled the interventions with characteristic political dexterity as he responded on a daily basis not only to Soviet reports on the changing circumstances but to growing tensions within the PCI leadership, confusion amongst its national membership, fierce criticism from the political mainstream and the groundswell of public opinion condemning the Soviet actions. He was also responding, as recent research shows, to constant consultation with Moscow regarding the wider political implications of developments. The Italian party line, throughout the unfolding scenario, was that the Soviet involvement in the Hungary situation was a painful necessity that had come about at the request of the Hungarian authorities in order to defend the People's Republic against a Horthyist coup. This can be seen in the following headline from the national party organ *l'Unità*, in response to first accounts:

GRAVE ATTEMPTS TO DISTORT THE DEMOCRATISATION PROCESS: FIGHTING ON THE STREETS OF BUDAPEST PROVOKED BY BANDS OF ARMED COUNTER REVOLUTIONARIES ...²²

This stance was modified over the following days, with at least some of the blame being attributed to the Gerő-Hegedüs regime for its failure to modernise and bad handling of the resulting crisis, as can be seen in the editorial extract below published on 30 October in which Togliatti talks of:

...the incomprehensible delay on the part of the leaders of the Hungarian party and the government in understanding the need to make the necessary changes and to take the measures the situation demanded, to correct the substantial errors that were blocking the way to socialism...²³

Nevertheless, the official version of events would remain firm on the essentials i.e. that current events in Hungary were a reactionary coup that had been CIA agitated and long in the making, and that the Soviets had had no choice but to intervene as decreed by the Warsaw Pact. This is demonstrated in the quote below from an article by 'the party leadership' published the day before the second, more decisive Soviet action on 4 November:

There is only one choice for those who are on the side of socialism, however hard that choice may be, and that is to defend the popular democratic socialist regime, by force if necessary.²⁴

Reactions in Gorizia – *il manifesto*

Meanwhile in the Federation of Gorizia, the national party line in support of the interventions does not appear to have been determinant in either of the reactions from its regional membership. It was contested by those of the progressive minority on the basis of their understandings of international communism at that point, whilst it appeared hardly to factor in the responses of the orthodox majority who supported them for reasons very much of their *own* (see below). The 'split' within the federation that autumn resulting from those contrasting responses was in fact ironic, in that those responses had been informed by the very same pre-war and second world war conditions and experiences, and by events

and developments in this community's labyrinthine post-war history (a fact that illustrates the polyvalence of historical experience, even for communists). At the heart of these differing interpretations of a shared history, and of communist militancy lay, on the one hand, a tendency towards de-stalinisation and on the other, towards a particular stalinist perspective that endured in the region.

The federation committee and its supporters vehemently opposed the interventions as a contravention of the forward-looking agenda set-out by Khrushchev at the twentieth Congress earlier that year. For these comrades, this was the way out of a cold war impasse, for the international communist movement, their national party, and most definitely for their federation, as Chiarion explains:

It (the interventions) knocked us for six and that's why we rebelled – we said “what's going on? you give us the twentieth Congress – you speak of ‘democracy’ bla-bla-bla – and then you go and do that! – it was a betrayal of the Congress and for us around here it was like a slap in the face!” that's the reason for the manifesto, you understand why we did it? we were more worried about Budapest than we were by Suez – you can see that by the manifesto – but the national party takes (took) the opposite position!

Had you been influenced by Di Vittorio's stance, or that of the communist intellectuals?

No, neither – what did it for us was our closeness to Yugoslavia, our understanding of their ‘autonomy’ – and most of all our complete adherence to the themes of the Twentieth Congress ...²⁵

The progressives had instantly seen the links between the Twentieth Congress and post-Congress developments that year, and the most significant of these, the one that could not be ignored, was the Hungarian Revolution and the Soviet interventions it elicited. A clear indication of the mood within the regional party leadership at this time is provided in the minutes of a meeting held on the night of the 29 October that had been scheduled to discuss the themes for the 8th National Party Congress

scheduled for 8-14 December. As it transpired, the entire five hour session was taken-up by the events in Hungary and their implications. Of the thirty two committee members, sixteen attended that night, and although the meeting was quorate, the orthodox perspective was under-represented as only one report supported the interventions (although that fact did not ultimately change the course of events, see below). As can be seen from these brief extracts of those reports, the tone that night was bullish:

Franco Raffaele:

Regarding the situation in Hungary all political leaders have given their opinion, but Togliatti has said nothing. A captain has to steer a ship, especially in a storm All men who make mistakes should be replaced ...,

Nereo Battello;

It is my view that something must be changed in the party ... in a new situation new methods should be applied so as not to dislocate from the masses... For example the substitution of Togliatti could be a sacrifice that would save the party

At the end of proceedings it was decided that in view of the strength of feeling that existed within the committee a communiqué summarising the substance of the debate would be drafted without delay by Nereo Battello, the young cadre in charge of press and propaganda (future barrister and senator). The next day Poletto and a handful of senior cadres decided that the document would, in fact, be sent out as a manifesto, signed by Poletto himself, to be displayed in all of the federation's twenty-five sections as well as in the streets of Gorizia and in towns across the province. Notwithstanding on receiving it, a number of the secretaries in and around Monfalcone in particular where the stalinist perspective prevailed, rejected it, and an extraordinary federation committee meeting was called post-haste to address the matter. Chiarion explains the particular situation and the protocol issue involved:

The manifesto hadn't actually been approved by federation committee – they'd decided within the secretariat to send it out the next day – normally it (a vote) wouldn't have been necessary – but in this case because certain sections had rejected it the decision was taken to reconvene the committee, where it was discussed, put to the vote, and approved in majority ...²⁶

Poletto describes the contention between these two opposing perspectives as having been one linked to and informed by universal precepts but also grounded in particular realities:

What was your role at the time?

I was secretary of the Federation of Gorizia – but the most important centre in terms of communist support was Monfalcone – it had 14.000 workers during the war and it was the fulcrum of the Italian Resistance ...

... we had a rapport that was difficult – sometimes it was quite bitter – but we had a point of reference and that was the War of Liberation, I mean, if I hadn't been a partisan during the war I wouldn't have been able to hold my own with the old guard revolutionaries of the PCI...

... those comrades said we couldn't go against the Soviet Union – in their opinion we should have defended a stalinist position – all those who had been condemned by special tribunals under fascism and had consequently spent time in prison tend to sustain the revolutionary principles of the Soviet Union...But we debated it (the manifesto) in the federation committee – some of them didn't accept the manifesto – but we approved it in majority.²⁷

And it is this consensual, responsive and as always pragmatic approach to politics that had kept this communist community solvent and its party effective in one way or another since the Liberation. The democratic centralist process had been carried-out, and the stalinist perspective had

been voiced, even if the final outcome may have surprised and angered a number of its representatives present for the vote. The split in political opinion that autumn within the federation was experienced and resolved as a *sui generis* community issue, not one imposed by exterior forces as the Tito-Stalin Split had been eight years earlier. In the event, not all of the sections did comply with the directive to display the manifesto, and tolerance was shown by the regional party leadership in this regard; a fact that in itself reveals much about the dynamic understandings of democratic centralism in this organisation.

The thesis of the manifesto was clear:

The federation committee of the PCI of Gorizia expresses its heartfelt sorrow at the bloody events in Hungary, which have been aggravated by the irresponsible request for the intervention of Soviet troops on the part of certain members of the Hungarian government ...,

it stated that the protestors had shown that:

... whilst they do not want a return to a Hitlerian-Horthyist regime, there is a real aspiration on the part of workers and the people, with whom we give all our support, to break the suffocating and anti-democratic chains ...’

thereby dismissing the Hungarian and therefore the Soviet version of events as simplistic and misleading (and thus disingenuous),

... the new international situation that has finally allowed all peoples to come out of the troubled period of cold war’, a situation that ‘wholly vindicates the historic importance of the twentieth Congress of the CPSU and its huge contribution to the demolition once and for all of forms and methods that are today outmoded, to build a new society in which a working class hegemony invites the full participation of all its citizens, with respect for human dignity and in a climate of open debate ...

It declared that the federation's position was in no way antithetical to those objectives, which were ostensibly, also those of Togliatti's new party: a vanguard party that would facilitate the forming of a new historic bloc of the Italian working classes; which by assuming the national identity and making it its own, would constitute a communist-led socialist hegemony on a national scale. This was a process that entailed proselytising on a community level, in the work place and via all of the party's flanking organisations; forming and maintaining working alliances with other political parties in the local, regional and national levels, especially but not exclusively with the socialists; leading the transition to socialism via constitutional means, using and not smashing the institutions and forces of their industrially advanced state, in their own interests, and from within. Therefore, apart from pursuing their own more immediate political interests, it could be argued that the Gorizian officials were taking a vanguard role within Italian communism at that moment in opposing the Soviet interventions and therefore the national party line which, they reasoned, could only undermine the communist cause and frustrate its objectives, on regional, national and international levels. The manifesto continues:

Communists in this province reaffirm their commitment to the noble cause of socialism, for which they will continue to fight, in the ranks of the glorious PCI, alongside all progressive forces in the country ...²⁸

It had not been the only or indeed the first written protestation by communists in Italy against the interventions.²⁹ Concerns regarding Soviet authority had been growing in certain quarters as a result of revelations and events that year and this latest development was the final provocation. It generated instantly a number of open letters, manifestos, statements and motions denouncing the interventions, addressed to the PCI central committee, some published in the communist press, some leaked to the mainstream media; on the part of communist student bodies, academics, individuals and small groups of communist dissidents up and down the country. The most prominent and potentially the most immediately damaging of these given the socio-economic composition of

the party-base, was that issued by the communist-led trade union (CGIL) Executive Committee in *l'Unità* on 28 October (supported by a personal statement by its secretary and member of the party leadership Giuseppe Di Vittorio that was refused publication).³⁰ This was followed by the 'Letter of the 101 intellectuals concerning Hungary' sent to the party leadership on 29 October, rejected by *l'Unità* but broadcast on radio that night. These protestations were challenges directed at the national party leadership, even if some of them addressed at the same time wider audiences.

What distinguishes the Federation of Gorizia's response in all this is firstly, that its manifesto was the only one in the county, possibly in the West, to be published by a veritable communist organisation.³¹ Secondly, it was distinct in the fact that it addressed directly its own membership and other progressive elements in the region. It was not sent initially to the central committee for its attention or for a response, it was a 'federation-down' communication, in fact 'down and across' – its membership body, the legions of communist sympathisers in the region and the wider community. It therefore constituted an autonomous act, its own intervention in the political and historical process.

Local and regional opposition to the manifesto

It is obvious from events how well-prepared the minority progressives had been to step-in and defend the 'soft revolutionary' principles of their party in that frenetic period between 24 October and 29-30 October by producing and disseminating the manifesto, whilst the majority Stalinists had reacted rather than acted in demonstrating a spontaneous consensus of support for the Soviet Union in its hour of need. Reasons for this apparent lack of preparedness on the part of those who supported the interventions, and especially those at the base of the party whose opposition had been largely informal, included the pressing problems of a more concrete nature that monopolised their attention every day, and faith in the Soviet system. Many in this communist community were finding it hard just to make a living, and for those who did have jobs, conditions were arduous. They had not yet obtained a forty hour week and all party and party related activities,

which were numerous and undertaken conscientiously, took place in their 'spare' time. Furthermore, the iconic and commanding image of the Soviet Union (and by extension the image of Stalin/Stalinist policies) for these people was such that unlike their cadres, they did not feel the same urgent need to spend time debating events in far-off Budapest. This sense of security together with not having fully grasped at that point the significance or implications of de-stalinisation had prevented them from making the links between Twentieth Congress earlier that year and subsequent developments (and when they did they were not necessarily the same as those made by their cadres). Whereas from very early on the progressives had been one step ahead of events, and of their national party.

The Stalinists

Regardless of the federation committee's vote to sanction the manifesto, and regardless of whether or not the secretaries of particular sections effectively complied with that directive, the prevailing sentiment within the membership was not to criticise the interventions. This majority was composed of blue collar workers but it included intermediary-level cadres and a non-proletarian element, and it was of a stalinist persuasion. Papais, a self-proclaimed stalinist (and there is a nostalgia in this regard that comes through in his and in many of these informants' testimonies half a century later) talks of the outright rejection within his community of the notion that the Soviet Union could be the aggressors in Hungary, and like so many of the informants he makes the Freudian slip of referring to Stalin the man, as though he were still alive, as opposed to stalinist policies: 'It was inconceivable – no-one could believe it – that the Soviet Union would go in and occupy a satellite state ... inconceivable – and anyway – we were stalinist – we were with Stalin – the overwhelming majority here was with Stalin ...'³²

The stalinist perspective or mind-set was certainly not peculiar to post-war Italy. The stalinist myth was alive and well in 1956 and it spoke directly to large numbers of communists in Western Europe despite revelations and despite events (and as is the way with myths, the fact that its subject was deceased lent an eternal quality to its communicative

value). Nevertheless, the particular hue of stalinism in the Federation of Gorizia was tinged with the regional history and regional issues of this sensitive border region, rooted in an empirical anti-fascism that must be described as unique in the national context: 'Everyone here knew someone who had suffered under fascism – internal exile, prison, death camps...'.³³ In Venezia-Giulia during the fascist period suspected communists were considered dangerous, 'foreign' elements (even more here than elsewhere), as were the Slav communities. Consequently these two groups felt the brunt of Mussolini's italianisation programme that entailed linguistic, cultural repression and persecution, and economic discrimination. Perhaps particularly for these people, Stalin was not only emblematic of the anti-fascist struggle but in their view, he provided the only real prospect of liberation. It was natural that in the immediate post-war period, political leanings in these constituencies would be firmly oriented towards internationalist rather than national political solutions (although they embraced the PCI Federation of Gorizia in 1947, as all other communists in the region, for reasons of political pragmatism). The stalinist perspective thereabouts was also linked, as previously discussed, to a particular experience of the Tito-Stalin Split and a particular hostility towards and distrust of Yugoslavia and its 'nationalistic' tendencies. For many reasons it was as concrete (if complex) as it was conceptual. Although intrinsically and inevitably linked to macro issues, macro developments and universal tenets, engagement in communist politics per se in Venezia-Giulia was inherently and it is argued here predominantly experiential; understood in relation to and allowing for immediate exigencies and conditions, its successes measured in relation to results in immediate contexts in continual flux. Therefore it can be said that although the pro-Soviet stance adopted by the stalinists within the Federation of Gorizia that autumn was effectively in line with that of the national party, it appears to have had little to do with opinions in Rome (this is also evident in the overwhelming majority vote to re-elect Poletto as federation secretary later that year, see below). Party militant Alessandro Visintin recalls the rejection of the manifesto in his section in Ronchi, just outside Monfalcone:

Did you receive directives from the federation as regards how to deal with things?

‘Yes – always – but for Budapest there wasn’t time – it all exploded – their (rank and file) response was instinctive...’

Not all sections displayed the manifesto?

‘No – people around here are majority working class – they wouldn’t put it up – to be a communist was to be in favour of the Soviet Union full stop ...’

Not even after it had been sanctioned by the federation committee?

‘No...’

Resolution / Repercussions

It was inevitable that the federation committee’s ‘heresy’ would be challenged by the national party leadership in Rome. On learning of the manifesto via the routine administrative processes of internal communication, the central committee took measures to bring the Federation of Gorizia, or rather its senior cadres, back into line. Nonetheless, by any evaluation this was conducted in a measured and judicious manner, and certainly if compared to the instant and draconian punishments invariably meted out at all levels of its sister party the PCF for even the slightest deviation from the party line.³⁴

The perfect occasion for this come-uppance was to be the Federation’s IV Congress already scheduled for 23-25 November. Chosen to oversee proceedings was trouble-shooter Enrico Bonazzi, the former secretary of the Federation of Bologna (the definitive communist stronghold in national terms) recently promoted to the PCI secretariat, known for his hard-line pro-Soviet position – just the man for this assignment. His instructions were to extract a formal admission from those responsible of having made a ‘serious error’ in publishing the manifesto. He was also tasked with overseeing the substitution (nothing more) of Poletto as federation secretary.

In the event, and with the political pragmatism that defined this community, the senior cadres understood and accepted the auto-critique as a necessary concession to be made in a fast-moving Cold War scenario in the interests of national party unity. They made the conscious decision to bow to the PCI leadership, at least in the context of an internal party review. No time for 'identity crises' or 'positions of principle' in this organisation. The comrades did what they had to do at that moment to preserve national party unity, but equally to ensure that their federation remained a viable political entity. An important stand had been made in publishing the manifesto. In that act of political agency, the concerns of the progressive element within the federation had been addressed. At the same time, via the democratic centralist process (and paradoxically by allowing certain sections to disregard that majority decision), those of the larger orthodox element within the regional membership body had similarly been addressed.

These democratic conditions and the freedom of political expression they afforded may have something to do with the fact that no firm evidence to date has been found of members leaving the federation in protest to the Soviet interventions (as opposed to the case of the Var Federation where there was an anomalous 11% loss of membership around that time).³⁵ An important stand had also been made vis-à-vis the wider community, and last but not least the PCI itself, in highlighting the existence of a tangible revisionism within its national structure, or at least in this federation.

In Bonazzi's report to the PCI central committee he describes his visit as having been a success in terms of the federation's ideological and political re-alignment with the national party line. Nonetheless, with some inconsistency, he concedes reservations in this regard:

Apart from one or two firebrands (Trevisan, Chiarion and some others) everyone at the Congress recognised the serious error the Federation committee had committed in assuming, in the first instance, a misguided position, one that went contrary to that of the party, regarding Hungary.

Nonetheless, on that point, the auto-critique was weak ...In conclusion I am convinced that the Federation of Gorizia and its

leaders have emerged stronger and more united from their Congress, knowing that the working classes of Monfalcone are their touchstone and driving force ...³⁶

Successful in achieving his first objective, however weak the auto-critique proved to be, Bonazzi was unsuccessful in achieving the second, that of presiding over the replacement of Poletto as federation secretary. Much to the former's surprise, the membership body – Stalinists and progressives alike – came together at once and of their own volition in support of their most senior regional official who was re-elected for the next two years with near unanimity, as Clemente recalls: 'He was re-elected with maximum confidence in him as a person'.³⁷ And in accordance with PCI constitution, there was nothing Bonazzi could do.

In the longer term, the prime movers in the manifesto affair were transferred to alternative positions within the national party apparatus between 1958-59, as Battello remembers:

The re-organisation happened in 1958 – but it was handled well – we'd been well prepared for it – as would be expected from a responsible political party – not like 'You're out!'- that wasn't the style of the PCI ...'.³⁸

For federation secretary and signatory of the manifesto Poletto, things were a little different. He was called to work in Botteghe Oscure, party headquarters in Rome, alongside the young MP for Naples, member of the PCI central committee and declared supporter (at that time) of the Soviet interventions in Budapest, Giorgio Napolitano. Poletto was based there between 1958-63, carrying out a key advisory and executive role overseeing cadre training programmes, resolving disputes and advising on national party policy. The structured nature of this appointment and the disciplined environment of Botteghe Oscure had clearly been intended to serve as a formative/ rehabilitative experience for this regional cadre, whom the party leadership clearly considered politically adroit (and popular). Nonetheless, it is unclear how far this measure can be interpreted by observers as a punishment, other than in the fact that from 1958 onwards his career took a 'predetermined' path in certain

respects. After 1963 he would indeed go on to fulfill several prominent roles in the party structure before being knighted by Napolitano himself in 2011 for the part he had played in the Italian Resistance, and his lifelong commitment to Italian (PCI/ PD) politics. But he would not be reinstated as secretary of the Federation of Gorizia, nor would he go on to represent the region in political office as can be the case for those who hold those positions. Clemente recalls events:

... he never said anything about being sent to Rome – because he would have made a great M.P – it’s a bit of a contradiction that he was brought to heel in that way because otherwise he was always coherent with the party line ...³⁹

Poletto never expressed regret for having made the stand he did in 1956, nor for having complied with the call to Rome two years later, which as the informants frequently remarked during the course of this research, he could have declined in view of the support he continued to enjoy within the federation. Chiarion recalls that time: ‘Poletto could have refused to go to Rome – we told him – but he accepted it ...’.⁴⁰

Poletto talks of that time:

He (Napolitano) used to ask me about the situation in Venezia-Giulia, he was very interested at how much went on along the eastern frontier, the dynamics of which were difficult for the party hierarchy in Rome to grasp

In time I came to see my time in Rome as also having been a learning experience for the party hierarchy. I think I contributed to an understanding on the left that Venezia-Giulia was different to other parts of the nation. Here we were another Italy.

So was it a punishment or a promotion?

(He smiles, this is obviously a question he has thought long and hard about): ‘I don’t know. Let’s say half promotion and half punishment. I’d say there’s room for doubt’.⁴¹

Conclusion

And so what does all of this tell us about the coherence and cohesiveness of Italian communism at that conjuncture? With regard to the PCI Federation of Gorizia, whilst there was noticeably a bi-dimensional factor to its orientation and strategies in that regional issues as well as Soviet foreign policy were automatically accounted for in its application of PCI policies at the regional level, evidence suggests that the attention given to Soviet interests and agendas by the Gorizian comrades was more of an acute *awareness* that stemmed from lived experience rather than an ideological *pull* (as we have seen, even the Stalinists thereabouts were 'organic'). On the other hand, the very existence of such fundamentally opposing responses to the Soviet interventions within that organisation and the way they were acted upon in such a voluntarist manner that autumn (by all of the comrades, in one way or another) would seem to be indicative in itself of a predominantly national-societal tendency in that body politic that attached more importance to constructing socialism in immediate contexts on a day to day basis than to following a prescribed, external, foreign agenda. A bona fide internationalist tendency would after all have precluded these levels of autonomy.

Given the professed theoretical underpinnings of Togliatti's new party in the post-war period, events in Gorizia could be interpreted as a distinct articulation of a national political model that understood communist politics as in essence empirical rather than normative. Certainly as far as the regional party leadership was concerned, such issues as a more forward-looking, more self-determining European communism and new interpretations of communist militancy were already firmly on the agenda, even if at that point a firm consensus on either had not been reached across the membership body.⁴² The fact that the PCI eighth Party Congress in December that year focused on 'an Italian road to socialism', albeit couched in cautious rhetoric at that point, substantiates the predictive quality and vanguard nature of the action taken by the Federation of Gorizia.⁴³ By the time of the next such moment in communist history, the Prague Spring of 1968, there were many more 'Gorizians' in the national party.

As for the PCI itself, it is not within the remit or scope of this article

to reach conclusions about its orientation and strategies as such. Questions of its national-societal, internationalist and/or bi-dimensional tendencies are relevant to this study inasmuch as they had a bearing on events in Gorizia that autumn. In other words what *is* at stake here is the extent to which the national-societal vs internationalist, and bi-dimensional interpretations of the PCI as a national organisation held at the regional and local levels as exemplified in this particular instance. And on the basis of the findings, and via the logic of meaningful comparison, certain observations can be made in that regard.

There certainly appears to have been a bi-dimensional aspect to the PCI's orientation and strategies that was visible in both the attention given to Soviet foreign policy by the national party leadership, especially or most noticeably at difficult moments, and in the very careful way in which it translated this to the Italian context so as to maximise its 'national' credentials and minimise any semblance of exoticism. Nonetheless, there also seems to have been a prevailing internal dynamic in force across its national structure that was flexible, democratic, tolerant, in-keeping with a national-societal rather than internationalist tendency that permitted a certain freedom of political interpretation and expression at the regional level as witnessed in relation to a) those contrasting responses in Gorizia to the events in question and b) the responses to those responses at the regional level and c) the relatively light-touch handling of the affair on the part of the national party hierarchy. A truly internationalist tendency would after all have precluded all of these.

(Whether this national-societal dimension was a genuine commitment to 'the Italian road to socialism' subscribed to by all but the party's unreconstructed element; whether it was an objective from first principles or an end result due to *realpolitik*; whether it represented the party leader's true motives; and whether such orientation and strategies coincided with overall Soviet policy, which is very likely to be the case, are wider questions that still need addressing.)

Even so, the Federation of Gorizia was the only one in the country to make such a stand. It would also have been an awkward moment in a difficult year for the national party leadership to have made more of the affair. Furthermore, the unprecedented and audacious nature of events in

Gorizia may have given the party hierarchy pause for thought. Could it be that the Federation of Gorizia's response to the interventions was simply an anomaly in the national context due to regional issues? Was the party hierarchy's relatively lenient handling of the matter merely an exercise in discretion? Or was it in fact a carefully considered policy of containment?

As to whether the situation in Gorizia that autumn had less to do with a national-societal tendency within the national party and more to do with geopolitics, an important factor should be taken into account. The importance of regional identities and politics across the Italian peninsular is such that all regions are highly specific entities with strong cultural, linguistic and often political affiliations; each with its own distinct history, its own particular issues; and in a way that is not the case in more long-standing nation states. The border city of Trieste for example, 69 kilometres to the south-east of Gorizia but still within the same region, had an equally tortuous post-war history, and yet the PCI Federation of Trieste supported the Soviet interventions vehemently and unequivocally.⁴⁴ In order to ascertain whether the autonomy vis-à-vis the national party leadership shown by the Gorizian comrades in the autumn of 1956 was an inconsistency in the national context due purely to its physical location and historical experience, and therefore not in fact an indication of a national-societal tendency within the national party, it would need to be established whether comparable shows of independence were evident in other PCI federations in the post-war period in relation to other issues, that is to say, issues that had specific resonance *to them*.

As to whether the considered handling of this regional dissent by the party hierarchy can essentially be attributed to political pragmatism in the national context, certain factors are pertinent. The fall-out from the XXth Congress had been relentless, affecting the party's election results earlier that year, its all-important relationship with the socialists and its chances of forging an 'opening to the left'. The high profile communist protestations to the interventions had been a blow, and the condemnation of the Soviet actions by the political establishment and from across the Italian population could not be dismissed. It is also possible that the PCI leadership had deemed it imprudent at that a moment to 'take-on' the Federation Committee given a) the exceptional and unpredictable

nature of those regional politics, b) the apparent existence of an organised and influential, if minority, revisionist strain within the Federation of Gorizia and c) the simultaneous concatenation of international events in a Cold War context in which, it seemed, all things were possible.⁴⁵

On the other hand if it had wished to, at a later date the national party hierarchy could have made harsher redress. Instead none of the protagonists of the manifesto affair were expelled from the party, which would have been the instantaneous outcome of such indiscipline in the French party. All of them remained in the PCI, which became the Democratic Party of the Left (PDS), Democrats of the Left (DS) and finally Democratic Party (PD), and all went on to have important and life-long careers within the regional and / or national party structures, even if in the case of Poletto, things may not have panned-out as, perhaps, envisaged.

Therefore in the final analysis, given the independence shown by all of the Gorizian comrades, given the reasonable way in which things were handled by the national party, for whatever reasons, at the time or subsequently, it is argued here that there was a relative freedom of political expression within the national party at this time, and that this is laid bare by the fact that a similar situation in the only other comparable communist party, the PCF, would have been unthinkable.

Notes

1. The PCI transformed itself into the Democratic Party of the Left (PDS) in 1991, whilst a dissident faction formed the *Rifondazione Comunista* (PRC). Since then the PDS has existed in various forms of Democratic Party.
2. Aga Rossi & Zaslavsky, *Togliatti e Stalin – Il PCI e la politica estera staliniana negli archivi di Mosca*, Milano, Il Mulino, 1997, pp132-156.
3. S. Courtois & M. Lazar, (eds.), *Histoire du Parti Communiste Français*, Paris, PUF, 1995, pp17-18.
4. For a comprehensive and in-depth discussion of all aspects of the research design and methodological approaches used in this study, see Haig, 'Reactions to the Soviet intervention in the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 amongst rank and file communist party members in the commu-

- nist controlled ports of La Seyne (France) and Monfalcone (Italy)', <http://eprints.port.ac.uk/id/eprint/7626>, 2011, pp. 37-45.
5. The partitioning of (a section of) the town Gorizia between Yugoslavian Zone B and the Allied Military Government Zone B by the Morgan Line 1945-7, gave rise to the building of 'New Gorizia' on the Yugoslavian side of the border. It consequently became known as 'a town of two halves'.
 6. For more information on the clandestine resistance activity in the Monfalcone shipyards see Giuliano Fogar, *L'antifascismo Operaio Monfalconese tra le du guerre*, Milan, Vangelista, 1982.
 7. Chiarion, 19 October 2009.
 8. Since the sixteenth century the region had known Habsburg rule (briefly interrupted by Venetian 1508-9 and Napoleonic 1805-13), the Princely Country of Gorizia and Gradisca and then the Fascist regime 1921-43. In the twentieth century it had known Austro-Hungarian flag, the Italian, the Yugoslavian for forty days in May and June 1945, the provisional civil ensign of the Allied Military Government, before the return of the Italian tricolour in September 1947.
 9. The PCRG was a highly selective, highly structured political entity, using the same networks, organisational base and procedures it had as an underground party before the war and as the major Resistance force in the region during the second world war. This was in order to prevent outside infiltration, retain ideological integrity and therefore ensure political efficacy. It had to take these measures, it had enemies. In difficult times, and the immediate post-war period was a such a time for the Communist Party in the region, mass parties like the PCI were ideologically and operationally inappropriate. During the Yugoslavian campaign however, it had had a strong flanking organisation in the Union of Italian and Slovenian Anti-Fascist (UAIS) of *de facto* members and supporters.
 10. Papais, 20 October 2008.
 11. An estimated 250,000 to 350, 000 ethnic Italians came to Italy between 1943-54 (the main periods of immigration) (see Ministero degli Esteri Amedeo Colella Commission, 1958, and Raoul Pupo *Lesodo degli Italiani da Zara, da Fiume e dall'Istria: un quadrofattuale*, [in:] *Esodi. Trasferimenti forzati die popolazione nel Novecento Europeo*, Napoli, 2000, pp205-206, n. 40).
 12. Elda Soranzio, 12 June 2010.

13. For more on the 'counter-exodus' and its consequences in the region, see Marco Puppini, M. (2003). *Il Mosaico Giuliano: Società e politica nella Venezia-Giulia del secondo dopoguerra (1945-54)*, Gorizia: Centro Isontino di Ricerca e Documentazione Storica e Sociale 'Leopoldo Gasperini', pp.65-94.
14. Zanuttin, 9 December, 2009.
15. Chiarion, 14 December 2009.
16. Verginella, 10 December 2009.
17. Clemente, 26 November 2009.
18. Zanuttin, *ibid.*
19. Clemente, 26 November 2009.
20. Italian order of knighthood.
21. Poletto, 25 November 2009.
22. 'Scontrinelle vie di Budapest', *l'Unità*, p1, 24 October 1956.
23. 'Siufatti di Ungheria', *l'Unità*, p1, 30 October 1956, also published in *Rinascita*, no. 10, 1956.
24. Il giudizio della Direzione del Partito sui fatti di Ungheria e di Polonia', *l'Unità*, p3, 3 November, 1956.
25. Chiarion, 14 December 2009.
26. Chiarion, 14 December 2009.
27. Poletto, 10 December 2009.
28. PCI Federation of Gorizia, (October 29 1956), Verbale della Riunione Comitato Federale, tenuta a Gradisca. Fondazione Gramsci, Rome, (0444 1126).
29. See Giuliana D'Amelio, La lotta politica del 1956 fra gli universitari e gli intellettuali comunisti a Rome. *Passato e Presente*, 1960, n. 13, pp 1704-39, and Giovanni Gozzini and Renzo Martinelli, *Storia del Partito comunisti italiano*, 1998, Torino: Einaudi, pp 588-603.
30. *l'Unità*, pp1, 8, 28 October 1956.
31. The only other comparable action was that taken by the PCI Federation of Mantua, which sent a letter protesting the Soviet actions to the PCI central committee that was retracted almost immediately. PCI Federazione di Mantua. (1956, October), *Object: Note sulle riunioni con I compagni della Segreteria della Federazione di Mantua*. [Subject: Minutes of the meeting of comrades of the Secretariat of the Federation of Mantua]. Unpublished internal document. Fondazione Gramsci (0443 1564).

32. Papais, 14 June 2010.
33. Russi, 4 December 2009.
34. See Haig, *ibid*, pp265-7.
35. See Haig, *ibid*, pp304-6.
36. Bonazzi, E. (1956, 28 November). 'Note sul Congresso della Federazione di Gorizia.' (0444 1190-4) [Minutes of the PCI Federation of Gorizia Congress] Unpublished internal document, PCI.Fondazione Gramsci, Rome.
37. Clemente, 15 November 2009.
38. Battello, 1 December 2009.
39. *Ibid* Clemente.
40. Chiarion, 1 December 2009.
41. *Ibid*, Poletto interviewed by Roberto Covaz, p109.
42. *Ibid*, The existence of such differentiation in responses to the interventions is juxtaposed in the original research with the striking consistency of responses in the PCF Var Federation, see Haig, pp307-46.
43. For a more detailed discussion of the PCI 8th Congress see Joan Barth Urban, *Moscow and the Italian Communist Party: from Togliatti to Berlinguer*, London: I.B. Tauris,1986, p239.
44. For more on the politics of the region see Enrico Cernigoi, *Scelte politiche e identità nazionale. Ai confiniorientali d'Italia dalla Resistenza alla Guerra fredda*. Udine: Gaspari Editore, 2006.
45. The virtual absence of reference to the Gorizian affair official party documentation may give some weight to this hypothesis. During the course of the research, only one mention was found, the example of direct correspondence between Bonazzi and the central committee (see footnote p27 in this work).