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**Transnational Imaginations of Socialism
Political Town Twinning between Italy and the German Democratic Republic in the 1960s
and 1970s**

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Political Town Twinning between Italy and the German
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Table of Contents

Introduction	3
PART 1 – Groundwork and historical background	
1. Materials, methods and aims	14
1.1 State of the art	14
1.2 Case studies	21
1.3 A toolbox for interpretation: asymmetry	22
1.4 Sources criticism	24
<i>Archives</i>	26
<i>Oral interviews</i>	28
1.5 Methodological orientations	31
<i>Translocality</i>	31
<i>Microhistory</i>	34
1.6 Methodological warnings: <i>mise-en-scène</i>	37
1.7 Language	38
2. Cold War entanglements	39
2.1 The role of USA and USSR in the “German question”	40
2.2 An “elephant in the room”: West Germany, Italy and the GDR	47
2.2.1 The late postwar and the 1950s	50
2.2.2 Between détente and Ostpolitik: the 1960s and the 1970s	53
2.2.3 The establishment of diplomatic relations with the GDR: changes and continuities	58
PART 2 – Institutional strategies of bilateral exchange: analytical frames	
3. National strategies of contact	61
3.1 Twinnings	66
3.1.1 Organizational networks: international, national, local	66
3.1.2 “ <i>Abattere i muri e fare i ponti!</i> ”. Cities for <i>peace</i> : a politically transversal movement	76
3.2 Political contacts between agreement and dissent: the <i>Brüderparteien</i> PCI and SED	81
3.3 Culture and cultural policies	90
3.3.1 Culture’s nest. The Thomas Mann Center	90
3.3.2 Italian heterodox leftist intellectuals and the early GDR	96
3.3.3 Academic exchange across the Iron Curtain	102
3.4 Between parties and workers’ policies: the Italian and East German labor unions	107
4. Red areas and communist towns: developments, similarities, asymmetries	116
4.1 GDR: towns as cells of the central State	119
4.2 Italy: red towns as political organs	127
4.2.1 Italy: red areas, red subcultures	133
<i>Governing development: Emilia-Romagna and Tuscany</i>	138
<i>Communist government in a politically inhomogeneous territory: Piedmont and Turin</i>	152
PART 3 – Twinnings, knowledge exchange, transnational encounters	

5. Sister cities across the Iron Curtain	159
5.1 Transnational actors	160
<i>Administrators</i>	160
<i>Activists and militants</i>	180
<i>Connecting personalities</i>	188
5.2 Translocal fields of convergence	194
5.2.1 Economy and trade	197
<i>The port</i>	198
<i>The fair, the enterprises</i>	203
5.2.2 Local welfare	214
<i>Health</i>	214
<i>Education</i>	226
<i>Town Planning</i>	237
5.2.2.1 Interpreting communist administrative exchange	249
6. Looking at the other	260
6.1 Shadows of the war, antifascism, Resistance	260
6.2 Microsociability and ceremoniality, everyday life, generations	272
6.3 “Living” symbols: Togliatti, the wall	285
6.4 Memory and subjectivity	293
Sources	308
Bibliography	314
List of abbreviations	340
Abstracts	341

Introduction

“Cities, like dreams, are made of desires and fears, even if the thread of their discourse is secret, their rules absurd, their perspectives deceitful, and everything conceals something else”
“I have neither desires nor fears”, the Khan declared, “and my dreams are composed either by my mind or by chance”

“Cities also believe they are the work of the mind or of chance, but neither the one nor the other suffices to hold up their walls. You take delight not in a city’s seven or seventy wonders, but in the answer it gives to a question of yours”
(Italo Calvino, *Invisible cities*, 1974)¹

This conversation between the explorer Marco Polo and the emperor of the Tartars Kublai Khan, present in the masterpiece by Italo Calvino *Invisible cities*, can be seen as a contraposition between a dreamlike, chaotic, contradictory, non-linear representation of the world – of the cities – and a rational, static, immanent one. Cities and memory, cities and desire, cities and signs, trading cities – every place visited and narrated by Marco Polo had its peculiarity. In Calvino’s mind, the book was designed as a long travel of discovery in search for the ultimate city, which would have been formed by the union of all these imaginary cities in a huge, utopian (invisible) design.

Calvino had been a communist. In 1951, he had stayed for fifty days in the Soviet Union, publishing a well-known travel diary about the life and costumes he had seen and experienced.² Years later – in 1979 – Calvino would have adopted a self-critical attitude, distancing himself from the tones he had used in his travel notes, and blaming himself for being too accommodating and non-reflective in his descriptions of daily life in Soviet Russia when Stalin was still in power.³ In 1972, year in which *Invisible cities* first appeared in Italy, he was probably already going through a process of disenchantment towards the Soviet Union and the system of “real socialism” in Eastern Europe, as the book appeared as an exaltation of multiplicity and complexity, and therefore an open critique towards Soviet realism. As a matter of fact, the style was considered ideologically non-conform to socialist aesthetic canons, and this is the reason why the novel was not published before the fall of the USSR.⁴

I chose to begin this dissertation with these suggestions for two reasons. Firstly, Calvino, as a politicized person and a writer, can be considered as a symbol of the process of differentiation

¹ Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1974), p. 44. [Or. Ed.: Italo Calvino, *Le Città Invisibili* (Torino: Einaudi, 1972).

² Italo Calvino, “Taccuino Di Viaggio Nell’Unione Sovietica,” in *Saggi (1945-1985)*, ed. Mario Barenghi, vol. 2 (Milano: Mondadori, 2001), pp. 2407-2496 [First edition: 1995]

³ Italo Calvino, “Sono Stato Stalinista Anch’io?” *La Repubblica*, 17/12 1979.

⁴ Italo Calvino, “Nezrimye Goroda” in *Nezrimye Goroda. Zamok Skreščënnnych Sudeb* (Kiev: Simpozium, 1997). On Calvino and his reception in the Soviet Union, see the doctoral dissertation: Ilaria Sicari, “La Ricezione Di Italo Calvino in URSS (1948-1991). Per Una Microstoria Della Diffusione Della Letteratura Straniera in Epoca Sovietica” (Tesi di dottorato, Università Ca’ Foscari Venezia, 2017).

happening inside the Italian Communist Party (PCI). Although he was a young intellectual, and thus not comparable to the average profile of the communist militant, he is nevertheless representative of a general tendency: a soft, but progressive separation from the myth of Soviet Russia and popular democracies, which was fully underway in the 1970s. Secondly, the contraposition he puts into motion between two different ideas of the town is a provocative lead-in to the topic of communist cities and their transnational connections across the Iron Curtain.

These two nodes – connected to Italian communism, and to the role of communist cities in international relations – are what I identify as the main historiographical contributions of this work, which is conceived as an analysis of Cold War transnational town twinning⁵ between communist-led municipalities in three regions of North-Central Italy and their equivalents in the pro-Soviet German Democratic Republic (GDR). My analysis is focused on seven case studies. Four of them take connections between *communal* administrations into account: it is the case with Bologna and Leipzig, Reggio Emilia and Schwerin, Carpi and Wernigerode, Collegno (near Turin) and Neubrandenburg; one is related to *provincial* administrations (Livorno and Rostock); and two to local articulations of *labor unions* – Modena and Potsdam, and Bologna and Suhl.

Such analysis is conducted through an exploration of actors, strategies and mechanisms of exchange and confrontation among the two sides, in the 1960s and 1970s. In it, I have chosen to use the concept of *convergence*. The term is not thought to define two paths that *actually arrived* at the same point, but to express that the *horizon* they share is to some extent (still) the same – i. e. socialism. *Convergence*, in this dissertation, thus indicates relations that never fully culminated in an importation of practices, techniques, traditions and ideas from one side to the other, but that *opened* a translocal and parallel communication on topics and issues that were relevant both within the communist world and in the whole, divided Europe.⁶

The first point on which I seek to give my contribution is the history of East-West relations across the Iron Curtain, by proving the impact and the agency of (communist) cities and their

⁵ Town twinning can be defined as the practice of pairing towns, with the aim of promoting «cultural, educational, and professional interaction between municipalities and their residents» and exchange of «ideas and experiences across national borders to find solutions for improving urban services and local administration». I have taken this definition from Kirsi Ahonen, “Town Twinning as a Tool of the Cultural Cold War: Finland and the Two Germanies,” in *Nordic Cold War Cultures. Ideological Promotion, Public Reception, and East-West Interactions*, ed. Valur Ingimundarson and Rosa Magnusdottir, Aleksanteri Cold War Series, 2/2015 (Turku: Juvenes Print, 2015), 132–53., 132-133.

⁶ The effort has been to highlight connections and disconnections inside the transnational communist movement between East and West, but also to embed communist history in a wider context, showing – without forgetting the increasing permeability of the Iron Curtain in this period – connections, comparisons and interactions inside and outside the communist world. In so doing, I position myself in the field of transnational and global approaches to communism studies. On these new approaches, see the recent, imponent work “The Cambridge History of Communism”, published in 2017 in three volumes. In particular, see Silvio Pons, “General Introduction,” in *The Cambridge History of Communism*, ed. Silvio Pons and Stephen A. Smith, vol. I, World Revolution and Socialism in One Country 1917-1941 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

administrators in international politics. These cities had a considerable impact on building a dialogue on the level of *economy* and of technical-administrative solutions for the well-being of citizens (*welfare*); but also on the one of transnational friendship among the people involved in the delegation exchanges – activists, militants, politicians, and technicians – built on the basis of both antifascist tradition and socialist faith. The increasing permeability of the Iron Curtain in the 1960s and 1970s is well known at the level of nation-states and diplomatic and international relations, but the role of towns has so far received only little attention within the historiographical panorama.⁷ Moreover, most of the published works have highlighted their role as an instrument of “détente from below”, though without analyzing the micro-level and the specifically communist forms and modes of mutual, territorial interaction. Looking at the literature, the sources and the interviews I have conducted, it is possible to affirm that the sympathy towards the GDR that was to be grasped at the local level was *not only* based on the common ground of antifascism,⁸ but it also had a socialist specificity, which can be better detected in the local microcosms. Despite being, perhaps rather unsurprisingly, lost or partially rejected in the retrospective memory of Italian communists, this peculiar communist dimension emerges clearly from the analysis of the town twinnings’ practices. This can possibly be an additional element in historiography on bilateral relations between Italy and the GDR, which has mostly considered towns as marginal subjects. Moreover, in translocal communism studies, the two countries appear as particularly representative, as they epitomized, respectively: (a) a dogmatic and repressive Soviet-friendly regime, but also the antifascist “second half” of Germany, the showcase of the Cold War and a place where a continuous and unavoidable confrontation with the Western counterpart took place; and (b), a country which was stably inserted in a democratic organization of power, but with the strongest communist party (PCI) in Western Europe.

Right the PCI, and the structural modifications inside it in the delicate phase of the 1960s and 1970s, represent the second historiographical contribution that this work aims to provide. In the second half of the 1970s, the party was already actively working in the direction of a European

⁷ Most of the works are confined to the French-German context. See Corinne Defrance and Tanja Hermann, “Städtepartnerschaften. Ein Instrument Der „Versöhnung“ von Unten?,” in *Verständigung Und Versöhnung Nach Dem „Zivilisationsbruch“? Deutschland in Europa Nach 1945*, ed. Corinne Defrance and Ulrich Pfeil (Bruxelles: Peter Lang, 2016).; Ulrich Pfeil, “Ostdeutsch-Französische Städtepartnerschaften Zwischen Westabschottung Und Westorientierung 1958-1973,” *Lendemains* 29, no. 114/115 (2004): 146–65.; Antoine Vion, “Superare i Conflitti: Il Gemellaggio Tra Città Europee Dopo La Seconda Guerra Mondiale,” in *L’Europa Dei Comuni. Origini e Sviluppo Del Movimento Comunale Europeo Dalla Fine Dell’Ottocento Al Secondo Dopoguerra*, ed. Patrizia Dogliani and Oscar Gaspari (Roma: Donzelli, 2003), 249–72.; Antoine Vion, “Europe from the Bottom Up: Town Twinning in France during the Cold War,” *Contemporary European History*, 04, 11 (November 2002): 623–40.

⁸ As suggested, for instance, in the work by Magda Martini on culture and intellectuals: Magda Martini, *La Cultura All’ombra Del Muro. Relazioni Culturali Tra Italia e Ddr (1949-1989)* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2007).

commitment, and of the construction of relations with Western socialists and social democrats.⁹ The reservations towards Europe were progressively being abandoned, and unprecedented questions were arising about the characteristics that a socialist society could have against the backdrop of a European belonging. This new phase had been marked, symbolically, by the announcement of the Eurocommunist political project by the PCI's secretary Enrico Berlinguer, in 1976.¹⁰

Consciously, I have decided not to include this period in my analysis. I see the period before as historiographically more thought-provoking, as it is complex, transitory and ambiguous. In the 1960s and 1970s, the PCI was blocked between a substantially reformist path, and an almost existential bond with the Soviet orbit, that – despite moments and elements of strong friction in the 1960s and 1970s – was never fully severed until 1989. In this sense, Eurocommunism can be seen almost as a technical solution, a transitory form of belonging which acted as an anticipation for the future collapse of the PCI.¹¹ It is *before* Eurocommunism that the party started forging a creative and recognizable political culture, which stood out as *unique* in Western Europe. Local government was an essential part of this picture. The party started an incessant internal labor to harmonize differences and to realize the composition of different souls and political conceptions – the old Stalinists, the reformists, the local administrators, the “New Left”¹² and the movements emerged after 1968. Political divisions or generational fractures never took place: the political machine of the PCI managed to remain compact. Despite changes and turmoil, the iron bond with the Soviet bloc remained intact.

In my view, all these elements are particularly visible through the prism of relations with the GDR. My idea is that these relations between the local administrations of the two countries, analyzed in their administrative, economic and symbolic dimensions, show the permanence of a tie with the Soviet sphere, even until the mid-1970s. Certainly, we cannot talk about such a strong «Soviet metaphor» in the development of local territories, as the one that Marco Fincardi has shown for the

⁹ See Michele Di Donato, *I Comunisti Italiani e La Sinistra Europea. Il PCI e i Rapporti Con Le Socialdemocrazie (1964-1984)* (Roma: Carocci, 2015).; and Paolo Ferrari, *In Cammino Verso Occidente. Berlinguer, Il PCI e La Comunità Europea Negli Anni '70* (Bologna: Clueb, 2007). For Berlinguer's European orientation in the late 1970s and early 1980s, see Calogero Laneri, “Il Pci Di Enrico Berlinguer e Le Elezioni Europee Attraverso La Lettura Della Stampa Comunista (1979-1984),” *Diacronie. Studi Di Storia Contemporanea: Proiezioni Individuali e Agire Collettivo Nella Storia. Ruoli Sociali, Aspetti Politici e Nodi Storiografici Tra Pubblico e Privato* 32, no. 4 (2017).

¹⁰ Silvio Pons, *Berlinguer e La Fine Del Comunismo* (Torino: Einaudi, 2006).

¹¹ Which slow “death” started on November 12, 1989. See Guido Liguori, *La Morte Del PCI* (Roma: Il Manifesto libri, 2009).

¹² With “New Left” – not casually put in brackets – I mean a composite melt of political positions, which cannot be compared with the more compact waves in other European countries. I embrace Marica Tolomelli's observation here: she has argued that we cannot use “New Left” as an analytical category in the Italian context, even though it is possible to find groups of “critical Marxism” which contributed to the de-dogmatization of the orthodox Marxist theory. On this, see Marica Tolomelli, *“Repressiv Getrennt“ Oder „organisch Verbündet“. Studenten Und Arbeiter 1968 in Der Bundesrepublik Deutschland Und in Italien* (Opladen: Springer, 2001).

Emilian context in the 1950s.¹³ However, I think that the bond with the Soviet world – in this case, with the face of the highly industrialized and advanced GDR – persisted in a softened way, proceeded hand in hand with the softening of tensions in the Cold War, and continued to manifest and unfold itself in the developments of local economy; in the conception of local social policies; and in personal bonds among local subjects, based on antifascism but also on the common belonging to the international communist movement.

A fundamental remark needs to be done: this dissertation had been initially conceived as a history of cultural transfers between two poles. However, throughout the process, it turned out to have a stronger focus on Italy. This is not the result of my personal preference, as an Italian young researcher; but it is rather the outcome of the interaction of many aspects, which are fundamentally connected to the pendulum between the geopolitical positioning of the two sides and the effect of such positioning on the sources. When looking at communist local administrations across the Iron Curtain, there is an obvious asymmetry between Italy and the GDR, in terms of political cultural paradigms; nature and role of the state and local administration; role and position of the communist party; nexus between centralization and decentralization. Asymmetry, however, was also visible in the travel possibilities, which were limited for East Germans and led to an almost unilateral movement from Italy to the GDR.

This had a repercussion on archival sources: whereas the Italian documents and reports on the twinnings and on delegation visits were not necessarily higher in number, the democratic positioning of the country surely allowed a higher degree of freedom, and thus a better insight in the opinions and comments of the participants. This was almost impossible to find in East German documents, which were more official and standardized. This rigidity of standards was also reflected in the number of people involved in the town twinning activities: in the GDR, those who were actively participating were only a limited number of politically trusted persons; whereas hundreds and hundreds of activists, administrators, technicians, professionals, and labor unionists were sent from the Italian “red” towns. This situation impacted the probability of finding interviewees. Of ten oral testimonies that I have gathered, nine are from Italian militants, and only one – although important, since it has been conducted with a former mayor – from the German part. Most of the few German protagonists of the twinnings that I had found after the first archival research had died or were not available for interviews. For all these reasons, this research is conceived as a study of transnational, or better translocal contacts and transfers, but with a focus on Italy.

¹³ Marco Fincardi, *C'era Una Volta Il Mondo Nuovo. La Metafora Sovietica Nello Sviluppo Emiliano* (Roma: Carocci, 2007).

The thesis is structured in three main parts. Part one, which contains the first two chapters, is dedicated to the groundwork and historical background. Besides a detailed state of the art, chapter 1 – *Materials, methods and aims* – contains a brief description of the seven case studies I have selected, and the reasons for their choice; a short reflection on a concept that can be found throughout the whole dissertation, *asymmetry*; a criticism of the sources, both archival and oral ones; the main methodological orientations; and some methodological warnings, connected to the quantity and quality of the available sources and to the omnipresent possibility of a *mise-en-scène*, in the welcoming of Italian delegations from the GDR hosts. Chapter 2 is conceived as contextual, but already oriented towards a precise interpretative frame. In it, I first briefly analyze Cold War relations and the role of the United States and the Soviet Union in the developments of the “German question”. However, most of all, I highlight what I have defined as the *triangular* relation between Italy, the GDR and West Germany from the postwar until the 1970s. Through such an approach, I aim to emphasize that in the bilateral relations between the two countries I focus on there always was the presence of the “elephant in the room”: the Western German state. This is true for the GDR, which was constantly confronted with it, but also for the Italian communists, that since the end of the 1960s started a rapprochement, even if cautious, with Willy Brandt’s SPD. In this small chapter, I also touch upon the issue of the GDR’s diplomatic recognition by the Italian government in 1973, stressing the centrality of that watershed but also its relativity, when researching about communist translocal bonds.

Part two, which likewise consists of two chapters, touches upon analytical frames. Chapter 3 is dedicated to the *strategies* employed by Italy in relating to the GDR at the *national* level. Among these strategies, I have broadly included the town twinnings; the political contacts; the cultural contacts; and the relations developed through labor unions. It may be surprising to find twinnings at the beginning of this section, but this is a precise choice, that has been made to stress their centrality *also* as an element of a broader international politics. Twinnings, party contacts, culture, etc.: all these fields were used first and foremost to reach the main objective of Italy’s recognition of the GDR. This process was *guided* by the PCI, but not confined to it: it found the agreement of other political forces, too, mostly for reasons connected to economy and to the adhesion to the project of a peaceful Europe. The main aim of the chapter is thus to emphasize this transversal dimension of the contacts with the GDR, focusing the attention on the *national* strategies of contact employed both by communists and other parties. These represented the general context inside of which more specific mechanisms of translocal communication unfolded. More in detail, the twinnings that I have selected for my case studies will be presented, and the first two interpretative aspects about them will be raised. On the

one hand, I will highlight the inextricable connection between the local, national and international bonds in relation to towns. On the other, I will focus on the topic of peace, which seemed to be shared, on many levels, by many political subjects of the town administrations and of international institutions such as the *Fédération Mondiale des Villes Jumelées* (FMVJ). I will then face the official bilateral relations between the *Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands* (SED) and the PCI, against the backdrop of highs and lows, determined both by national and international political developments. The section on cultural policies will take into account both the official cultural bonds, taken care of by official national institutions, and the interest (both critical and sympathetic) raised by some personalities of the Italian heterodox left and from the academic world. Finally, the section on labor unions will include rapprochements and detachments between the *Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro* (CGIL) and the *Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund* (FDGB) against the backdrop of their single aims but also of the (until 1970) common belonging to the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU). Chapter 4, instead, is entirely dedicated to the topic of local governments and communist-led towns in Italy and the GDR, taking asymmetries, similarities and developments into consideration. After a first part which will deal with the communist conception of towns in the two countries, deduced from literature but also from the confrontation and the entangled views of the actors involved in the twinnings, I will delve into the specificity of the Italian red areas which hosted the towns twinned with the GDR. All three of them are located in North-Central Italy: I am referring to Emilia-Romagna, Tuscany and the industrial belt around Turin, in Piedmont. In the first two cases, red local administrations of Bologna, Reggio Emilia, Modena, Carpi, and Livorno were fundamental actors in the government of economic and political development. In the third case, the one of Piedmont, the context is more complex, as – despite the presence of an industrial historical center as Turin – the regional territory was politically diversified and communist administration, for reasons that I will explain, was not able to govern to such an extent as it was in Emilia and Toscana.

The third part includes the two last chapters, which represent the core of the dissertation and are almost entirely built on empirical material, both archival documents and interviews. In both of them, I will analyze the communist specificity of the town twinnings. In chapter 5, I will look at the red local governments' role in the development of economy and trade and at knowledge exchange in the field of local welfare. The first section of the chapter presents the actors of these exchanges, that I have divided in three categories: *administrators* (those who were fully aware of the twinnings' meaning and logics); *activists and militants* (those who were involved in the delegations and who, not necessarily conscious of the mechanisms, sometimes represented a way for politicized local administrators to reinforce their consent in both countries); and *connecting personalities* (translators

and interpreters, Italian or Germans, sometimes with mixed families, which made the actual communication possible in the first place, and despite their substantial invisibility played a fundamental role in the political and technical colloquia). The second section of the chapter is centered on the concept of *convergence*, as I have conceived it and presented it at the beginning of this introduction. *Economy* and *trade* were a field of convergence for red local administrations, especially in the contexts of port relations, fairs and contacts between medium-small enterprises. This is probably the only field in which a full reciprocity can be found. Strengthening the economic contacts was central for both countries. While the development of economic contacts with the GDR was endorsed by many political forces, as highlighted in chapter 3, there was also a territorial specificity to the contacts, which was connected, in my view, to particular socio-economic characteristics of the biggest towns among my case studies, Bologna and Leipzig and Livorno and Rostock. Other connections were visible at the level of local social policies at the beginning of their conception in the “socialist Sixties”. *Health*, *education* and *town planning* are three fields in which I have found that knowledge exchange through the town twinnings unfolded. The actual *use* of the East German expertise in the technical realizations by the red local administrations in these areas is difficult to prove, and it is not even my aim. In some cases the interest was more explicit than in others, depending from personal sensibilities and many other elements, included the local pride about the organization and implementation of certain “models”. However, what I have tried to stress here is the *meaning* that the enthusiasms, the detailed studies, the interest assumed from a historiographical point of view. In my view, these aspects can show a mutation in the conception of *internationalism* for Italian local communists. Against the backdrop of the rupture of 1968, and of the line set by the at that time new PCI secretary, Luigi Longo, the mechanism of projection towards a mythic and far world, and its reflection on the local context and its organization of life,¹⁴ changed, became milder, and was channeled in topics which could be more easily acceptable for the citizens of the communist-guided cities. Well-being and social protection were key concepts of citizenship, inextricably linked with local identities, and in order to reach a high consent red administrators had to provide those for the town’s workers and inhabitants. In relation to social policies, the GDR had a comparable strategy,¹⁵ and, as a highly industrialized country and, after all, as the heir of a long German tradition, it was considered a socialist, but trustworthy interlocutor on these topics. This was the specific ground

¹⁴ Mario Caciagli, “Tra Internazionalismo e Localismo: L’area Rossa,” *Meridiana*, *Questione settentrionale*, 16 (January 1993): 81–98.. p. 95.

¹⁵ On this point, I will employ the concept of “welfare dictatorship” as developed by Konrad Jarausch. See Konrad Jarausch, “Care and Coercion: The GDR as Welfare Dictatorship,” in *Dictatorship as Experience. Towards a Socio-Cultural History of the GDR*, ed. Konrad Jarausch (New York-Oxford: Berghahn, 1999), 47–72.

on which the relation with “red Prussians” was still acceptable and conceivable for Italian reformist communists in the 1960s and 1970s, despite the political embarrassment that the GDR itself created.

Chapter 6 is entirely dedicated to communication among the single actors involved in the exchanges, to the topics that stemmed from such communication, and to the memory of the twinning experiences, through diaries and reports, as well as a massive use of oral testimonies. Among these themes, I have first identified the *shadows of the war*, and namely the memory of World War II and its complex heritage, due to a crystallized idea of the German as “bad” after Hitler’s occupation of Italy between 1943 and 1945.¹⁶ Inside this memory of the past, I have included the strategic handling of both the experiences of *antifascism* and *Resistance*. The second section of the chapter deals with the sphere of *ceremoniality*, and with the effects that the organized *microsociability* during the twinings’ meetings had, favoring a mutual communication on topics connected to *everyday life*, different *modi vivendi* and world conceptions, especially among the young generations. In this context, the twinings were either a life experience (for Italians), or a way to escape from an otherwise grey reality (for East Germans). The third section is centered around communist “living” symbols, on the way they were presented by the propaganda, but also on how they were perceived at the level of grassroots activists. I will focus in particular on the celebration of the personality of Palmiro Togliatti and the rhetoric about the Berlin Wall. The last section of chapter 6 is an open reflection on *memory* and *subjectivity*. In it, I will explore issues related to oral history and to the remembering of the twinning experiences. I will try to emphasize the ex post justifications that emerge from the testimonies, where possible confronting them with diaries and memories written at the time of the exchanges, and to dig into the reasons why, from the side of almost all the interviewees, the trips to the GDR have nowadays been reduced to a secondary, minimalized, sometimes almost disturbing experience.¹⁷

All these elements aim at shedding light on the active role of communist cities and their transfers between East and West, in the late Cold War. The transnational, or better, translocal dimension is a central interpretative element in this narration. On this last point, it is possible to briefly touch upon a last reflection, which regards the nexus between localism and internationalism. In Italian red administrations, the political project behind local realizations was fueled by references to other

¹⁶ Filippo Focardi, *Il Cattivo Tedesco e Il Bravo Italiano. La Rimozione Delle Colpe Della Seconda Guerra Mondiale* (Bari: Laterza, 2013). Also translated into French and German: Filippo Focardi, *L’Italie, Alliée Ou Victime de l’Allemagne Nazie?* (Bruxelles: Editions de l’Université de Bruxelles, 2014).

Filippo Focardi, *Falsche Freunde? Italiens Geschichtspolitik Und Die Frage Der Mitschuld Am Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2015).

¹⁷ On the new global reference points in international communism, see Juliane Fürst, Silvio Pons, and Mark Selden, eds., *The Cambridge History of Communism. Volume III. Endgames? Late Communism in Global Perspective, 1968 to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholar Press, 2017).

countries, and in particular to Eastern, socialist ones. The internal dimension always remained central but was not isolated. This continuous interaction between localism and internationalism had been central ever since Antonio Gramsci's thoughts, as it emerges from some passages of the *Prison's notebooks*.¹⁸ However, that conception had mostly been conveyed by the PCI's secretary (1927-34; 1938-64) Palmiro Togliatti.¹⁹ Togliatti had been in Moscow in the 1930s, together with the ruling class of the future GDR, but at the same time, in the postwar, he had addressed his party along the ideas of an "Italian way to socialism". His personality, or better, perhaps, the PCI he had strongly contributed in shaping, were the real *trait d'union*, the prism through which Italian postwar mayors and administrators had made the meaning of the iron bond with the Soviet world theirs. Some of them had actually experienced antifascism and exile – such as Giuseppe Dozza, first mayor of Bologna in 1945 –;²⁰ some others had learnt about that period later, through war and Resistance or party schools provided by Togliatti's PCI.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the memory of this common path set out together with the Soviet Union in the name of communist internationalism was still present, but the awareness of that constitutive bond went hand in hand with a distancing from the Soviet political model. In Italian "red" towns, those international references had not completely disappeared from the communist discourse, but they had changed form, abandoning blind ideology and taking the appearances of a mature, pragmatic socialism, as it had been developed in the industrially most advanced country of Eastern Europe. This research, and the attention on Italian-East German town twinnings, is one way to interpret the PCI's attempt to compose its internal contradictions.

¹⁸ Antonio Gramsci, *Quaderni Del Carcere. Edizione Critica a Cura Di Valentino Gerratana*, ed. Valentino Gerratana, 4 vols. (Torino: Einaudi, 1975): Q 14, 68, p. 1729, quoted in Renato Caputo, "Internazionale, Internazionalismo," in *Dizionario Gramsciano 1926-1937*, ed. Guido Liguori and Pasquale Voza (Roma: Carocci, 2009).

¹⁹ Aldo Agosti, *Palmiro Togliatti* (Torino: UTET, 1996).

²⁰ Sante Cruciani, "Giuseppe Dozza, Sindaco Di Bologna. La Rivoluzione Del Buongoverno," in *Storie Di Sindaci per La Storia d'Italia*, by Oscar Gaspari, Rosario Forlenza, and Sante Cruciani (Roma: Donzelli, 2009), 145–56.; Luisa Lama, *Giuseppe Dozza. Storia Di Un Sindaco Comunista* (Reggio Emilia: Aliberti, 2007).

PART 1

Groundwork and historical background

1. Materials, methods and aims

1.1 State of the art

The topic of relations between the German Democratic Republic and Italy has been treated by numerous scholars of both countries in the past three decades, slowly starting to emerge with the opening of the Eastern German archives in the 1990s. Nevertheless, published works – books, book chapters or essays – have often been addressed towards national audiences, with the aim of making this particular, relational, bi-national history during the Cold War²¹ more easily available to both countries. This historiographical division is still existing, despite the presence of a well-established and active community of historians working on Italian and German connections in contemporary history, with bilingual Italian researchers living and working in Germany and vice versa. While this could theoretically lead to an increased exchange of perspectives and to an interchangeable use of respective works in different national research contexts, up until now the panorama seems to have remained rather separated in this respect.

My intention is to build the present research on the basis of a bi-national and possibly international research ground. For this reason, the state of the art will be articulated with reference to the most consistent pieces of research that have been published on Italian-Eastern German relations in both countries, although of course diversities and peculiarities due to different environments will be highlighted. This will constitute the first block of historiographical references. The other two blocks will be related to town twinnings and municipal movements after 1945, and to international communism, also studied against the backdrop of its local manifestations.

In this first area, Laura Fasanaro's work *La Ddr e l'Italia* is the most recent publication and the one that more systematically deals with bilateral relations, thereby constituting an important resource in increasing general knowledge and sensibility towards this topic in the Italian public.²² Fasanaro's book appears as an outcome of her previous interests, as she had already published on the

²¹ I am going to refer to "Cold War" as a «common term to describe the political conflict between Western liberal democracies and Eastern European Socialist states after World War II», although, as Annette Vowinckel, Marcus Payk and Thomas Lindenberger have pointed out, following Muriel Blaive's reflections, the term reflects more the Western discourse and vocabulary, while the "other Europe" was commonly referred to as "Eastern Europe". About this, see Muriel Blaive, *Utopian Visions: The 'Cold War' and Its Political Aesthetics*, in "Zeithistorische Forschungen/Studies in Contemporary History", 2008, quoted in Annette Vowinckel, Marcus M. Payk, Thomas Lindenberger, *European Cold War Culture(s)? An Introduction*, in Annette Vowinckel, Marcus M. Payk, Thomas Lindenberger (Ed.), *Cold War Cultures*, Berghahn, New York-Oxford 2012, pp. 1-22., p. 1. In general, I am aware of the manifold meanings that this expression could have, but I will use the term "Cold War" for pragmatic reasons connected to readability.

²² Laura Fasanaro, *La DDR e l'Italia. Politica, Commercio e Ideologia Nell'Europa Del Cambiamento 1973-1985* (Roma: Carocci, 2016). Laura Fasanaro, *La DDR e l'Italia. Politica, Commercio e Ideologia Nell'Europa Del Cambiamento 1973-1985* (Roma: Carocci, 2016). Laura Fasanaro, *La DDR e l'Italia. Politica, Commercio e Ideologia Nell'Europa Del Cambiamento 1973-1985* (Roma: Carocci, 2016).

topic of Eurocommunism and its reception from an Eastern German perspective.²³ She portrays the image of a changing Europe in the 1970s and 1980s and highlights the impact of such transformations on contacts between the two countries. Significantly, her narration starts in 1973, year in which the GDR first gained diplomatic recognition from Italy. This choice is representative of an approach oriented towards a history of official governmental relations and international relations – that represents the basis and one of the background keys to my work, but that I seek to overcome by focusing more on political, social and cultural aspects of microhistorical, transnational relations. Fasanaro’s book also represents a completion of the two most systematic works on Italy-GDR relations on a political, cultural and commercial level, that appeared for the German public at the beginning of the 2000s – the publications by Charis Pöthig and Johannes Lill.²⁴ These works respond to the aim of drawing a general frame and a well-documented narration of bilateral relations between the countries at a national level, together with a picture of commercial, political-ideological and partly cultural aspects; Fasanaro’s work, instead, has a more definite interpretative glance.²⁵

More specific on cultural relations is Magda Martini’s work.²⁶ Martini examines the international cultural policies of both governments and the personal interest towards the GDR from the side of Italian intellectuals who were oftentimes part of or close to the Italian left. She first provides a chronological partition of the way cultural politics were handled. Before 1973, they were run through the political parties (SED and PCI) and various associations related to them, whereas, after the GDR’s diplomatic recognition by Italy, contacts were established on a governmental level. I will consistently use her precious work in chapter 3 (3.3) of this dissertation, but also elaborate, on the basis of my empirical research, on some of the ideas that she has developed with reference to culture and intellectuals – for instance, the nature of the sympathy for the GDR until the 1970s, which I claim was still also *political*, as well as broadly antifascist as Martini has suggested. The second part of her work is devoted to an analysis of cultural receptions and reciprocal images through literature, art and music.

²³ Laura Fasanaro, “Eurocommunism. An East German Perspective,” in *The Crisis of Détente in Europe: From Helsinki to Gorbachev, 1975-1985*, ed. Leopoldo Nuti (London-New York, 2009), 244–55.; Laura Fasanaro, “L’eurocomunismo Nelle Carte Della Sed,” *Mondo Contemporaneo*, no. 3 (2006): 63–95.

²⁴ Johannes Lill, *Völkerfreundschaft Im Kalten Krieg? Die Politischen, Kulturellen Und Wirtschaftlichen Beziehungen Der Ddr Zu Italien 1949-1989* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2001).; Charis Pöthig, *Italien Und Die DDR. Die Politischen, Ökonomischen Und Kulturellen Beziehungen von 1949-1980* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2000).

²⁵ On Fasanaro’s book, also see Teresa Malice, “Review of Laura Fasanaro, *La DDR e l’Italia. Politica, Commercio e Ideologia Nell’Europa Del Cambiamento (1973-1985)*, Roma, Carocci Editore, 2017,” *Annali Recensioni/Reviews/Rezensionen Online (ARO)*, 2018, <http://aro-isig.fbk.eu/issues/2018/1/la-ddr-e-litalia-teresa-malice>.

²⁶ Magda Martini, *La Cultura All’ombra Del Muro. Relazioni Culturali Tra Italia e Ddr (1949-1989)* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2007).

Political relations between the PCI and the SED have been tackled more specifically in some collective volumes that adopt a multi-national perspective. For instance, the already quoted Johannes Lill has curated the chapter on Italy in the more general work edited by Ulrich Pfeil and focused on the GDR and Western Europe.²⁷ Contributions to the topic also come from Francesco Di Palma and Fiammetta Balestracci. The first author has compared the contacts between the SED and the PCI in the period of Eurocommunism; the second one has given account of the ideological-cultural contacts between the two parties in the same period.²⁸ Both essays are inserted in the collective volume, edited by Arnd Bauerkämper and Di Palma himself, about the post-1968 SED's relations towards Western and Southern European communist parties.²⁹ It is an important work in the context of German historiography, as it marks a renewed attention towards non-state actors (parties), rather than towards official contacts. Worth a mention, despite its brevity, is also Andrea La Bella's article, as it represents a first attempt to account for these bilateral political relations for an Italian public.³⁰ I will build on all these works throughout my whole dissertation, even though my focus will be on the local administrations, more than on the national party lines.

Overall, all the mentioned works variously consider political, ideological, cultural, commercial, diplomatic and governmental aspects, but none of them takes town twinnings into account, if not superficially.³¹ Thus, this research aims at covering the lack of information on this topic for the case of Italy and the GDR and highlight its relevance in East-West cultural communication during the Cold War.³²

²⁷ Johannes Lill, "Die DDR Und Italien (1949-1973). Möglichkeiten Und Grenzen Für Den Ausbau Der Bilateralen Beziehungen," in *Die Ddr Und Der Westen. Transnationale Beziehungen (1949-1989)*, ed. Ulrich Pfeil (Berlin: Links Verlag, 2001), 237–55.

²⁸ Francesco Di Palma, "Die SED, Die Partito Comunista Italiano Und Der Eurokommunismus (1968-1989). Akteure, Netzwerke, Deutungen," in *Brüderparteien Jenseits des Eisernen Vorhangs. Die Beziehungen Der SED Zu Den Kommunistischen Parteien West- Und Südeuropas (1968-1989)*, ed. Arnd Bauerkämper and Francesco Di Palma (Berlin: Christoph-Links Verlag, 2011), 149–66.; Fiammetta Balestracci, "Zwischen Ideologischer Diversifikation Und Politisch-Kulturellem Pragmatismus. Die Beziehungen zwischen Der Partito Comunista Italiano Und Der SED (1968-1989)," in *Brüderparteien Jenseits des Eisernen Vorhangs. Die Beziehungen Der SED Zu Den Kommunistischen Parteien West- Und Südeuropas (1968-1989)*, ed. Arnd Bauerkämper and Francesco Di Palma (Berlin: Christoph-Links Verlag, 2011), 168–85.

²⁹ Arnd Bauerkämper and Francesco Di Palma, eds., *Brüderparteien Jenseits des Eisernen Vorhangs. Die Beziehungen Der SED Zu Den Kommunistischen Parteien West- Und Südeuropas (1968-1989)* (Berlin: Christoph-Links Verlag, 2011). About relations between the GDR and the West, see also, with a similar transnational approach, Ulrich Pfeil, ed., *Die DDR Und Der Westen. Transnationale Beziehungen 1949-1989* (Berlin: Links Verlag, 2001).

³⁰ Andrea La Bella, "I Comunisti Italiani e La Repubblica Democratica Tedesca," in *Italiani in Germania Tra Ottocento e Novecento. Spostamenti, Rapporti, Immagini, Influenze (Annali Dell'Istituto Storico Italo-Germanico in Trento. Quaderni)*, ed. Gustavo Corni and Christoph Dipper, vol. 67 (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2006), 657–77.

³¹ The *Städtepartnerschaften* are touched upon in three pages of Pöthig, *Italien Und Die DDR.*, pp. 324-327.

³² On this, in Cold War studies, one of the relatively new approaches is focused on *cultural* interactions between 1945 and 1989. See Peter Romijn, Giles Scott-Smith, and Joes Segal, eds., *Divided Dreamworlds? The Cultural Cold War in East and West* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012).; Sari Autio-Sarasmo, Brendan Humphreys, and Katalin Miklóssy, *Winter Kept Us Warm: Cold War Interactions Reconsidered* (Helsinki: Aleksanteri Institute, 2010).; Jean-François Sirinelli and Georges-Henri Soutou, *Culture et Guerre Froide* (Paris: Presses Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2008).

The topics of town twinning and municipal contacts represent the second block in this state of the art. Contributions here could be divided in works with a sociological and with a historical approach. Andreas Langenohl has addressed the topic from a sociological point of view, though also providing a historical introduction on twinning in Europe from the early postwar until the 2000s.³³ On theoretical grounds, he conceives the expression *town twinning* as referring to a «set of practices that have gained broad currency in Europe, in particular with a view to the process of European integration».³⁴ More than his perspective in relation to Europe as a political project – my use of the concept *Europe* in this dissertation is more cultural than institutional, enlarged to the GDR, and thus not uniquely Western – what is particularly interesting for me are Langenohl’s theoretical reflections, especially on the category of *translocality*, which he has developed and used with reference to twinning practices.

In history, instead, the most important platform of discussion on town twinning has been and is the Franco-German one, as it is shown by a recent colloquium which has taken place in Mainz in 2015 and has gathered almost all historians and researchers working on the topic.³⁵ On that occasion, presentations had been delivered broadly on (1) town twinings in the *Zwischenkriegszeit*;³⁶ (2) town twinings in Western Europe after 1945, with a focus on France and Germany;³⁷ (3) town twinings between East and West during the Cold War, but again limited to France and the two Germanies, with incursions in the USSR and Poland;³⁸ (4) the role of memory in the twinings and their effect on nation-building, colonial propaganda, and politics of war;³⁹ (5) and their meaning today, in the European context.⁴⁰ Among the most recent studies on the Franco-German context, it is possible to

On the specific case of Nordic countries, see Valur Ingimundarson and Rosa Magnúsdóttir, eds., *Nordic Cold War Cultures. Ideological Promotion, Public Reception, and East-West Interactions*, Alexsanteri Cold War Series, 2/2015 (Turku: Juvenes Print, 2015). For recent, general considerations about historiography of Cold War, see Federico Romero, “Cold War Historiography at the Crossroads,” *Cold War History* 14, no. 4 (2014): 685–703, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14682745.2014.950249>.

³³ Andreas Langenohl, *Town Twinning, Transnational Connections, and Trans-Local Citizenship Practices in Europe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).; Andreas Langenohl, “The Imagination of Europe in Twin Town Activities: Rethinking Political Culture in the European Union,” in *Transnational Political Agents - Structures - Encounters*, ed. Mathias Albert et al. (Frankfurt a. Main/New York: Campus Verlag, 2009), 212–36.

³⁴ Langenohl, *Town Twinning*, p. 1.

³⁵ “Les Jumelages En Europe. Conceptions et Pratiques Du Rapprochement Au XXe Siècle” (17/10 2015).

³⁶ Presentations by Corine De France, Tanja Herrmann, Ulrich Pfeil and Birgit Schwellung, 15 October 2015.

³⁷ Presentations by Jürgen Dierkes, Sebastian Dörfler, Claus W. Schaefer, Jean-Christophe Meyer, and Maik Schnierer.

³⁸ Presentations by Jan Kusber, Francesca Malle, Dominik Pick, Malgorzata Świder, Antoine Mandret-Degeilh, and Ulrich Pfeil.

³⁹ Presentations by Pia Nordblom, Eva Kübler, Lucas Hardt, Ruža Fotiadis, and Lisa Montmayeur.

⁴⁰ Presentations by Verena Von Wiczlinski, Annina Lottermann, Thomas Höpel, Michael Kißener, Mirjike Mulder and Andreas Langenohl.

mention the essays and articles by Ulrich Pfeil⁴¹, Corinne De France and Tanja Hermann,⁴² Antoine Vion⁴³ and Lucie Filipová,⁴⁴ among which some have been centered on the West only, some others have taken the East and the GDR into account.⁴⁵ In both cases, *jumelages* were mostly seen, respectively, either as a tool for European integration, or as a potential instrument of reconciliation “from below” in a context where a complete communication could not take place. This is also one of the meanings that town twinning had for Italy and the GDR, in the context of the campaign for the GDR’s diplomatic recognition (see chapter 3, 3.1); but, in my view, not the only one.

Convergences, I argue, can be found on the level of the conception of red local administration and of the interaction of reciprocal communist imaginations. In this sense, I aim at inserting my research in the field of a political-administrative history receptive towards cultural aspects and to a history of identities, experiences and memory. In such a conception of disciplinary perspectives, the purpose is to take some distance from works that are conceived as histories of international relations or political-diplomatic history and draw nearer to the cultural turn and, to a certain extent, to a history “of below” broadly related to political militance. In so doing, I want to contribute to the relatively new tendency of focusing on the non-homogeneous nature of “Cold War culture” – a direction that

⁴¹ Ulrich Pfeil, “Ostdeutsch-Französische Städtepartnerschaften Zwischen Westabschottung Und Westorientierung 1958-1973,” *Lendemains* 29, no. 114/115 (2004): 146–65.

⁴² Corinne De France and Tanja Hermann, “Städtepartnerschaften. Ein Instrument Der „Versöhnung“ von Unten?,” in *Verständigung Und Versöhnung Nach Dem „Zivilisationsbruch“? Deutschland in Europa Nach 1945*, ed. Corinne De France and Ulrich Pfeil (Bruxelles: Peter Lang, 2016).

⁴³ Antoine Vion, “Superare i Conflitti: Il Gemellaggio Tra Città Europee Dopo La Seconda Guerra Mondiale,” in *L’Europa Dei Comuni. Origini e Sviluppo Del Movimento Comunale Europeo Dalla Fine Dell’Ottocento Al Secondo Dopoguerra*, ed. Patrizia Dogliani and Oscar Gaspari (Roma: Donzelli, 2003), 249–72.; Antoine Vion, “Europe from the Bottom Up: Town Twinning in France during the Cold War,” *Contemporary European History*, 04, 11 (November 2002): 623–40.

⁴⁴ Lucie Filipová, *Erfüllte Hoffnung. Städtepartnerschaften Als Instrument Der Deutsch-Französischen Aussöhnung, 1950-2000* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015).

⁴⁵ Further studies have enlarged this research panorama, by looking at more specific aspects, such as the relations between twinings, globalization, and neo-liberalism; or other areas, such as Great Britain or the USA; and the story of municipalism. See Nick Clarke, “Town Twinning in Cold-War Britain: (Dis)Continuities in Twentieth-Century Municipal Internationalism,” *Contemporary British History* 24, no. 2 (June 2010): 173–91.; Nick Clarke, “In What Sense ‘Spaces of Neoliberalism’? The New Localism, the New Politics of Scale, and Town Twinning,” *Political Geography*, 2009.; Earl H. Fry, Lee E. Radebaugh, and Panayotis Soldatos, *The New International Cities Era: The Global Activities of North American Municipal Governments* (Provo: David M. Kennedy Centre for International Studies, 1989). As far as twinings and their “municipal foreign policy”, or “alternative foreign policy” is concerned, see Kai Pfundheller’s work: Kai Pfundheller, *Städtepartnerschaften – Alternative Außenpolitik Der Kommunen* (Opladen: Barbara Budrich, 2014).

Some older (German) publications include the political scientist’s Fieber: Bettina Fieber, *Internationale Gemeindeparschaften: Kulturaustausch Und Seine Wirkungen in Europäischen Landgemeinden* (Trier: WVT, 1995); Johannes Sticker, *Kommunale Außenpolitik. Jumelage, Verschwisterung, Twinning, Gemellaggio, Verbroedering* (Köln: Deutscher Gemeindeverlag, 1982).; Hansjuergen Gartska, *Die Rolle Der Gemeinde in Der Internationalen Verständigung Nach Dem Zweiten Weltkrieg Gezeigt Am Beispiel Der Deutsch-Französischen Verständigung* (Stuttgart: Vogt, 1972). About the history of municipalism, see Patrizia Dogliani and Oscar Gaspari, eds., *L’Europa Dei Comuni. Origini e Sviluppo Del Movimento Comunale Europeo Dalla Fine Dell’Ottocento Al Secondo Dopoguerra* (Roma: Donzelli, 2003).; and Oscar Gaspari, “Cities against States? Hopes, Dreams and Shortcomings of the European Municipal Movement, 1900-1960,” *Contemporary European History*, 04, 11 (November 2002): 597–621. On the case of Bologna and Zagreb, see Vladimir Unkovski-Korica and Eloisa Betti, “Town Twinning in the Cold War: Zagreb and Bologna as ‘Détente from Below’?,” (September 7, 2016).

is also connected with a recent shift in research towards «social, cultural, and media history, the history of ideas, utopias, and mentalities»,⁴⁶ and with the active role of *cities* during the Cold War.⁴⁷

This active role of the municipalities represents the peculiarity of the *communist-oriented* towns, which are at the center of this dissertation. This is why the third and last historiographical block is a selection of publications about communism, in its international, national and local dimensions, with references to both Italy and the GDR and the (Italian) regions involved in the twinnings with the East.

Among the most recent and comprehensive works on international communism, the *History of Communism* published in three volumes by Cambridge University Press is surely to be mentioned,⁴⁸ together with other works by Silvio Pons.⁴⁹

On the GDR and the SED, the production is extremely wide.⁵⁰ Most useful for my research were some general German works on the GDR's structure and political organization, both recent⁵¹ and older.⁵² Among these, I have particularly appreciated the contributions of two non-German

⁴⁶ Annette Vowinckel, Marcus M. Payk, and Thomas Lindenberger, "European Cold War Culture(s)? An Introduction," in *Cold War Cultures*, ed. Annette Vowinckel, Marcus M. Payk, and Thomas Lindenberger (New York-Oxford: Berghahn, 2012), 1–22., p. 5.

⁴⁷ On this, Katja Pizzi and Marjatta Hietala, eds., *Cold War Cities: History, Culture and Memory* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2016), with a contribution by Eloisa Betti on Bologna in the early Cold War. Specific on urban issues, and on case studies in Italy and West Germany, see the recent publications, with many essays about Bologna: Martin Baumeister, Bruno Bonomo, and Dieter Schott, eds., *Cities Contested. Urban Politics, Heritage and Social Movements in Italy and West Germany in the 1970s* (Frankfurt a. Main/New York: Campus Verlag, 2017).

⁴⁸ Silvio Pons and Stephen A. Smith, eds., *The Cambridge History of Communism. Volume I. World Revolution and Socialism in One Country 1917-1941* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).; Norman Naimark, Silvio Pons, and Sophie Quinn-Judge, eds., *The Cambridge History of Communism. Volume II. The Socialist Camp and World Power 1941–1960s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017). Juliane Fürst, Silvio Pons, and Mark Selden, eds., *The Cambridge History of Communism. Volume III. Endgames? Late Communism in Global Perspective, 1968 to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholar Press, 2017).

⁴⁹ Silvio Pons, *La Rivoluzione Globale. Storia Del Comunismo Internazionale 1917-1991* (Torino: Einaudi, 2012).; also translated into English: Silvio Pons, *The Global Revolution: A History of International Communism 1917-1991* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

⁵⁰ Many reflections on the state of the art on GDR research in: Magda Martini and Thomas Schaarschmidt, eds., *Riflessioni Sulla Ddr. Prospettive Internazionali e Interdisciplinari Vent'anni Dopo* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2011).

⁵¹ Klaus Schroeder, *Der SED-Staat: Geschichte Und Strukturen Der DDR 1949-1990*, 3rd ed. (Köln: Böhlau, 2013).; Dierk Hoffmann, *Von Ulbricht Zu Honecker. Die Geschichte Der DDR 1949-1989* (Berlin Brandenburg: be.bra, 2013).; Marcus Böick, Anja Hertel, and Franziska Kuschel, eds., *Aus Einem Land vor Unserer Zeit. Eine Lesereise durch Die DDR-Geschichte* (Berlin: Metropol, 2012).; Ulrich Mähler, *Kleine Geschichte Der DDR*, 4 überarb. Aufl. (München: C. H. Beck, 2004).Ulrich Mähler, *Kleine Geschichte Der DDR*, 4 überarb. Aufl. (München: C. H. Beck, 2004).Ulrich Mähler, *Kleine Geschichte Der DDR*, 4 überarb. Aufl. (München: C. H. Beck, 2004).

⁵² Corey Ross, *The East German Dictatorship* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).; Stephan Gerd-Rüdiger, Andreas Herbst, and Christine Krauss, eds., *Die Parteien Und Organisationen Der DDR. Ein Handbuch* (Berlin: Dietz, 2002). Dietrich Staritz, *Geschichte Der DDR* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1996).

historians, of very different extraction: the British Mary Fulbrook⁵³ and the Italian Enzo Collotti.⁵⁴ Besides social histories of the GDR,⁵⁵ and some publications on the SED,⁵⁶ I have gone through various useful, more methodological works on the nature and the interpretations about the East German dictatorship,⁵⁷ on its international dimension,⁵⁸ and on the relations between the state and local administrations.⁵⁹

On the historiography of the Italian Communist Party,⁶⁰ valid general works, which represent the basis of this dissertation, have been published since the 1970s, both by Italian⁶¹ and non-Italian

⁵³ Mary Fulbrook, *Power and Society in the GDR 1961-1979. The "Normalization of Rule"?* (New York-Oxford: Berghahn, 2008).; Mary Fulbrook, *The People's State. East German Society from Hitler to Honecker* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).; Mary Fulbrook, *Anatomy of a Dictatorship: Inside the GDR 1949-1989* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

⁵⁴ Collotti, Marxist contemporary historian, and a Germanist, is author of two milestones in Italian literature about divided Germany. I am referring to his pioneering work, in Italy, which includes a history of the "two Germanies" published in 1968 and its follow-up in 1992, after the German reunification: Enzo Collotti, *Storia Delle Due Germanie* (Torino: Einaudi, 1968).; Enzo Collotti, *Dalle Due Germanie Alla Germania Unita* (Torino: Einaudi, 1992). Both are still of great interpretative value and historiographical acumen, despite the perceivable, but also somehow natural impact of the periods in which the two books have been drafted, on the political views of Collotti and his sympathy towards the GDR. On this point, see Lutz Klinkhammer, "Enzo Collotti e Il Problema Tedesco Nel XX Secolo," in *Enzo Collotti e La Memoria Del Novecento*, ed. Simonetta Soldani (Firenze: Firenze University Press, 2011), 35–60.

⁵⁵ Hartmut Kaelble, Jürgen Kocka, and Hartmut Zwahr, eds., *Sozialgeschichte Der DDR* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1994).; on social politics since the 1970s, see Beatrix Bouvier, *Die DDR – Ein Sozialstaat? Sozialpolitik in Der Ära Honecker* (Bonn: Dietz, 2002).

⁵⁶ Andreas Malycha and Peter Jochen Winters, *Die SED. Geschichte Einer Deutschen Partei* (München: Beck Verlag, 2009).; Andreas Malycha, *Die SED: Geschichte Ihrer Stalinisierung 1946-1953* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2000).

⁵⁷ The fact that the GDR has been a dictatorship has been established, but there are many different interpretations about it. Particularly useful for my work has been the category of *Fürsorgediktatur*, "welfare dictatorship" developed by Jarausch: Konrad Jarausch, "Care and Coercion: The GDR as Welfare Dictatorship," in *Dictatorship as Experience. Towards a Socio-Cultural History of the GDR*, ed. Konrad Jarausch (New York-Oxford: Berghahn, 1999), 47–72.; Jürgen Kocka, "The GDR: A Special Kind of Modern Dictatorship," in *Dictatorship as Experience. Towards a Socio-Cultural History of the GDR*, ed. Konrad Jarausch (New York-Oxford: Berghahn, 1999), 17–26.; Martin Sabrow, "Dictatorship as Discourse: Cultural Perspectives on SED Legitimacy," in *Dictatorship as Experience. Towards a Socio-Cultural History of the GDR*, ed. Konrad Jarausch (New York-Oxford: Berghahn, 1999), 195–212.

⁵⁸ Pfeil, *Die DDR Und Der Westen. Transnationale Beziehungen 1949-1989.*; and, about the GDR and the Third World, the recent volume: Quinn Slobodian, *Comrades of Color. East Germany in the Cold War World* (New York-Oxford: Berghahn, 2015).

⁵⁹ Also see Mary Fulbrook, "Democratic Centralism and Regionalism in the GDR," in *German Federalism. Past, Present, Future* (New York-Oxford: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 146–71. Many are the works by Palmowski on the local *Heimat* and regional identities in the GDR: Jan Palmowski, *Inventing a Socialist Nation: Heimat and the Politics of Everyday Life in the GDR, 1945-90* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).; Jan Palmowski, "Learning the Rules: Local Activists and the Heimat," in *Power and Society in the GDR 1961-1979. The "Normalization of Rule"?*, by Mary Fulbrook (New York-Oxford: Berghahn, 2008), 151–80., and Jan Palmowski, "Regional Identities and the Limits of Democratic Centralism in the GDR," *Journal of Contemporary History* 41, no. 3 (July 2003): 503–26.

⁶⁰ Achille Conti, *Dirigenti Comunisti. Reclutamento, Selezione e Formazione in Una Regione Rossa (1945-1991)* (Roma: Carocci, 2017).

⁶¹ Most of the early works on the PCI were written by communists, starting from Paolo Spriano: Paolo Spriano et al., *Problemi Di Storia Del Partito Comunista Italiano* (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1976).; Paolo Spriano, *Storia Del Partito Comunista Italiano, V, La Resistenza. Togliatti e Il Partito Nuovo* (Torino: Einaudi, 1975). Among the more recent, general publications, see Albertina Vittoria, *Storia Del PCI 1921-1991* (Roma: Carocci, 2006). Interesting contributions are inside the collection of essays: Roberto Gualtieri, *Il Pci Nell'Italia Repubblicana 1943-1991* (Roma: Carocci, 2001). See, again, Aldo Agosti, *Storia Del Partito Comunista Italiano 1921-1991* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1999).; Giorgio Galli, *Storia Del PCI: Livorno 1921, Rimini 1991* (Milano: Pantarei, 1993).; Marcello Flores and Nicola Gallerano, *Sul Pci. Un'interpretazione storica* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1992).

authors.⁶² Useful have also been publications which set a comparison with the French Communist Party (PCF),⁶³ while, for the international dimension of the PCI, I have mostly used the works by Carlo Spagnolo⁶⁴ and Michele Di Donato.⁶⁵ Fundamental were, then, works which also take into account the PCI and local administrations in the three regions and areas involved in the twinnings with the GDR: Emilia-Romagna,⁶⁶ Tuscany⁶⁷ and the industrial belt around Turin, in Piedmont.⁶⁸ With regard to this last specific point, I aim at giving my contribution on the international dimension of Italian red local administrations and the meaning of this dimension for their self-representation as political subjects.

1.2 Case studies

I have decided to work on seven case studies. While the criteria and the reasons for the selection of the town twinnings, and the details of their parables, will be fully explained in section 3.1.1 of this dissertation, what I have chosen to do here is to simply list them, clarifying the categories they belong to. The first block of case studies is the one of the towns twinned through municipalities, communal administrations. It is the case with Bologna and Leipzig, Carpi and Wernigerode, Reggio Emilia and Schwerin, and Collegno and Neubrandenburg. The second block is the one of towns twinned via provincial administrations, such as Livorno and Rostock. The third and last block of towns comprises the local articulations of the labor unions. Part of this group are the twinnings between the CGIL of Modena and Potsdam's FDGB; and the unions of Bologna and Suhl. The regular way to establish twinnings was via the communal institutions: the other two solutions were usually

⁶² Donald L. Blackmer, *Unity in Diversity. Italian Communism and the Communist World* (Cambridge: M. I. T. Press, 1968).; Donald Sassoon, *Togliatti e La via Italiana Al Socialismo. Il Pci Dal 1944 Al 1964* (Torino: Einaudi, 1980).;

⁶³ Marc Lazar, *Maisons Rouges. Les Partis Communistes Français et Italien de La Libération à Nos Jours* (Paris: Aubier, 1992).; Donald L. Blackmer and Sidney Tarrow, *Communism in Italy and France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975).

⁶⁴ Carlo Spagnolo, *Sul Memoriale Di Yalta. Togliatti e La Crisi Del Movimento Comunista Internazionale (1956-1964)* (Roma: Carocci, 2007).

⁶⁵ Michele Di Donato, *I Comunisti Italiani e La Sinistra Europea. Il Pci e i Rapporti Con Le Socialdemocrazie (1964-1984)* (Roma: Carocci, 2015).

⁶⁶ See, among many works, two fundamental ones: Roberto Finzi, ed., *L'Emilia-Romagna. Storia d'Italia. Le Regioni Dall'Unità a Oggi* (Torino: Einaudi, 1997)., and Fausto Anderlini, *Terra Rossa. Comunismo Ideale Socialdemocrazia Reale: Il Pci in Emilia-Romagna* (Bologna: Istituto Gramsci, 1990).; and Alberto De Bernardi, Alberto Preti, and Fiorenza Tarozzi, eds., *Il Pci in Emilia-Romagna. Propaganda, Sociabilità, Identità* (Bologna: Clueb, 2004).. Here, I will not go into the details of Bologna and the single cities.

⁶⁷ Ballini, Luigi Lotti, and Mario G. Rossi, *La Toscana Nel Secondo Dopoguerra* (Milano: FrancoAngeli, 1991).; Giorgio Mori, ed., *La Toscana. Storia d'Italia. Le Regioni Dall'Unità a Oggi* (Torino: Einaudi, 1986).

⁶⁸ Bruno Maida, ed., *Alla Ricerca Della Simmetria: Il Pci a Torino, 1945-1991* (Torino: Rosenberg & Sellier, 2004).; Stephen Hellman, "Militanti e Politica Nel Triangolo Industriale," in *L'identità Comunista. I Militanti, La Struttura, La Cultura Del Pci*, ed. Aris Accornero, Renato Mannheim, and Chiara Sebastiani (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1983), 385–432.; Daniela Adorni and Marco Sguayzer, *Oltre La Metropoli: Per Una Storia Di Collegno Dalla Ricostruzione Agli Anni Novanta* (Milano: Ledizioni, 2013).; and Cecilia Bergaglio, *Dai Campi e Dalle Officine: Il Partito Comunista in Piemonte Dalla Liberazione Al "Sorpasso"* (Torino: Edizioni SEB27, 2013).

looked for in case some limitations were posed by the state, or the prefectures, since the GDR was not a recognized country on the diplomatic level until 1973. Despite these differences, for the sake of simplification, I have chosen to use the term *town twinning* for all these cases, so as to highlight first, the fact that the first initiative came from the municipalities and that most of the cases were related to communal bonds; and second, the fact that the *towns as broad subjects* were the central characters of these relations, as *representatives* of the local level.

1.3 A toolbox for interpretation: asymmetry

In this research, I employ the concept of *asymmetry*, not as a theoretical category, but as a *research tool*, to construct an explanatory background, and a red thread that is crossing the whole dissertation. This section serves as a statement, as a sort of introductory path to the relations I will take into consideration, while the following subchapters (1.4, 1.5 and 1.6) will embrace it more in detail, connecting it to sources' criticism and methodological orientations and issues. The questions from which this segment first proceeds are the following: when taking the bonds between Italian communist administrators and the GDR into account, to which extent are these relations reciprocal? Is an asymmetry to be noticed at all? How far do the asymmetrical starting conditions affect the reciprocity of the exchanges?

Fundamental asymmetries result on many levels: in terms of social and political systems in Italy and the GDR, but also in the degree of state presence in the organization of local initiatives. In post-1989 research, the GDR has universally been interpreted as a *dictatorship*. As Mary Fulbrook has asserted – and with her I agree – of course the GDR «was a dictatorship. But it was not only a dictatorship», or a “communist state”: it was also a “modern industrial society”.⁶⁹ In this sense, Fulbrook, and before her other scholars, such as Konrad Jarausch, has taken position against a reading of the East German political system which relies on the classical theory on totalitarianism. This last theory, for both of them, would focus «on the application of state power», while «it underestimates the importance of the collaboration of the masses and proceeds from a simplistic model of action and reaction that leaves social processes largely unexplained». ⁷⁰ To these brief statements, we could add the reflections by Magda Martini, who has likewise explained that the GDR's reality was much more complex than just definitions such as “police state” or “Stasi dictatorship” would suggest.⁷¹ However, despite the different general definitions applied recently (totalitarian, late-totalitarian, post-

⁶⁹ Fulbrook, *The People's State.*, p. 11.

⁷⁰ Jarausch, “Care and Coercion.”, p. 53.

⁷¹ Magda Martini, *La cultura all'ombra del muro. Relazioni culturali tra Italia e Ddr (1949-1989)*, Il Mulino, Bologna 2007, p. 9.

totalitarian, authoritarian) or the ones referred to specific aspects (“welfare dictatorship”⁷², “participatory dictatorship”⁷³), everyone agrees on its fundamental dictatorial nature. With the creation of the GDR in 1949 the Soviet hierarchies, together with the East German communist political élites, established a political-ideological dominance and a state structure based on the principle of democratic centralism.⁷⁴ This implied the monopoly of the SED (de facto the country’s only party)⁷⁵ in political life, an economic organization built on a Stalinist develop model, and repressive measures against manifestations of dissent. Democratic centralism had primarily political consequences, related to freedom of speech and expression, opposition, ideological conformity, but also organizational ones. The centrality of power also applied, for instance, to local processes: most of them – included town twinnings and their practical management – were state-driven.

Being stably inserted in the Western bloc, instead, Italy had a democratic structure and was not subjected to an occupying power or to a unique party system – although, of course, it is arguable to what extent the US also had a strong, though more implicit political and economic influence. However, at least the formal democracy of the political system, together with the high autonomy regional and local areas as established by the new Republican Constitution of 1948, led to a very different setting. These elements did not only result in a higher degree of freedom of expression, but also in a greater liberty of town and province councils in deciding about the twinnings. *Gemellaggi* were carried out as independent politics.

Proceeding from the differences between the two state structures, a further asymmetry can be identified in the two communist parties. Contrarily to the “unified” and ruling SED,⁷⁶ the Italian Communist Party was not only inserted in a multi-party system, but it was also at the opposition – a minority political force within a country ruled by the Christian democrats. Despite the PCI’s strong

⁷² Jarausch, “Care and Coercion.”

⁷³ Fulbrook, *The People’s State*.

⁷⁴ Collotti, *Storia Delle Due Germanie.*, p. 781.

⁷⁵ While it is true that all Soviet-inspired National Fronts (Democratic Blocs) in Central and Eastern Europe were formally constituted as umbrella organizations of several political parties, the minor, non-communist parties served exclusively as a façade of democracy for international public opinion. They had no executive impact and, albeit some of their leaders were installed to nominally hold high political offices, those were often run by communists directly. There are cases where politicians had a double party affiliation at the same time. On this, see Andreas Malycha and Peter Jochen Winters, *Die SED. Geschichte Einer Deutschen Partei* (München: Beck Verlag, 2009). On the multi-party system and its acritical reception by Italian communists in the early 1960s: «On the issue of the multi-party system the discussion has been really broad. We talked directly with the party executives and we can conclude as follows: it is not that these parties are pure fiction, a label without content, just: they are not proper parties, but interbranch organizations, centers of contact with certain groups, with farmers, professionals, catholic and protestant environments, etc. For the working class, Werner has reiterated the exclusivity of the SED», in Fondazione Istituto Gramsci Roma (from now on FIG), Archivio PCI (from now on APCI), Fondo Estero, “Rdt”, 1963, mf 0492, p. 2724, *Relazione di Luciano Lusvardi, del 18 dicembre 1963, sul Convegno di informazione sulla RDT svoltosi a Berlino a cui hanno partecipato 50 rappresentanti dei partiti comunisti dei paesi capitalistici*.

⁷⁶ On the complex and contradictory process of unification of the SPD and KPD in East Germany, see: Malycha and Winters, *Die SED*.

impact on society, especially in local government, its situation clearly cannot be equated with the one in the GDR.

The issue of reciprocity is strictly connected to the one of asymmetry. When pointing at the real focus of this research – town twinnings and the translocal political-administrative communication across the Iron Curtain – to what extent was the Italy-GDR relation entirely reciprocal? Did interest and knowledge flow in the same amount from one side to another, or was there a disparity? I argue that this problem can be interpreted against the backdrop of the asymmetrical relation between the two socio-political systems: asymmetry affects reciprocity. In the GDR, the state-driven, centralized organization of local issues ensured that the twinnings, and the technical-administrative knowledge exchange which passed through them, were firmly inserted in a controlled propaganda frame, mostly aimed at the diplomatic recognition of the GDR by Italy and, after 1973, at the diffusion of the country's realizations. This led to a substantial rigidity in the organization of the twinnings and in the treatment of political issues. This is not to affirm that the awareness about the political aims of the twinnings was not present in Italy: there, town twinnings were essential for the maintenance and improvement of commercial contacts with the Eastern bloc and subject to general political interests, too. However, for Italian local councils, starting a twinning with the East and with the GDR was still a free political choice, and not something imposed. The degree of freedom and *agency* that single towns had reflected, in my view, directly on the local economic structures and on the interest towards technical-administrative acknowledgments in the field of local welfare policies. Such interest mostly came from the Italian side. In this sense, the concepts of *asymmetry* and *reciprocity* are declined negatively.

The discourse is different when the perceptions and the micro-historical analysis of personal stories and bonds are concerned. In this case, the relations – as far as we can see from the documents – seem to be more mutual and the two concepts thus acquire a more positive, constructive meaning. In principle, East Germans and Italians both expressed opinions and points of view on the visitors and people they had been in contact with, during the delegations' exchanges. A communication, be it positive or negative, always took place: on the *microhistorical* level, we can thus talk about a fundamentally symmetrical relationship and a reciprocal exchange.

1.4 Sources criticism

The differences between Italy and the GDR can not only be seen in the contrast between East and West, dictatorship and democracy, single-party state and minority party, centralization and decentralization. The concept of asymmetry can be used as an interpretative tool in the criticism of

sources, too. There is a substantial imbalance in both the quantity and quality of the archival documents and interviews I have collected: the Italian side significantly overcomes the German one. One of the reasons for this lies in the travel possibilities themselves: East Germans could not reach Italy easily, due to the Travel Board's limitations. The issue related to the difficulties in the movements is directly connected to the one of the number of people rotating around the twinning's systems traceable from the archival documents, which was consequently much higher in Italy. Most of the impressions and comments which is possible to find today therefore come from Italians who went to Germany. The German participants indicated in the documents were few and oftentimes high-rank political and administrative personalities. At the time of my research, most of them had already died. Since I looked for my interviewees starting from the archives and the contacts I could obtain through the archives, German grassroots militants have mostly been lost in this process. If they were present or active in the exchanges as labor unionists, workers, young boys and girls, they disappeared in the papers, in the shadow of the administrative machine of the GDR dictatorship. One possible escape from this stasis, and of a possible expansion of my work in the future, could be represented by a collection of German testimonies right by grassroots activists. If possible, that would most likely provide a more bottom-up, detailed perspective on the GDR side. This operation, however, would require an in-depth research in the societal contexts of the twinned towns I have analyzed, beyond a well-known public context, so as to identify people who were not really visible. This way, a path towards more open testimonies, comments and opinions about that time could be started, which could perhaps depict the dark sides of the GDR in a more appropriate way, besides the standardized and official vision that *always* emerges from propaganda documents and interviews by protagonists of the political-administrative sphere. While such a work would not completely overcome what is certainly a structural limit – and would likewise not take away the nature of this research as a history of political-cultural transfers with a focus on Italy – it could probably add some more authenticity to my otherwise, and inevitably, dry and controlled sources – mirror of a propagandistic logic which also reflected in the communication of the GDR state-driven local administrations. Against the backdrop of the state of sources, and of the consequent weaker (but still existent) focus on East Germany, the possibility of a “truly” transnational dialogue between the two sides could also be questioned. I have tried to show this dialogue as much as I could with the material at my disposal, in the constant attempt of defusing the expression *transnational* from what I perceive to oftentimes be too high expectations – on the one hand, by being aware that a *true* and *fruitful* communication among different countries is a pretty uncertain and relative concept (especially during the Cold War, in a strongly mediated and controlled communicative context); on the other hand, by employing the

concept of *translocality* (see 1.5), which could in my view better picture an international dialogue starting from the bottom-up and opening new communication channels.

Archives

Overall, the sources I have found consist of different typologies. A list of the visited archives is provided at the end of this dissertation. In this space, I will limit myself to a categorization of the sources. I believe it is more beneficial not to divide them regarding their exact provenance (for instance communal archives, state archives, labor union archives), but on the basis of spatial levels. For this reason, I have compartmentalized the sources into three main categories: documents from the *macro* level, documents from a *meso* level (regional, or from institutions that are neither state-driven nor local), and documents from archives of the twin towns involved in the exchanges at the *micro* level (here, I include communal, provincial and local labor unions' documents).

The national archives have been the starting point, providing the general context for this research: in the *Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde*,⁷⁷ I have found general materials about Italy-GDR contacts and relations between high-level political personalities, together with lists of cities with which the dedicated GDR state organization called for local contacts. These lists have constituted the springboard for my work and have allowed me to first contact the communal archives of both the Italian and German towns, in order to investigate whether those twinnings had really been implemented or had only remained at the level of ideas. Part of the national, central archives from the German side was also the *Behörde des Bundesbeauftragten für die Stasiunterlagen* (BStU), likewise located in Berlin, which stores documents produced from the former *Ministerium für Staatssicherheit der Ddr* (Stasi). I have visited this archive looking specifically at Italians monitored by the Stasi, with special attention to the towns involved in the twinnings. While I found interesting general materials, I found no evidence that twinnings were used as a means to achieve information about Italy or that Italian administrators or militants were under strict surveillance. This could be due to the destruction

⁷⁷ The documents I have consulted there are stored both in the *Abteilung Deutsche Demokratische Republik* (Abteilung Ddr) and in the *Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen im Bundesarchiv* (SAPMO). The SAPMO hosts archival materials produced outside the state authority of the GDR state and allows insights into political decisions on control or regulations of state and society. It stores mostly documents from the offices of the SED and high-level personalities and from mass organizations connected to the party (for instance, the *Freie Deutsche Jugend* or the *Liga für Völkerfreundschaft*). The *Abteilung Ddr* instead, is responsible for the civil transmission of the central state machine of the GDR and its forerunner *Sowjetische Besatzungszone* (SBZ). This section stores materials coming from the different state branches and organs: the *Volkskammer* (People's Chamber), the *Staatsrat* (the State Council), or the various governmental departments devoted to Justice, Finance, Education, Work, Culture, etc. Besides a huge collection of international newspaper articles on the Italian internal political situation and foreign policy, both these two sections (SAPMO and *Abteilung Ddr*) include papers on international relations with Italy on the state level from the beginning of the 1950s.

of a part of the documents after the fall of the Berlin Wall, or to the effective lack of observation of the twinnings. It could also be that hosts from twin towns were treated with particular care, because of the role they played for the GDR's propagandistic aims. I did not visit governmental archives in Italy, such as the one of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as most of the documents have already been published in existing works.⁷⁸ Anyway, these sources are less beneficial for the Italian side. They serve more as a context, as twinnings were organized mostly from below. However, still regarding the national level, I have visited the central archives of the CGIL, the Italian labor union, located in Rome. Here, I found materials about correspondences and contacts with the German Democratic Republic far before the twinnings had started, already from the end of the 1950s. Besides the political-ideological official declarations, in this case too there are examples of knowledge exchange through the sending of delegations, as it appears in chapter 3.

The middle level has often led to documents that could better explain the political meaning of these contacts, compared to the merely official contacts. It is the case with archives such as the ones of the Gramsci foundation, both in Rome and Bologna, for the PCI; the Turati foundation in Florence for the *Partito socialista italiano* (PSI); and the Feltrinelli foundation in Milan for the papers of Raniero Panzieri.

Finally, the last corpus of sources is the one at the *micro* level, thus coming from communal, provincial and unionist archives on the local ground, both in Italy and Germany. These documents have opened up the research possibilities. Besides town twinning contracts – official documents, signed and countersigned – I have found correspondences among mayors, assessors and council members, so people who were actively involved in the management of local administration. Their tone in the letters varied: whereas it was often confined to a strictly administrative language, sometimes personal notes were also employed. Moreover, the administrators often wrote reports of their visits. These are important materials for my research, as they provide significant insights into the activities in which the delegations were involved, and most of all register the impressions of the visitors and both their positive or negative comments on the system of the GDR. These are the sources I use the most. Through reports and correspondences, it has been possible to make assumptions about the interest of Italian local administrations toward the GDR's technical-administrative realizations on the local level (see chapter 5, 5.2), but also on the reciprocal imaginations between the Italian and German participants to delegations, be they party members, activists, or labor unionists. As a matter of fact, sometimes local archives also store documents, letters and reports drafted by grassroots activists. These people discussed about the GDR, both in negative and positive terms. While it is not

⁷⁸ Pöthig, *Italien Und Die DDR.*; Lill, *Völkerfreundschaft Im Kalten Krieg?*

easy to find these kinds of opinions in national or political archives, as everything was more heavily controlled, the freedom of each local archive to decide the criteria for the storage of the documents, the only relative political censorship on the sources, and sometimes their disorder, have allowed to find openly “heretical” positions, negative assessments, or letters containing personal opinions. To define this category of sources, we could use the term *ego-document*, which has been defined by Mary Fulbrook and Ulinka Rublack as «a source or ‘document’ – understood in the widest sense – providing an account of, or revealing privileged information about, the ‘self’ who produced it».⁷⁹ The possibility of finding these ego-documents, with limited control on the organization of the archives, represents one of the reasons why local materials (which include diaries and travel journals written by militants) are so valuable and qualitatively different compared to national sources. Besides these, I have also found journal collections or articles published on local newspapers, which helped reconstructing movements, travels and contacts. Research at this level has not always been easy. While some institutions still stored the documents in their archives, in some cases I had to notice that there was no easily accessible and ordered information about the twinings. In many cases, especially in Italian archives, the documents are stored in the mayor’s personal folders, with non-systematically organized materials. After visiting the archives, I have realized that a contact did not always necessarily lead to an official twinning.

Oral interviews

All these materials have been enriched by oral interviews. They are ten in total; the names of the interviewees, their short biographies and the place and time in which they have taken place are likewise at the end of this dissertation. Testimonies are a fundamental source for this research, as they allow on the one hand to understand the context of creation of the twinning; on the other, to integrate the sources and the information contained in the press with perspectives that often illuminate what was happening behind the scenes – behind the propaganda veil and the public representation of the contacts. However, at the same time, they raise methodological issues, that one needs to be aware of and constantly take into consideration.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ «The term itself, which is of relatively recent coinage – just over half a century old – has variants: while it is a term originating in Dutch that works well in several languages including both English and German, some scholars prefer the notion of ‘self-narratives’ or ‘testimonies to the self’ (*Selbstzeugnisse*), a term in use since the late nineteenth century, with corresponding differences in theoretical approach and emphasis from those who retain the notion of ‘ego-documents», in Mary Fulbrook and Ulinka Rublack, “In Relation: The ‘Social Self’ and Ego-Documents,” *German History* 28, no. 3 (n.d.): 263-72., p. 263.

⁸⁰ For an introduction to (Italian) oral history, from a militant point of view – the originary one – see Cesare Bermani, *Introduzione Alla Storia Orale. Storia, Conservazione Delle Fonti e Problemi Di Metodo*, vol. I (Roma: Odradek, 1999). About orality and the use of interviews, also see the recent work (among many others) by Alessandro Portelli, one of the fathers of oral history in Italy and not only: Alessandro Portelli, *Storie Orali. Racconto, Immaginazione, Dialogo* (Roma:

The first issue is related to the division of the interviewees in typologies and to the relation of these typologies with the different personal and political background of these people, their roles and positions in the public local administration, and the places where they come from and they have been working in. I have divided the interviewees in three main categories: the first is the one of administrators and local politicians – generally speaking, of standout political-administrative figures (former mayors, assessors, members of local councils) with a role at the local level. The second category is the one of the technicians and professionals: having a specific work and profession, they put it at the service of local administrations. They were thus not professional politicians, but – as members of the PCI or close to it – they collaborated with local administrations and were also considered important players in terms of technical knowledge transfer. The third category is the one that includes grassroots activists, as they were mainly involved in the leftist parties, labor unions, or party-led organizations and associations. These people generally did not assume responsibility roles. They could be communal workers and therefore be more informed about what was going on, but this category also includes teachers, young boys and girls, workers, who were to various degrees involved in politics and inserted in the leftist debate but not necessarily aware or actively interested in the contacts with the GDR itself and their strategic importance. In relation to all these three typologies of interviewees, I have obtained different depositions, which I will try to recall inside the text of this research.

A further issue that is worth considering is the age of the interviewees. It was not my purpose here to conduct a systematic work on this, as the number of my interviews do not allow generalizations, and this would not be my primary scope, anyway. What I have tried to do is to contextualize each testimony in the light of this aspect too, and to reflect on this element and on the way it may related the general political-cultural context the person is moving within. Some of these reflections are included in the section which regards discourses on generations (chapter 6).

A last, yet still fundamental issue to address the way it is possible to cope with individual memories. These interviews have been conducted, on average, forty years after most of the delegation exchanges happened. Of course, this aspect deserves attention, but I would say it does not represent an obstacle. When I use the interviews to fill gaps in the information I have gathered, memory can often be verified, counterchecked or sustained by archival documents. The problems arise when testimonies work as tools to narrate reciprocal imaginations, as in this case it is the very perspective of the interviewed and their experience that matters, and that is put under the spotlight. Personal

Donzelli, 2017). For a general overview on methodologies and problems of oral interviews and oral history, see Bruno Bonomo, *Voci Della Memoria. L'uso Delle Fonti Orali Nella Ricerca Storica* (Roma: Carocci, 2013).

perceptions are always to be understood against the backdrop of subjective experiences. The memory of an experience is also very subjective. For this reason, I have decided to give to memory and subjectivity their own, separated space. In-depth reflections on the GDR memories through interviews and the methodological issues connected to them can thus be found in chapter 6.

Overall, I have conducted eleven interviews. All of them have been realized with former local administrators and politicians or with militants. The process I have followed in order to find the people to interview was similar for each town. I have usually started from the communal archives, collecting all the names of organizers or participants of the twinning exchanges that appeared in the sources and, where possible, basic information about them (date of birth, role in the party, labor union or local administration). Starting from these lists, I have looked for their names in old and more recent telephone books, and/or asked the archives' personnel, in case some of them were well-known personalities. Depending on the size of the town, on the kind of twinning, on the depth of personal relationships that had been built within that context and the grade of the citizens' involvement in the twinning, in some cases I was able to find more people, in other less. Although it may sound superfluous at a first glance, it has been more difficult to find old administrators than former participants of delegations now in their sixties or seventies, simply because of the age factor: these were boys and girls in the 1960s and 1970s, when they were sent to the GDR, usually through channels like the communist youth. Also, among the people I was able to contact, there has been a further selection element: these eight interviews only take into account those who voluntarily expressed the will to narrate stories about their GDR and Italian experiences.

As far as the countries are concerned, I only collected only one German interview, while all the others are Italian. It has been easier for me to find contacts through Italian communal archives and the Italian towns I have visited, not least for practical reasons, because I was able to spend more time there. In Germany, my archival visits were shorter and more targeted, and in most cases, the documents I looked at did not provide much information about the personalities involved. Furthermore, the number of people who participated and were involved to various degrees in the twinnings was definitely higher in Italy than in Germany, and this had a weight on the possibilities of finding potential interviewees.

I have collected every oral testimony as a semi-open conversation, employing the method of the semi-structured interview.⁸¹ After a first contact, via email, or phone, I have met the interviewees in the place they proposed, or we agreed upon together, leaving them the freedom to start talking

⁸¹ Atkinson, Robert. *L'intervista Narrativa*. Milano: Raffaello Cortina Editore, 2002.; Fideli, Roberto, and Roberto Marradi, "Intervista". *Enciclopedia delle Scienze Sociali*. Roma: Istituto Enciclopedia Italiana, 1996.

about what they preferred. Most of the times, they also narrated about their lives and political education, and that has also represented a useful instrument for me to understand who they were and where they came from. I solicited them whenever I felt it was needed. I had prepared a set of questions which were the same for everyone, but they came out in different moments and ways, being enriched or skipped, depending on personal sensibilities. I have tried not to force their memory at any time: whenever I have felt that there was no will to develop certain points, I have not insisted on them.

1.5 Methodological orientations

Translocality

When looking at international flows of ideas between Italy and the GDR on the local level, is historical comparison, with its focus on isolated spatial units and on structures instead of agencies, more fruitfully applicable? Would one first need to establish a comparative context between the countries in order to understand the emerging entanglements in a better way? Or, again, is it better to only look at relations and connections? In this research, I have chosen to work with transnational history.⁸² I find transnational approaches more beneficial, as they fit with the bottom-up, relational perspective I have chosen to adopt. In the following lines, after briefly giving account of previous discussions on different approaches, I will explain this choice and its meaning and the decision to work with transnational, relational history and in particular with the concept of *translocality*.

The dispute on the best way to look at international history started in the 1980s and 1990s, in the Franco-German research context. On the one hand, the comparative historians, mostly represented by the so-called “Bielefeld school”, supported the need to isolate historical units and compare them by looking at similarities and differences.⁸³ On the other hand, new, various approaches, more focused

⁸² The rise of the term „transnational“ is relatively recent. Many are the works which employ this expression in contemporary historiography, on the empirical level but also on the methodological one. See, for instance, Margrit Pernau, *Transnationale Geschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011).; Jürgen Osterhammel, “Transnationale Gesellschaftsgeschichte: Erweiterung oder Alternative?,” *Geschichte Und Gesellschaft* 27 (2001): 367–93. Patricia Clavin, “Introduction: Defining Transnationalism,” *Contemporary European History* 14, no. 4 (2005): 421–39. Akira Iriye, *Global and Transnational History. The Past, The Present, The Future* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

⁸³ For methodological notations on international comparison in social history, see Thomas Welskopp, “Stolpersteine Auf Dem Königsweg. Methodenkritische Anmerkungen Zum internationalen Vergleich in Der Gesellschaftsgeschichte,” *Archiv Für Sozialgeschichte* 35 (1995): 339–67. For an overview on historical comparison, Thomas Welskopp, “Comparative History,” European History Online (EGO), published by the Institute of European History (IEG), Mainz, December 3, 2010, <http://www.ieg-ego.eu/welskoppt-2010-en>. Within the discussion between comparativists and relational historians, among the defenders of historical comparison à la Bielefeld, although with differentiated positions, see Hans-Ulrich Wehler, “Transnationale Geschichte - Der Neue Königsweg Historischer Forschung?,” in *Transnationale Geschichte. Themen, Tendenzen Und Theorien*, ed. Gunilla Budde, Sebastian Conrad, and Oliver Janz (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006).; Heinz-Gerhard Haupt, “Historische Komparatistik in Der Internationalen Geschichtsschreibung,” in *Transnationale Geschichte. Themen, Tendenzen Und Theorien*, ed. Gunilla Budde, Sebastian Conrad, and Oliver Janz (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006). Jürgen Kocka, “Comparison and Beyond,” *History and Theory*, February 2003.; Heinz-Gerhard Haupt and Jürgen Kocka, “Comparative History: Methods, Aims, Problems,”

on transfers, interconnections, flows and mutual influences, emerged from France.⁸⁴ There is no need to enter this discussion in depth. What is relevant is that only recently this tension has left more space for cooperation and shaded positions. Traditional comparison has been challenged by new inputs given by cultural history and the many so-called “transnational approaches”.⁸⁵ One of the main criticisms was that comparativists were concentrating «too much on general social structures and functional contexts, rather than on the perspectives of affected and participating agents themselves», this last remark being made by two of the Bielefeld-school exponents themselves, Jürgen Kocka and Heinz-Gerhard Haupt.⁸⁶ Following these new inputs, more recent comparative studies have increasingly taken into account micro-histories, but a different analytical perspective with relational histories still subsists. For this very research, another interesting position connected to the family of comparativists is connected to the “asymmetrical comparison”, as thought, again, by Kocka. In this perspective, he has focused on the cases in which only one case is investigated carefully, whereas second, third or fourth ones only serve as comparative reference points.⁸⁷ Asymmetrical comparison

in *Comparison and History. Europe in Cross-National Perspective*, ed. Deborah Cohen and Maura O’Connor (New York-London: Routledge, 2004).; Heinz-Gerhard Haupt, Jürgen Kocka, and Philippe Ther, eds., “Comparisons, Cultural Transfers, And The Study of Networks: Toward a Transnational History of Europe,” in *Comparative and Transnational History. Central European Approaches and New Perspectives* (Basingstoke: Berghahn, 2009), 204–25. Hartmut Kaelble, *Der Historische Vergleich: Eine Einführung Zum 19. Und 20. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 1999). Recent works: Deborah Cohen and Maura O’Connor, eds., *Comparison and History. Europe in Cross-National Perspective* (New York-London: Routledge, 2004). Transnational history also embraces global history, in many declinations. For a general attempt of definition, see the already quoted Iriye, *Global and Transnational History*. For a focus on concepts, Hagen Schulz-Forberg, “The Spatial and Temporal Layers of Global History: A Reflection on Global Conceptual History through Expanding Reinhart Koselleck’s Zeitschichten into Global Spaces,” in *Historical Social Research (Historische Sozialforschung), Special Issue*, ed. Sebastian Dorsch and Susanne Rau, vol. 38, Space/Time Practices and the Production of Space and Time 145, 2013.

⁸⁴ See the main exponents of cultural transfers and *histoire croisée*: Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann, “Vergleich, Transfer, Verflechtung. Der Ansatz Der Histoire Croisée Und Die Herausforderung Des Transnationalen,” *Geschichte Und Gesellschaft*, December 2002.; Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann, “Penser l’histoire Croisée: Entre Empirie et Réflexivité,” *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, 2003.; Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann, “Beyond Comparison: Histoire Croisée and the Challenge of Reflexivity,” *History and Theory*, February 2006. On comparison and transfer: Michel Espagne, “Comparison and Transfer: A Question of Method,” in *Transnational Challenges to National History Writing*, ed. Matthias Middell and Lluís Roura (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 36–53. For a reflection on both methodological approaches, see Jürgen Osterhammel, “Transferanalyse Und Vergleich Im Fernverhältnis,” in *Vergleich Und Transfer: Komparatistik in Den Sozial-, Geschichts-, Und Kulturwissenschaften*, ed. Hartmut Kaelble (Frankfurt a. Main/New York: Campus Verlag, 2003), 439–466. Other ideas come from Matthias Middell and Lluís Roura, eds., *Transnational Challenges to National History Writing* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013)., and in particular from the essay in the volume Matthias Middell and Lluís Roura, eds., “Comparison or Transfer: A Question of Method,” in *Transnational Challenges to National History Writing* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 36–53.

⁸⁵ On the practices of comparing, see Angelika Epple, *Die Welt Beobachten. Praktiken Des Vergleichens* (Frankfurt a. Main/New York: Campus Verlag, 2015).

⁸⁶ Heinz-Gerhard Haupt and Jürgen Kocka, eds., *Comparative and Transnational History. Central European Approaches and New Perspectives* (Basingstoke: Berghahn, 2009)., p. 10.

⁸⁷ Jürgen Kocka, “Asymmetrical Historical Comparison: The Case of the German Sonderweg,” *History and Theory* 38, no. 1 (1999): 40–51.

has been defined as a method through which «one looks into another country, another society or another culture in order to better understand one's own».⁸⁸

To what extent does this dissertation represent a comparison or an asymmetrical comparison? I would say not entirely, and only in certain parts and aspects. For instance, in chapter 4, where I juxtapose the organization of local government in the two countries by pointing out contacts and distances, one may find comparative elements, while the idea of asymmetrical comparison could be applied when looking at the general *outcomes*, as well as at the focus on the Italian red local administration, which is a result of the asymmetrical research conditions and of the nature of the sources.

However, when concentrating on the *intentions* behind the research, on the use of documents and on other parts and aspects of it, it is clear to me that the general approach is not strictly comparative but relies heavily on a relational perspective. In chapter 4, besides describing the two systems and isolating certain aspects, I have insisted – through the use of documents that emphasize the perception of the “other” from both sides – on the *reciprocal views* between the two systems. This emerges also in chapter 5, where I am focusing on those which I have named *convergences*, *perceptions* and *imaginings*. The individuation of structures and patterns is not the primary aim, rather *interconnections* are under the spotlight.

Nevertheless, the employment of a transnational, relational approach is not free of methodological problems. *Transnational* is a dangerous term, as there is still not much agreement on its objective meaning, although there are certain characteristics that are generally recognized by most of the scholars and lead to a definition *ex negativo*. Firstly, transnational history is thought as an alternative to exclusively national-based history writings, although the terms of this alternative are still being discussed: some regard it as a possibility to leave national frames completely behind, some see it as an extension of national and nationalist approaches. Although I do agree with this anti-nationalistic approach as a political statement, I do not think this is the case with my research, where nation-states are still very present in the stories of the local administrations I am analyzing, and in general with the Cold War context, where territorial and ideological divisions are very clear. On this point, Patricia Clavin has explained very well that «whether compared or connected, the elements of this historical analysis still came in national-shaped bottles».⁸⁹ Secondly, as Philipp Ther among others has reminded, transnational history aims at going beyond the traditional way of doing political history (international relations or diplomatic history), focusing more on relations between cultures,

⁸⁸ Haupt and Kocka, *Comparative and Transnational History*., p. 5.

⁸⁹ Clavin, “Defining Transnationalism.”

societies or groups of societies and intentionally transcending «the boundaries of one culture or countries».⁹⁰ This is actually what I have tried to do here, focusing on political-cultural and social aspects of bilateral relations more closely. Thirdly, an important remark concerns the *kind* of communication that comes out from the relationship. One may think that it must only be positive in that context; instead, it can also be negative. Again, Patel has stressed that «transnational history [...] should be just as interested, if not more interested, in the suppression and subsiding, the diversion and destruction, the forgetting and fading of transnational relations».⁹¹ Patricia Clavin also makes this point, underlining that «the story of repulsion, rather than attraction, is so far an underplayed aspect of the history of transnational networks».⁹² It is also the case with municipalities in Italy and in the GDR. Sometimes the process of learning or exchange just did not happen, or political divergences eventually prevailed over connections and mutual understanding, leading to a failure or, most of the times, to decreased contacts. Again, the quality of relations changed through time. This is a central consideration as it is embracing the possibility that a uniquely positive communication was not always sure. Fourthly, and lastly, there is a consensus on considering “the transnational” not just as another layer to be added to the local, the regional, the national, or the global. Kiran Klaus Patel highlights that it «defies this logic of layers and can directly connect the local to the supranational or transcontinental».⁹³

In relation to this last point, I have decided to employ the category of *translocality*, as proposed by Andreas Langenohl. The concept, elaborated by the sociologist with reference to Europeanization practices in small towns through town twinning, makes the *concrete* effort to combine the transnational dimension and the attention on practices on the micro/local level. As Langenohl has stressed, the «main intention is to liberate the idea of practice from its narrow restriction to microprocesses alone without abandoning the focus on the localizations of practice».⁹⁴ Translocality can be advantageous for the analysis of Italian-East German communist communication across the Iron Curtain, in so far as it indicates processes which produce close interrelations between *people* in different places.

Microhistory

⁹⁰ Philippe Ther, “Beyond the Nation: The Relational Basis of a Comparative History of Germany and Europe,” *Central European History*, Vol. 36, No. 1, 45–73, 2003.

⁹¹ Kiran Klaus Patel, “Transnational History,” European History Online (EGO), published by the Institute of European History (IEG), Mainz, December 3, 2010, <http://www.ieg-ego.eu/patelk-2010-en>.

⁹² Clavin, “Defining Transnationalism.”

⁹³ Patel, “Transnational History.”

⁹⁴ Langenohl, *Town Twinning*.

From a disciplinary point of view, this research could be labeled as a political historical one in which elements of bottom-up administrative history, micro-histories of transnational activism and histories of (communist) identities coexist. In this sense, the choice of a translocal methodological approach is strictly connected to the decision of adopting a perspective “from below”. However, what does the expression “from below” mean, in the context of this dissertation?⁹⁵ The outcomes of my research suggest that the local, national, and international levels continuously and inextricably interacted with each other. In the chapters, I zoom on a case-by-case basis on these different levels, depending on the aspects of the town twinnings between Italy and the GDR which I aim at highlighting. Against the backdrop of this assumption, to what extent is microhistory beneficial to a study of Italy-GDR bottom-up relations? How can the lives of travelling communists, and their experiences and memories, be connected to the bigger structures?

In its initial conception, microhistory has been traditionally linked to national case studies and national-based research landscapes, in particularly Italy (with the modern historians Carlo Ginzburg⁹⁶ and Giovanni Levi⁹⁷) and, later on, France, the USA and Germany, with different declinations. In the Italian case, Ginzburg’s works were characterized by a strong focus on cultural analysis and everyday life. As Francesca Trivellato has recently highlighted, the follow-ups by other Italian microhistorians were characterized by a general «commitment to both empiricism and self-reflectivity», «a pronounced faith in the ability of individuals (mostly men) to shape the course of events».⁹⁸ As Jacques Revel has written, the French school had a stronger tendency towards the social sciences and reconceptualization, whereas the American one appeared to be more closely associated to «agency and narrative history», as key to a recovery of «the subjectivity, and even the interiority, of individual protagonists».⁹⁹ As a variation of microhistory, some German social historians, starting from the mid-1970s, have adopted the term *Alltagsgeschichte*, or history of everyday life. This term implied a step away from the prevailing tendency, in German historiography, to write social history that is more focused on broad historical structures and processes. The point of *Alltagsgeschichte*, as Geoff Eley has underlined, was to «develop a more qualitative understanding of ordinary people’s circumstances

⁹⁵ Simona Cerutti, “Who is below? E. P. Thompson, historien des sociétés modernes : une relecture,” *Annales HSS*, October 2015.

⁹⁶ The masterpiece of microhistory is traditionally considered Carlo Ginzburg, *Il Formaggio e i Vermi. Il Cosmo Di Un Mugnaio Del '500* (Torino: Einaudi, 1976). English edition: Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth Century Miller* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980).

⁹⁷ Giovanni Levi, *L'eredità Immateriale. Carriera Di Un Esorcista Nel Piemonte Del Seicento* (Torino: Einaudi, 1985).; Giovanni Levi, “The Origins of the Modern State and the Microhistorical Perspective,” in *Mikrogeschichte Makrogeschichte. Komplementar Oder inkommensurabel*, by Giovanni Levi et al. (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 1998), 53–82.

⁹⁸ Francesca Trivellato, “Microstoria, Microhistoire, Microhistory,” *French Politics, Culture & Society* 33, no. 1 (2015): 122–35., p. 126.

⁹⁹ Revel is quoted in Francesca Trivellato, *Microstoria*, p. 127.

and lives, both by investigating the material realities of daily existence at work, at home and at play [...] and by entering the inner world of popular experience in the workplace, the family, the neighborhood, the school».¹⁰⁰

More recently, however, many of these historians have to some extent adapted and updated their reflections to times of increasing globalization and to the consequent rise of world and global history, combining the *micro* with the *macro*, without contradictions. The historiographical interest in microhistory has shifted from «an anthropological mindset», which pulled «into the lives of demographically small communities», to «variations of temporal as much as spatial scales».¹⁰¹ Among others, in 1990, Natalie Zemon Davis has reflected on the possibility of putting together “classical social history” and “new social history”, that is – not only the social and the cultural aspects, but also the “big” frame and the “small” one. This perspective resonates well with the thoughts of Jacques Revel on local and global history. He argues that no hiatus or opposition exists between the two, and that what the experience of an individual, of a group, of a space has to add is a particular modulation of the global history.¹⁰²

Micro and macrohistory are thus research approaches that can and should overlap, to a certain extent. In the dissertation, I rely on this continuous play. When investigating technical-administrative issues, for instance, I will take communist or socialist local administrators, mayors, assessors, technicians into account. These people were responsible for the twinnings, fostered knowledge exchange with the GDR and introduced the results in their local political project. They kept contacts with higher spheres and related to national networks and the national and international political party system. They were locally-based, and nevertheless relevant within the broader communist network. In this case, it is possible to follow their paths and to narrate their human stories, besides the strictly political-administrative ones. The personal narrations are not used independently: they complete a broader frame. These individuals and their micro-histories help understanding more about political administrative contacts in the East-West transnational communist communication.

The discourse is different if we look at another category of actors involved in the twinnings. This group includes those who were part of the local communist societies: not only communist party militants, but also politicized families, pioneers, teachers and students, workers, farmers, officials and

¹⁰⁰ Geoff Eley, *Labor History, Social History, „Alltagsgeschichte“: Experience, Cultures and the Politics of the Everyday – A New Direction for German Social History?* in “The Journal of Modern History”, vol. 61, no. 2 (June 1989), pp. 297-343, p. 315.

¹⁰¹ Francesca Trivellato, *Microstoria*, p. 130.

¹⁰² «Il n'existe donc pas d'hiatus, moins encore d'opposition entre histoire locale et histoire globale. Ce que l'expérience d'un individu, d'un groupe, d'un espace permet de saisir, c'est une modulation particulière de l'histoire globale», Jacques Revel, *Micro-analyse et construction du social*, in Paolo Macry, Angelo Massafra, “Fra storia e storiografia: scritti in onore di Pasquale Villani”, p. 26; quoted in Francesca Trivellato, *Microstoria*, p. 129.

members of the trade unions, people participating at various levels in political, cultural, social organizations connected to the PCI. These people were involved in the delegations' exchanges, travelled to East Germany, and established connections with other citizens and activists there. In this case, their single, individual experiences, can be analyzed against the backdrop of a more traditional microhistorical approach. Looking at the role of international connections in the communist identity-building of activists, it is possible to reconstruct patterns of microsociability and ways of referring to the "other" within the transnational communist sphere; and to see to what extent personal and political stories were linked together.

I argue that such an open and dialogic microhistory can also well communicate with the use of oral interviews. As a matter of fact both approaches, microhistory and oral history – as Alessandro Casellato has recently stressed – were originally born from the need of «understanding society *as it is*, and not *as it should be*». ¹⁰³ Despite the differentiation that has characterized these two approaches since the end of the 1970s, their roots are mostly shared and connected. Through their use, I also aim at understanding the East-West communication during the Cold War *as it was*, on the ground, and not (only) as it should be, on the level of nation-states.

1.6 Methodological warnings: *mise-en-scène*

The possibility of a *mise-en-scène* – in this case, the tendency to set up in the occasion of visits from abroad – is something that needs to constantly be kept in mind. Italian delegations in the GDR visited former concentrations camps, factories, structures realized by the local administrations; they slept for short periods in hotels and touristic buildings; they visited the East German cultural heritage. We cannot know to what extent this happened, but we also cannot completely exclude that a certain level of *Inszenierung* was employed – thus a hiding, or at least an improvement, of the structures and spaces as they had been implemented in the GDR. On the one hand, this was a normal ceremonial aspect, and it also invested Italian towns, in the rarer cases in which East Germans visited the country. On the other, however, we can hypothesize that that element had an impact on the Italian perception of things – not casually, a feeling of suspicion often emerges in archival documents and interviews, with East German attitudes described as "fake" or not completely true. In this section, this represents only a methodological warning, to point out that this is an aspects that constantly needs to be taken into account. However, whenever it will emerge, I will emphasize it in the text.

¹⁰³ Alessandro Casellato, "L'orecchio e l'occhio. Storia Orale e Microstoria," *Italia Contemporanea* 275 (2014): 250–78., p. 256.

1.7 Language

A final remark regards the use of language and translation in this dissertation and the explanation of some choices. I have written in English, as a *lingua franca* between Italian and German, the languages of the case studies and of the sources I have analyzed. I have tried, as much as I could, to find a balance between a wise and not excessive use of the translations, and the readability of the text for an ideally international public. For this reason, whenever I found it necessary to insert long quotes in the texts, whether they came from publications, sources, or oral interviews, I have left them in their original language. Where they were short, instead, I have decided to translate them, integrating them in the text. The designations of the archival documents have been left in their original languages, too.

I have done most of the translations by myself: for this reason, I have avoided signaling that in each footnote, with the partial exception of the interviews, where specific or colloquial language was used, and I felt it was better to report the original quote. In some cases, I have translated more freely, so as to better communicate certain expressions or ideas. Conscious of the (always present, and ineradicable) risk of the “translator’s betrayal”, I take full responsibility for misreading, mistakes or inaccuracies that could have occurred.

2. Cold War entanglements¹⁰⁴

It is interesting to note that among the internal risks that threaten the communist regimes, the most important seems to be the possibility of creating social democratic alternatives [...]. Today it is interesting to detect that the communist parties in the Western countries [...], there where they have enough strength, seems to be pulled to behave as if they were social democrats.¹⁰⁵

Kaj Björn, Swedish delegate at the Copenhagen conference of the Socialist International in 1968, addressed these words to a public of socialist and social democratic representatives from all of Western Europe. Although no party was explicitly mentioned, it is relatively clear that Björn was referring to the Italian Communist Party (PCI) and its international positioning. At that time, the PCI was slowly but stably working not only in the direction of an increased Europeanization, but also towards a more democratic version of socialism, which could be more easily accepted in the Westernized context.¹⁰⁶ This ever-growing institutionalization of the PCI, which progressed in tandem with its transformation from a revolutionary to a governmental political force as the party's internal strategy, constituted the first reason behind external observers equating the Italian Communist Party to a social democratic actor. The second reason lies in the peculiarity of the Italian Socialist Party in the European context.¹⁰⁷ The PSI acted as a subordinate ally of the PCI until 1956, year in which it split off following the Budapest events. However, even after 1956, it was still not fully able to affirm itself as a powerful force: the already strong PCI remained the most popular party within the Italian left. The new identity of the PCI made it a possible dialogue counterpart in the eyes of Willy Brandt and the West German social democrats; however, at this stage, it is more accurate to talk about an explorative interest rather than about a concrete one: as Michele Di Donato has explained, «the diversity of the PCI was a fact, but the way it could be used politically appeared as less evident».¹⁰⁸ The SPD explored the possibility of working with the Italian communists by closely studying them and by organizing unofficial political meetings. Although the PCI never denied its

¹⁰⁴ For a reflection on recent international historiography on the Cold War, see Federico Romero, "Cold War Historiography at the Crossroads," *Cold War History* 14, no. 4 (2014): 685–703, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14682745.2014.950249>.

¹⁰⁵ IISH, SIA, b. 275, Council Conf. of the Socialist International, Copenhagen, August 1968, Speeches (1), quote by Kaj Björn, Swedish delegate; quoted in Italian in Michele Di Donato, *I Comunisti Italiani e La Sinistra Europea. Il PCI e i Rapporti Con Le Socialdemocrazie (1964-1984)* (Roma: Carocci, 2015), p. 70.

¹⁰⁶ Europeanization came at a late stage for the PCI. At least until 1955, the Party was against the European project of integration. On this, see Linda Risso, "Against the 'New Wehrmacht': The Italian Communists' Opposition to the European Integration Process, 1950-55," in *Politics and Culture in Post-War Italy*, ed. Linda Risso and Monica Boria (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholar Press, n.d.), 164–86.

¹⁰⁷ On the relation between PCI and PSI after 1968 and in relation to the dissent in the East, see Valentine Lomellini, *L'appuntamento Mancato. La Sinistra Italiana e Il Dissenso Nei Regimi Comunisti (1968-1989)* (Firenze: Mondadori-Le Monnier, 2010).

¹⁰⁸ Di Donato, *I Comunisti Italiani e La Sinistra Europea. Il PCI e i Rapporti Con Le Socialdemocrazie (1964-1984)*. Di Donato, *I Comunisti Italiani e La Sinistra Europea. Il PCI e i Rapporti Con Le Socialdemocrazie (1964-1984)*, p. 72.

ideological ties to the Soviet Union until 1989, the issue of its “social democratization” has been long discussed among scholars since the 1960s, especially when looking at its role and weight at all geographical levels, and specifically on the local ground. This is the reason why West Germany – and the SPD in particular – cannot be ignored when looking at the bilateral links between Italy and the GDR at the local level. It represents the third actor, the “elephant in the room” that needs to be taken into consideration in the analysis.

I will discuss the problem of Italian “red” local governments and their links to East Germany against this backdrop by highlighting the fundamental political-ideological loyalty of the PCI to the Soviet bloc, despite disagreements, and at the same time by emphasizing its pragmatic attitude as well as its attempt to act as an institutionalized political force of the West, thus referring to the SPD experience.

If the latter topic will be better explored in the next sections of the dissertation, especially with regards to Italy-GDR administrative exchanges, the present chapter is specifically conceived to deliver what could be defined as an “interpretative context” that takes West Germany into account. Section 2.2, in particular, will provide a chronological narration of the *triangular* relations between Italy, the GDR and the Federal Republic, thus consistently pointing out the importance of West Germany’s presence and role; in governmental relations, in the contacts with the Italian Center-left governments, but with particular attention to the PCI-SPD dialogue. Section 2.1, instead, has been conceived as a more general, explanatory introduction on the role of the two superpowers in the so-called “German question” between 1945 and the mid-1970s. It provides the necessary background to delve into German-German (or inner-German, for the FRG) relations and the various phases of the East-West conflict in Europe, focusing for instance both on *détente*, on Willy Brandt’s *Ostpolitik*, and on the most important caesurae (watersheds) in international and European politics. Ultimately, this section will introduce the “fundamental treaty” between the two Germanies, which played a key role in opening the way for GDR’s diplomatic recognition by Western countries and by Italy, in 1973. Focusing on the meaning of the treaty and its consequences allows us to better understand town twinnings, as their whole story starts in the context of the campaign for recognition and unfolded in the previous years.

2.1 The role of USA and USSR in the “German question”

The expression “German question”, referred to the postwar era, generally indicates a set of issues: the division of Germany after the Potsdam agreement, the birth of two German republics in 1949 – independent from each other but subordinate to their respective occupying forces – their links

to conflicting political and military alliances and the legitimacy of the second state on German territory, the German Democratic Republic.¹⁰⁹ The term also refers to the consequences of such divisions on international politics and on the evolution of the international actors' policies.

The Potsdam agreement, signed in August 1945, led to the decision, by the victorious powers of WWII, to divide Germany in four zones: the American, British, French and Soviet. The same partition was decided for the city of Berlin, although in this case the Soviet part was bigger and surrounded the other ones, which substantially remained inside the Eastern side as an enclave.¹¹⁰ Furthermore, following both the Yalta and Potsdam's decisions, Germany was forced to pay a considerable amount of money as war reparations to the Soviet Union, and lost all its territories to the East of the artificially established Oder-Neisse line.

The reasons that steered to a more acute crisis between the four powers in the second half of the 1940s are manifold. On the one hand, the arm-wrestling was a direct result of Western fears of an excessive expansion of the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe. The containment policy towards the USSR has been identified as one of the main reasons behind the establishment of the Marshall plan – which provided economic aid for the Western European countries – and, more generally, behind the consolidation of the Western bloc. On the other hand, the Soviets were also not satisfied with the conduct of the Western forces, which were not fulfilling the payment of war reparations, openly challenging the decisions that had been jointly taken in Potsdam. The tension clearly emerged during a Council's meeting held in London in November and December 1947, which ended up being a failure.¹¹¹

This sequence of reciprocal accusations reached its peak in 1948. At the beginning of June, Great Britain, France and the United States announced their will to create a federal German state that would include the three zones they controlled. Immediately after, a new currency was released in the Western zones.¹¹² Such decision marked the start of the Berlin Blockade, as it was termed by the West: it consisted «of a limited set of restrictions on land access to the Western sectors of Berlin from East Germany».¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ Karl Christian Lammers, "The Nordic Countries and the German Question after 1945," *Contemporary European History* 15, no. 4 (n.d.): 443–52., p. 446.

¹¹⁰ Ralph B. Levering, *The Cold War: A Post-Cold War History* (Indianapolis: Wiley, 2016). Ralph B. Levering, *The Cold War: A Post-Cold War History* (Indianapolis: Wiley, 2016)., p. 40.

¹¹¹ Michael Brecher, Philip Potter, and Anne-Marie Durocher, *International Political Earthquakes* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008). Michael Brecher, Philip Potter, and Anne-Marie Durocher, *International Political Earthquakes* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008)., p. 148.

¹¹² Geoffrey Roberts, *Stalin's Wars. From World War to Cold War, 1939-1953* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2006)., p. 354.

¹¹³ John Paul Delacour Dunbabin, *The Cold War: The Great Powers and Their Allies* (London: Longman, 1994)., pp. 143-147; Roberts, *Stalin's Wars*, p. 355.

Despite this action, used by Stalin as a tool to carry out pressure with the hope of a new negotiation, Western powers did not recede. The creation of a Western German state, at that point, had become an essential strategic tool in the context of a harsh political-ideological confrontation with the USSR. A democratic political ideology and a strong economy would have constituted the grounds for this political project. However, to reach this purpose, the occupying countries would have had to allow West Germans to develop an autonomous political life.¹¹⁴ For this reason, in July 1948, the three Western allies invited the German minister-presidents to convene a constituent assembly with the aim of drafting a constitution for a new government. However, its authority would have been limited by an occupation statute: the occupying powers would have «retained ultimate control over foreign relations and foreign trade, over the level of industrial production and reparations as well as over all matters bearing on demilitarization, decartelization, and scientific research of potential military significance».¹¹⁵ This sort of conditional freedom was at the base of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), which was officially born in September 1949.

To this action, one month later, the Soviet Union responded with the creation of the German Democratic Republic in the East.¹¹⁶ There, the powers were transferred from the Soviet Military Administration, which had been controlling the territory since 1945, to a temporary government. Although the SMA had been disbanded, the USSR still decided to keep a Control Commission. Similarly to what happened with its Western counterpart, this authority continued to represent the GDR for international affairs and the control of the compliance of war reparations. A new constitution was also promulgated on October 9, 1949, while the Soviet authorities had encouraged the creation of the Socialist Unity Party already since 1945 (*Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands*, SED), as a communist-led political organization that was meant to ensure the unity of Germany, having *de facto* absorbed the Eastern social democrats.¹¹⁷

In both cases, the new sovereign states were to a certain extent – in foreign policies and international affairs – controlled by and subjected to the former occupying powers, the USA and USSR being the most influential and prevailing among them. This meant, for instance, that Germans

¹¹⁴ Jürgen Thomanek and Bill Niven, *Dividing and Uniting Germany* (London-New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 30.

¹¹⁵ Henry Ashby Turner, *Germany from Partition to Reunification. A Revised Edition of the Two Germanies since 1945* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1992), pp. 36-37.

¹¹⁶ The extent to which the birth of the GDR was subjected to the necessities of the Soviet foreign policies and political contingencies has been highly debated. A particularly strong historiographical discussion was started after the publication of Wilfried Loth, *Stalins Ungeliebtes Kind. Warum Moskau Die DDR Nicht Wollte* (Berlin: Rowohlt, 1994). [Italian edition: Wilfried Loth, *Figliastri Di Stalin. Mosca, Berlino e La Formazione Della Rdt* (Urbino: Quattroventi, 1997).] Loth argued that Stalin did not want a socialist state on German territory but was pushed towards that by the revolutionary zeal of Walter Ulbricht and the exclusivism of Western policies.

¹¹⁷ On this, see Andreas Malycha and Peter Jochen Winters, *Die SED. Geschichte Einer Deutschen Partei* (München: Beck Verlag, 2009).

of both sides were not allowed to negotiate reunification deals on their own. Although, «at the time of their founding in 1949, the two German states were perceived as provisional entities»¹¹⁸, they soon became the showcase of the political-ideological paradigm from which they originated. Each side «regarded itself as the 'better Germany', the potential nucleus for a future reunified whole»¹¹⁹ and had different conceptions and aims for post-war Europe. While Stalin appears to have favored German unity,¹²⁰ albeit under conditions that would suit Soviet interests and that were permeated by communist values, the British and Americans preferred to divide Germany politically and economically and to hold control over the destiny of the Western zones of occupation through these means.¹²¹

These first years of harsh ideological and military confrontation constituted the most dangerous phase, not only because of the Korean war itself, that had started right in 1950, but rather «because of what the Korean war confirmed: namely that both sides, prisoners by now to the Cold War tendencies to miscalculate and to think the worst of each other's intentions, were prone to tragic errors of policy».¹²² Over time, however, the division of Germany, and of the world, also started constituting an element of safety and security, thus not only being one of the pre-conditions to the Cold War, but also providing a solution to it.¹²³ The relevance of the territorial division in maintaining a balance would have become more clear during the 1960s.

By late 1954, the elements of the two opposite ruling systems had been settled. The relations of the Federal Republic with the Western powers, and especially with the US, were regulated by a set of treaties and protocols, which would have provided the legal basis for future relations during the rest of the Cold War.¹²⁴ The German army was inserted in the integrated NATO defense system, being «rendered incapable of conducting major military operations independently».¹²⁵ This marked

¹¹⁸ Elizabeth Harvey, "The Two Germanies: Recent Publications on the Federal Republic, the German Democratic Republic and the German Question," *The Historical Journal* 33, no. 4 (December 1990): 953–70. p. 953.

¹¹⁹ Harvey., p. 953.

¹²⁰ «Stalin's political strategy in postwar Germany was a variation of his more general project for a people's democratic Europe. The hope was that postwar Germany would evolve into a left wing, democratic and anti-fascist state ruled by a coalition including Stalin's communist allies. While Stalin was optimistic that the people's democratic project could succeed in Germany, he could not guarantee that the politics of a future German state would be to his liking. But he could control developments in his own zone where the Soviet occupation authorities, in alliance with the East German communists, pursued people's democracy with the aim of extending this model to the rest of Germany when reunification took place». See Roberts, *Stalin's Wars.*, p. 350.

¹²¹ Roberts., p. 352.

¹²² Levering, *A Post-Cold War History*, p. 43.

¹²³ Gert Krell, "West German Ostpolitik and the German Question," *Journal of Peace Research* 28, no. 3 (August 1991): 311–23., p. 312.

¹²⁴ Marc Trachtenberg, "The Making of a Political System: The German Question in International Politics, 1945-1963," in *From War to Peace. Altered Strategic Landscapes in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Paul Kennedy and William I. Hitchcock (Yale: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 108.

¹²⁵ *Ibidem*.

the moment in which the Soviet Union left all doubts about the existence of the GDR behind: while until that point the creation of a united and neutral Germany was perceived to be strategically more beneficial for Stalin's interests, the integration of the Federal Republic in NATO changed the panorama.¹²⁶ In 1955, the Warsaw Pact was established, as a counterpart of NATO and as a network of mutual assistance between the Soviet Union and its satellite states in Eastern Europe. Analogously to West Germany, the East German armed forces were incorporated into the alliance. This differed from the other Eastern states, which only had to place some units under the general command.¹²⁷

As Vojtech Mastny has highlighted, the purpose of the Warsaw Pact changed over time, often against Soviet interests. Mastny has argued that the Pact's mission was not always clear, even in the minds of the Soviet leaders, and that it was not the result of an increased military tension between East and West, but rather a first step towards a *détente*, as intended by the Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev.¹²⁸ For the Western German side, Hanrieder has maintained, similarly, that despite the harsh conflict, Washington was starting to think that «a stable European equilibrium was a vital American geostrategic interest» already in the 1950s.¹²⁹

The 1960s marked a new phase, in which both NATO and the Warsaw Pact lost cohesion. Within the Western forces, it was also the beginning of a partial internal disagreement between the US, represented by the Kennedy and Johnson progressive administrations, and the Bonn government. Being interested in maintaining the European Status quo, the United States were more inclined to sort out adjustments in their approach to the conflict, through «a strong interest in arms control, a qualification of the American nuclear commitment to Europe, acceptance of the European status quo, and a shift of American diplomatic energies to the Third World arena of the East-West conflict».¹³⁰ At this point, in the first half of the 1960s, the objectives related to the German question – reaching a better stabilization, which also implied guaranteeing diplomatic recognition to the GDR – were substantially shared with the Soviets. Bonn, instead, perceived such new tendencies as a «selling out of vital German interests».¹³¹ Especially the more conservative politicians and leaders of the Christian Democrats were reluctant to develop a more constructive attitude towards East Germany, and

¹²⁶ Antonio Missiroli, “Un Rapporto Ambivalente. Le Due Germanie Viste Dall'Italia: 1945-1989,” *Storia e Memoria* 4 (1996): 223–55., p. 659.

¹²⁷ Law on the establishment of the National People's Army, January 18, 1956, *Gesetzblatt der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik*, 1956, part 1, p. 81. Also contained in http://www.documentarchiv.-de/ddr/1956/nationalevolksarmee_ges.html, quoted in Vojtech Mastny and Malcolm Byrne, eds., *Cardboard Castle? An Inside History of the Warsaw Pact* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2005), p. 6.

¹²⁸ Ivi, p. 2.

¹²⁹ Wolfram F. Hanrieder, *Germany, America, Europe. Forty Years of German Foreign Policy* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1989), p. 172.

¹³⁰ Ivi, p. 173.

¹³¹ *Ibidem*.

therefore stuck to a policy of rejection, in the conviction that «dealing with the repugnant regime in East Germany in any formal way would be morally reprehensible and politically and legally deleterious».¹³²

A change occurred in 1966 when Erhard's government was substituted by the Grand Coalition CDU-SPD, in which Willy Brandt acted as vice-chancellor and Foreign Minister. After pressing for many years for a more open attitude towards the GDR, the SPD had now the opportunity to turn its statements of intent into practical action, by finally participating in government.¹³³ The more flexible wing of the Christian democrats agreed with this stance, too.¹³⁴ As a result, by the late 1960s, East Berlin started to be perceived not only as an ideological opponent, but also as a potential partner.¹³⁵ However, even the mild turn to the left that West German politics was experiencing did not have a concrete effect on issues such as the recognition of the GDR and of the Oder-Neisse border.¹³⁶

1968 represented in many ways a turning point both in general affairs and specifically in the management of the German question by the superpowers. Besides being the year of the big students' protests and movements in the West,¹³⁷ '68 was also a tragic year due to the brutal repression following the Prague's spring – Alexander Dubcek's attempt of building a reformist socialism – by the USSR troops. The Soviet brutal response highlighted the real risk of a military confrontation between Eastern and Western forces. The repressive means used by the Soviets raised an enormous wave of heavy criticism in the whole Western bloc, in different ways and intensities, not only by the conservatives, the social democratic left and the students' movements, but also from the communist parties. The intervention in Czechoslovakia was justified by means of the so-called "Brezhnev doctrine", which stated that the USSR, as the guide-state of the communist system, had the right to intervene, even militarily, in the internal affairs of its Allied countries.

However, some researchers have emphasized how the application of the "Brezhnev doctrine" in Prague in a way also led to a new wave of communications between East and West.¹³⁸ According to Christoph Klessmann, for instance, while on the one hand the brutality of the communist power had succeeded in maintaining internal stability, pushing away the risk of a crisis within the Eastern bloc, on the other hand, paradoxically, the USSR's intervention in Czechoslovakia had become one

¹³² Ivi, p. 178.

¹³³ Ivi, 186.

¹³⁴ Krell, "West German Ostpolitik.", p. 317.

¹³⁵ Hanrieder, *Germany, America, Europe.*, p. 194.

¹³⁶ Krell, "West German Ostpolitik.", p. 318.

¹³⁷ On 1968 in the West and its consequences, see Ingrid Gilcher-Holtey, *A Revolution of Perception. Echoes and Consequences of 1968* (New York: Berghahn, 2014).; Ingrid Gilcher-Holtey, *Die 68er Bewegung. Deutschland - Westeuropa - USA* (München: Beck, 2001).

¹³⁸ Ulrich Pfeil, *Die „anderen“ Deutsch-Französischen Beziehungen. Die DDR Und Frankreich 1949-1990* (Köln: Böhlau, 2004)., p. 143.

of the prerequisites for a successful German Ostpolitik.¹³⁹ In a way, we can affirm that a substantial loosening of the tensions between the blocs started right after 1968. For Maud Bracke, that very year the Soviet Union introduced a defensive kind of détente, «based on the consolidation of the political and military blocs and superpower hegemony over their allies»¹⁴⁰.

Focusing on Europe, although many scholars agree in tracing the beginning of the détente process back in the mid-1960s, 1969 undoubtedly marked a fundamental year in the loosening of tensions. One could say that the softening of relations which had already started with the CDU-SPD coalition in 1966, gained new momentum when the Social Democrats won the elections in the *Bundesrepublik* and Willy Brandt became Chancellor.¹⁴¹ This victory, and the consequent formation of another coalition in 1969 that included both the SPD and the FDP, marked a further step in the German question. This change went hand in hand with other shifts in the coordinates of world politics, not necessarily in the same political direction but all aiming towards a détente: a general easing of geo-political tensions between the superpowers. A transformation was to be seen in the new Richard Nixon's conservative administration in the United States, which supported détente as a core element of US-American foreign policies to avoid nuclear risks. This latter concern led to an increased dialogue with the Soviet Union government. Simultaneously, the USSR was experiencing a domestic reform and likewise a lessening of tensions with the US. As head of government, Leonid Brezhnev had already substituted Stalin's successor Nikita Krusciov in 1964. This process went on for all the first half of the 1970s.

It is in this very context of international détente that the so-called *Grundlagenvertrag* ("fundamental treaty") between the two Germanies is to be inserted. In fact, in December 1972, this pact laid the foundations for the official recognition of the GDR by the Western countries. This happened also due to the aforementioned modifications in the United States' strategy towards Europe, which also had an impact on economic issues. Being increasingly autonomous from the US American capital, the Western countries – and Federal Germany in particular – became freer in developing contacts with the socialist countries.¹⁴² To this regard, the *Grundlagenvertrag* constituted the most

¹³⁹ The reference here is to Christoph Klessmann, "Rethinking The Second German Dictatorship," in *Dictatorship as Experience. Towards a Socio-Cultural History of the GDR*, ed. Konrad Jarausch (New York-Oxford: Berghahn, 1999)., quoted in Pfeil, *Die „anderen“ Deutsch-Französischen Beziehungen.*, p. 143.

¹⁴⁰ Maud Anne Bracke, *Which Socialism? Whose Detente? West European Communism and the Czechoslovak Crisis of 1968* (New York: Central European University Press, 2007)., p. 365.

¹⁴¹ Elena Calandri, Daniele Caviglia, and Antonio Varsori, eds., *Détente in Cold War Europe. Politics and Diplomacy in the Mediterranean and the Middle East* (London-New York: IB Tauris, 2012)., p. 1.

¹⁴² Laura Fasanaro, *La DDR e l'Italia. Politica, Commercio e Ideologia Nell'Europa Del Cambiamento 1973-1985* (Roma: Carocci, 2016)., p. 61.

visible peak of the détente phase and the most significant result of Willy Brandt's *Ostpolitik*.¹⁴³ Lastly, it marked the entrance of the GDR in a broader European competition, where the direct, harsh ideological rivalry and the constant risk of a nuclear war left space for new methods, mainly represented by the words *confrontation* and *integration*.¹⁴⁴

This process of tension loosening went further, leading to the signature of the Helsinki Agreements in 1975, which, for many opinion-makers and historians, indicate the start of a new period in East-West relations and the substantial expiration of Cold War in Europe.¹⁴⁵ Establishing the principles of sovereign equality, non-intervention in internal affairs, inviolability of frontiers and, not least, respect for human rights, the Agreements signaled a significant reduction of reciprocal tensions and the achievement of a new stability, even though the 1980s would have seen a resurgence of the conflict.

2.2 An “elephant in the room”: West Germany, Italy and the GDR

In this section, the German issue and the German-German contacts will always be at the forefront. However, I will introduce a further element, giving account of the position of Italy towards both the German states over time. With regards to Italy, I will be referring on the one hand to the Italian government, always characterized by a Christian Democrat, thus catholic-conservative, majority; on the other hand, to the PCI, the major leftist opposition party, because of its active role in backing the existence and the legitimacy of the GDR, by fostering political relations before its diplomatic recognition, but also against the backdrop of its contacts with West German social democrats, from the 1960s onward. Due to the weight and the importance played by the PCI in Italian society,¹⁴⁶ it is possible to consider it as a “shadow” counterpart of the government in this process, a strong actor that developed independent policies towards both Germanies.

¹⁴³ Ennio Di Nolfo, *Storia Delle Relazioni Internazionali*. Vol. 2: Gli Anni Della Guerra Fredda 1946-1990 (Bari: Laterza, 2005), pp. 1204-1208. Also see Federico Romero, *Storia Della Guerra Fredda. L'ultimo Conflitto per l'Europa* (Torino: Einaudi, 2009).

¹⁴⁴ Fasanaro, *La DDR e l'Italia*, p. 59.

¹⁴⁵ Calandri, Caviglia, and Varsori, *Détente in Cold War Europe*, p. 1. On this, also see Robert Brier, “Beyond the Helsinki Effect. East European Dissent and the Western Left in the ‘Long 1970s,’” in *the “Long 1970s”: Human Rights, East-West Détente and Transnational Relations*, ed. Paul Villaume, Rasmus Mariager, and Helle Porsdam (London-New York: Routledge, 2016), 71–86.

¹⁴⁶ On this aspect, see Aldo Agosti, *Storia Del Partito Comunista Italiano 1921-1991* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1999); Donald L. Blackmer and Sidney Tarrow, *Communism in Italy and France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975); Marcello Flores and Nicola Gallerano, *Sul Pci. Un'interpretazione storica* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1992); Giorgio Galli, *Storia Del PCI: Livorno 1921, Rimini 1991* (Milano: Pantarei, 1993); Albertina Vittoria, *Storia Del PCI 1921-1991* (Roma: Carocci, 2006). On the comparison with the French Communist Party, see Marc Lazar, *Maisons Rouges. Les Partis Communistes Français et Italien de La Libération à Nos Jours* (Paris: Aubier, 1992).

After shortly facing the immediate postwar period and the 1950s, I will focus my attention on the 1960s and 1970s. The main reasons behind this choice are three. First, these two decades represent the frame of the big propaganda season for the GDR recognition (*Ddr-Anerkennung*), and exactly the time span in which the town twinnings' contacts that are at the center of this work are taking place. Second, the Sixties marked the beginning of the so-called Center-left governments in Italy, which were characterized by an unprecedented collaboration among the DC majority, driven by its democratic wing, and the Socialist party.¹⁴⁷ This turn to the left also had effects in the way the German issue was faced by the Italian republic. Third, this is also the time lapse in which the PCI started to look to the West – and to Western Germany – in a process of opening towards Europeism and pre-elaboration of what would have become the political project of Eurocommunism, in 1974/75.¹⁴⁸

This latter element, connected to the slow changes inside the PCI, is particularly relevant and thus will find a peculiar space in this chapter, as it allows to establish some first interpretative paths for the inquiry of the meaning of twinning with the GDR for Italian communist communal and provincial administrations. At that time, these were considered the shiny showcase of an ascendant PCI, which was consistently enlarging its consensus in the early 1970s and aimed at becoming a governmental power. This peculiarity of Italian communists – wedged between ideological loyalty to the communist ideal and a drive to finding its place among institutions, both at a national and European level – placed them somehow in the middle between East and West. If this is true at a national level, where the achievement of a majority over the DC was, and in the end remained, merely

¹⁴⁷ For an English-written overview on Italian social and political structures and parties written in the early Seventies, see the review by Alan Zuckerman of the following books: Giorgio Galli and Alfonso Prandi, *Patterns of Political Participation in Italy* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1970).; and Sidney Tarrow, *Peasant Communism in Southern Italy* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1967). Alan Zuckerman, "Social Structure and Political Competition: The Italian Case," *World Politics* 24, no. 3 (April 1972): 428–33. On the reform period, see Carmine Pinto, *Il Riformismo Possibile. Una Grande Stagione Delle Riforme: Utopie, Speranze, Realtà (1945-1964)* (Roma: Carocci, 2008).; Giovanni Bernardini, "Il Primo Centro-Sinistra Italiano Nell'epoca Del 'Riformismo' Europeo," *Ricerche Di Storia Politica*, no. 2 (June 2014): 147–54. The expression "Center-left" government indicates, in Italian politics, the cabinets that occurred from 1962 until the end of the decade. They were characterized by an alliance between the DC and the Italian socialist party (PSI). This was an absolute novelty, since 1) the Italian governments since 1948 had been uniquely one-party, Christian-democratic. Also, at least until 1956 the PSI had been the submissive ally of the PCI, starting a detachment from it only after the Budapest facts. These cabinets started on the one hand as the DC wanted to pursue reforms but needed a more solid majority; on the other, as they wanted to break the leftist bloc, and this – after 1956 – coincided with the PSI line. These cabinets achieved significant progressive reforms, such as the institution of the unique middle school (*scuola media unica*), which aimed to overcome previous social differentiations in the school system itself, the nationalization of electric energy with the creation of the ENEL state group, and a new law on social housing. On this, see for instance Guido Formigoni, *Storia d'Italia Nella Guerra Fredda (1943-1978)* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2016)., pp. 295-303. Specifically on the PSI, see the works by Paolo Mattera: Paolo Mattera, *Storia Del PSI 1892-1994* (Roma: Carocci, 2010).; Paolo Mattera, *Il Partito Inquieto. Organizzazione, Passioni e Politica Dei Socialisti Italiani Dalla Resistenza Al Miracolo Economico* (Roma: Carocci, 2005).; and Gianluca Scroccu, *Il Partito Al Bivio. Il PSI Dal Frontismo Al Centrosinistra, 1953-1963* (Roma: Carocci, 2011).

¹⁴⁸ For insights of the PCI's line towards the "German question" at the end of the 1950s, see Sergio Segre, *La Questione Tedesca* (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1959).

a hope, it was even more true in the places where they already administrated – that is in the local government.¹⁴⁹

Moscow and the Eastern bloc continued being the PCI's ideological reference point until the very fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the subsequent collapse of the communist system. Although the divergences would have been disclosed and made more explicit by the late 1980s, through historical political declarations coming mostly from the side of PCI's secretary Enrico Berlinguer,¹⁵⁰ the climate of growing dissent and unease was never sealed with an official disregard of the Soviet power. Being in this ambiguous and simultaneously powerful position, the PCI increasingly looked for connections with the democratic forces of Western Europe, and especially with the German social democrats, which were likewise interested in the PCI for strategic reasons.¹⁵¹ Despite never reaching the point of an official agreement in these years, the contacts with the SPD were of extreme interest, as that party in a way represented a model for the increasingly institutionalized PCI. The horizon, the perspective of finally becoming a *forza di governo* ("governmental force") by winning the 1976 elections seemed more than feasible. This hope was also connected to an Italian anomaly within the realm of the left: while in most of the other Western European countries the main opposition party was a social democratic one, in Italy it was the PCI that played this role. The reasons for that had to be sought in its major role in organizing the Resistance movement in the years 1943-45, taking over the weaker Socialist party and relegating it to the role of a de facto subordinate ally at least until 1956, when their paths began to diverge.¹⁵²

Despite this democratization process and this increased attention to Western experiences, the bond between the USSR and the communist movement remains a fundamental element in the understanding of the historical developments of the PCI. By recalling the category of *doppia lealtà* ("double loyalty"), Michele Di Donato has argued that for the PCI «the contradiction activated because of its double reference to Italy on the one hand, and to the Soviet Union as the guide of the communist movement on the other» is not only inherent to the different alliance systems, but, more

¹⁴⁹ About this, see Eloisa Betti, "Bologna in the Early Cold War: Histories and Memories of a Communist City in the West," in *Cold War Cities*, ed. Katja Pizzi and Marjatta Hietala (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2016), 271–302.

¹⁵⁰ «At that time the foreign policy of the PCI went through major revisions inspired both by the new pro-European sentiments of the West European communists and by Enrico Berlinguer's own political vision, which took distance from both NATO and the Warsaw Pact», quote from Laura Fasanaro, "Continuity and Transformation. Alternate Visions of Italy's Three Decades of Détente," in *The Long Détente. Changing Concepts of Security and Cooperation in Europe, 1950s-1980s*, by Oliver Bange and Paul Villaume (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2017), p. 156.

¹⁵¹ On this, see the works of Michele Di Donato and Bernd Rother: Di Donato, *I Comunisti Italiani e La Sinistra Europea. Il PCI e i Rapporti Con Le Socialdemocrazie (1964-1984)*.; Michele Di Donato, "Tra Guerra Civile Internazionale e Distensione. I Comunisti Italiani, La Guerra Fredda in Europa e l'Ostpolitik," *Giornale Di Storia Costituzionale* 26, no. 2 (2013): 135–49.; Bernd Rother, "'Era Ora Che Ci Vedessimo'. Willy Brandt e Il Pci," *Contemporanea*, January 2011.

¹⁵² Italy also had a Social democratic party after the so-called *Scissione di Palazzo Barberini* in 1947 ("Barberini Palace division") but it always remained low in numbers and represented the right-wing side of the PSI. On this, see for instance Mattered, *Storia Del PSI*.; and Mattered, *Il Partito Inquieto*.

generally, lies in «the unresolved duplicity of the party [...] in its adhesion both to the democratic-constitutional system and to the horizon of international communism».¹⁵³

Thus, the nature of the PCI as somehow a substitute to the Italian social democrats in Europe on the one hand, and its fundamental loyalty towards the Soviet system on the other, placed it in a middle-way and ambiguous position, which nevertheless is also beneficial in explaining the local relationships with the GDR and its practical outcomes. In other words: the way the PCI dealt with local politics in the 1960s and 1970s could have been influenced by and be approachable to both a communist way of looking at the organization of local societies (adopted by the GDR) and a social democratic *modus operandi* (adopted through significant, though sporadic and fragmentary contacts with Federal Germany).

Keeping this interpretative line in mind, in the following sub-sections I will analyze the different positions that both the PCI and the Italian governments adopted towards the GDR and the Federal republic, and vice versa. These triangular entanglements will be highlighted in the time frame between the postwar period and the mid-1970s.

2.2.1 The late postwar and the 1950s

The harsh disagreement between the GDR and the Federal Republic about their own right to be the one and only legitimate state ensured that from the very beginning the relations between Italy and the GDR did not have a purely bilateral nature, but rather that they oftentimes assumed the direct or indirect involvement of the Federal republic.¹⁵⁴

In the Italian political panorama, the reactions to the creation of the two German states and the consequent support towards one or another, substantially and in a way predictably reflected the division between the pro-governmental and pro-US political groups and the mass left parties, in particular the PCI. While the first ones backed the Federal republic, the PCI and the PSI, together with different groupings of antifascists, jointly supported the GDR at least until 1956.¹⁵⁵ The different perceptions in the 1950s, therefore, were strongly influenced by the polarization of the Cold War. As Charis Pöthig has highlighted, if the *Bundesregierung* feared that Italy could fall under the Soviet influence, at the same time Rome was worried about a power action by the Western Germans, but despite this latter worry, and the strong communist propaganda in Italy, the German Federal

¹⁵³ Di Donato, “Tra Guerra Civile Internazionale e Distensione”, p. 138.

¹⁵⁴ Magda Martini, *La Cultura All'ombra Del Muro. Relazioni Culturali Tra Italia e Ddr (1949-1989)* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2007), p. 19.

¹⁵⁵ On the relations between Italy and West Germany in the immediate postwar, see the recent publication: Filippo Triola, *L'alleato Naturale. I Rapporti Tra Italia e Germania Occidentale Dopo La Seconda Guerra Mondiale (1945-1955)* (Firenze: Le Monnier, 2017).

government was accorded considerable trust.¹⁵⁶ In this phase, therefore, the relations between the Italian government and the *Bundesrepublik* were built in a way that excluded the legitimacy of the German “second half”, the GDR, completely. A fruitful common work was started between the West German CDU and the Italian Christian Democracy (DC), especially after the diplomatic exchanges between the two countries were first established and regulated in 1951. This unconditional support to the Federal Republic, and consequently the harsh positioning towards the GDR, characterized not just the DC, but also the parties that participated in Alcide De Gasperi’s governmental coalition between 1948 and 1950. They all spoke openly of the «illegality of the Moscow’s satellite state».¹⁵⁷

On the other hand, being likewise unconditioned, the support of the PCI for the GDR was based on it representing an antifascist and anti-imperialistic country. The German issue had not been a priority for the Italian communists in the immediate postwar period, as internal politics such as the reconstruction of the country and the construction of the *partito nuovo* (“new party”) by PCI’s secretary Palmiro Togliatti were put forward. A fundamental acceptance of the Soviet theses was first shown between the end of 1947 and the beginning of 1948, when the party publicly reported the alleged violation, by the Western side, of the Potsdam agreements and the danger connected to Western Germany’s rearmament. After that moment, and with the official creation of the GDR, the Italian communist propaganda, blindly following the Soviet line, built its support to the GDR by opposing the democratic, socialist, antifascist character of the Eastern German state to the threat to peace in Europe that Bonn – painted as a servant of the Western political and economic powers – supposedly represented.

The backing of the GDR by the PCI was also connected to an essential problem, the one of the *legitimacy* of the new country: while the Federal Republic portrayed itself as the natural heir of the old German state, the proclamation of the Eastern German state had a *political* justification. The GDR «was the empirical outcome of the transformation of the antifascist military alliance in a Cold War between two ideological and social systems, both on a European and on a planetary scale».¹⁵⁸ The self-appropriation of legitimacy by Western Germany was legally supported by the “Hallstein doctrine”, which influenced foreign politics until the 1960s.¹⁵⁹ According to this doctrine, relations with Western Germany would have been immediately interrupted, in case a third country would have

¹⁵⁶ Charis Pöthig, *Italien Und Die DDR. Die Politischen, Ökonomischen Und Kulturellen Beziehungen von 1949-1980* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2000)., pp. 36-37.

¹⁵⁷ Social democratic, republican and liberal party.

¹⁵⁸ Francesco Benvenuti, “Nascita e Dissoluzione Della Repubblica Democratica Tedesca,” *Contemporanea* 2, no. 1 (January 1999): 127–36., p.132.

¹⁵⁹ Johannes Lill, *Völkerfreundschaft Im Kalten Krieg? Die Politischen, Kulturellen Und Wirtschaftlichen Beziehungen Der Ddr Zu Italien 1949-1989* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2001)., p. 43.

had diplomatic contacts with the GDR. This would have been considered as a hostility act towards the Federal Republic, by virtue of the principle of its so-called “unique representation of German people”.¹⁶⁰ In this climax of growing competition, and in order to avoid the GDR’s isolation, after 1952 the main worry of the *Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands* was «to deny the accidental character of the German division and to affirm the thesis of the historical unavoidability of the existence of two contraposed German states, respectively heirs of the democratic-socialist traditions and monarchic-nationalist of the old *Wilhelmine Reich*». ¹⁶¹

The PCI supported the SED’s will to build a “permanent division” in response to the Hallstein doctrine, thus contributing to the achievement of a better status in Italy-GDR relations.¹⁶² Such a collaboration was not even interrupted by the events of the “unforgettable 1956”,¹⁶³ following the brutal repression of Budapest’s uprising and the 20th congress of the PCUS, when the new Khrushchevian leadership first condemned Stalin’s crimes and announced the theory of pacific coexistence in international relations. While the GDR initially struggled with the acceptance of the new theses, due to a devoted faith towards Stalinist power, that however eventually gave space the new Soviet line,¹⁶⁴ the reactions were more differentiated within the Italian left. The PCI also officially stuck to Moscow’s positions, though without accepting the changes in total passivity.¹⁶⁵ among the Italian communists, many critical voices rose after those crucial events, but they were not strong enough to challenge the dominant party line and Moscow’s leadership.¹⁶⁶ To this regard,

¹⁶⁰ The Hallstein doctrine, which was named after the jurist Walter Hallstein (undersecretary in the German Foreign Ministry between 195 and 1958), influenced West Germany’s foreign policies until the 1960s. A more “militant” explanation comes from Italian Marxist historian Enzo Collotti, who has highlighted: «In front of the pseudo-legalistic approach given by the Federal Republic to the problem of the existence of two German states, simply negating – with a petition of principle as reasonable as politically absurd – the existence of one of them, the German democratic Republic never made any similar demands of exclusivity in representing the German population», quoted in Enzo Collotti, *Storia Delle Due Germanie* (Torino: Einaudi, 1968), p. 1016.

¹⁶¹ Benvenuti, “Nascita e Dissoluzione Della Repubblica Democratica Tedesca.”, p. 132.

¹⁶² F. Venuti, *Nascita e dissoluzione della Rdt*, p. 132-133.

¹⁶³ As Pietro Ingrao, party leader and at that time director of the PCI’s official newspaper “L’Unità”, defined it.

¹⁶⁴ For Magda Martini, «in the GDR the process of destalinization was started more for a sense of duty towards Moscow than for a real belief. The Sed renounced to a critical confrontation with its mistakes and to a revision of internal and foreign politics until 1989». In pointing this out, the author also recalls Hermann Weber’s idea that the SED remained a Stalinist party until the very end. See Martini, *La Cultura All’ombra Del Muro.*, p. 28.

¹⁶⁵ Martini also points out the opposite reaction of the PSI: being subjected to the Soviet line until that point, the Budapest events marked for the Socialists the final rupture with the USSR. See Id., p. 20. On the international politics of the PSI, see the important book by Giovanni Scirocco: Giovanni Scirocco, *Politique d’abord. Il PSI, La Guerra Fredda e La Politica Internazionale (1948-1957)* (Milano: Unicopli, 2010), together with the newly published Paolo Mattered, *L’ombre de La Guerre Froide: Socialistes Italiens, Internationale Socialiste et États-Unis (1945-1966)* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2017). To this, it could be added the recent article: Tommaso Nencioni, “Tra Neutralismo e Atlantismo. La Politica Internazionale Del Partito Socialista Italiano 1956-1966,” *Italia Contemporanea* 260 (2010): 438–70.

¹⁶⁶ 1956 marked an extremely delicate phase, opened by the 20th Congress of the PCUS. Neither in the Central Committee in March, nor in the National Council in April Khrushchev’s report was mentioned. This was part of a defensive strategy by PCI’s secretary Palmiro Togliatti, which lasted for the whole spring. Only in June – after detecting a loss of consensus at the administrative elections in Italy – Togliatti wrote his famous intervention of the communist-oriented journal “Nuovi argomenti”, explicitly stating for the first time that the socialist system was not monocentric anymore but polycentric,

despite opposite tendencies – respectively dogmatic and more democratic ones – the PCI and the SED were able to normalize their positions after '56 and find a substantial convergence.

Therefore, in the second half of the 1950s, the East German propaganda in Italy did not encounter obstacles or great changes. This also rings true, for instance, in relation to the substantially positive attitude the PCI showed towards the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961. In that occasion, the action was described by PCI's official organ "L'Unità" as a «security measure of the GDR against espionage activities and provocations led by Bonn's revanchists». Despite the sometimes deep ideological differences, the two parties always tried to keep their collaboration going, although for different reasons.¹⁶⁷ In the end, «up to the 1960s, the two parties still shared the battle against the conservatives and the anti-communists, which materialized in Germany in the German-German conflict, and in Italy in the contrasts against the government».¹⁶⁸

Furthermore, until the end of the 1950s the situation remained static also on the Christian democratic side: having the majority, the Italian DC-oriented government kept being part of the Atlantic alliance and supporting it unconditionally. A new change would have occurred only at the beginning of the 1960s, with the activation of the Italian government's own Ostpolitik.¹⁶⁹

2.2.2 Between détente and Ostpolitik: the 1960s and 1970s

Drawing from the idea of "long détente" recently developed by Bange and Villaume,¹⁷⁰ Laura Fasanaro has analyzed the Italian governments' management of relations with the GDR, reading it in a chronologically long perspective. She has emphasized that «the Eastern policy developed by Italy [...] started to develop its own dynamism already in the 1960s, when the bilateral relations with the Soviet Union started to take shape».¹⁷¹ Nevertheless, at the beginning of the decade, the reciprocal interests between these two parts were mostly economic and commercial, so whenever European security issues came into play, the official stance of the Italian government was extremely cautious and totally supportive of both Western and Western German positions.¹⁷²

and that the Soviet model could not be mandatory anymore. Later, Togliatti also explained his and the party's position on the Soviets' double repressive action in Budapest, in November. He claimed that the first intervention "needed to and had to be avoided" ("*poteva e doveva evitarsi*"), but that the second was a "painful necessity" ("*dolorosa necessità*"). On this, see Agosti, *Storia Del Partito Comunista Italiano 1921-1991.*, pp. 80-81.

¹⁶⁷ Martini, *La Cultura All'ombra Del Muro.*, pp. 27-28.

¹⁶⁸ Ibidem.

¹⁶⁹ Fasanaro, *La DDR e l'Italia.*, p. 19.

¹⁷⁰ Oliver Bange and Paul Villaume, *The Long Détente. Changing Concepts of Security and Cooperation in Europe, 1950s-1980s* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2017).

¹⁷¹ Fasanaro, *La DDR e l'Italia.*, p. 18.

¹⁷² Ivi, p. 22.

Fasanaro identifies two reasons behind the peculiarity of the Italian case, in relation to the German question. The first one draws right on the fact that the undisputed loyalty to the Atlantic alliance started to coexist with an opening to the East, marking an independent Ostpolitik (starting from the “economic” one of the Center-left governments in the early 1960s) that in certain ways anticipated the German one and made Italy a central character of East-West mediation. The second one lies on the multiplicity of interpretations of “international détente” by the different political forces. In this long process, the Center-left economic interpretation, backed by the progressive wing of the DC and the socialists, was not the only one. Later, between the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, the conservative side of the DC kept following the US line, also reading détente as a stabilization of the bipolar system.¹⁷³ The leftist parties, instead, aimed at a new multi-polar equilibrium, although with a multiplicity of points of view.¹⁷⁴

The peculiar version of détente proposed by the PCI was to be achieved on the one hand, through a stronger commitment in the European context, by promoting a reform of the European Parliament, and on the other hand through an internal ideological turn. This included the political project of Eurocommunism, developed together with the French and the Spanish Communist parties. Its slow elaboration, publicly exposed as a strategy only in the mid-1970s, represented a peculiar way both to overcome the European bipolar division and to take distance from both NATO and the Warsaw Pact.¹⁷⁵

In this context the early contacts between the PCI and the SPD started to take place.¹⁷⁶ According to Raffaele D’Agata, when the secret meetings between the two parties were revealed to the public, right at the eve of the Italian general elections in 1968, the press office of the SPD had provoked the Italian public opinion by substantiating the possibility of a participation of the

¹⁷³ Ivi, p. 21.

¹⁷⁴ Alexander Höbel has also made this point for a subsequent phase, in the 1970s, and in more general terms. He underlines the coexistence of two opposed conceptions of détente; one that tends to consolidate the division of the world in blocs and refers to a competitive bipolarism, although less ideological compared to the one in the 1950s (Kissinger, Nixon); and one which tends to attenuate the rigidity of the two paradigms, with the aim of overcoming them. Here the reference is also to the diverse leftist European forces, not without significant differences, from the German social democracy to the Italian PCI, passing through the French socialists and the more progressive groups of the catholic world. See Alexander Höbel, “Pci, Sinistra Cattolica e Politica Estera (1972-73),” *Studi Storici* 51, no. 2 (June 2010): 403–59.

¹⁷⁵ Fasanaro, *La DDR e l’Italia.*, p. 21. On Italian Eurocommunism and its rise, also see Michele Di Donato, “The Cold War and Socialist Identity: The Socialist International and the Italian ‘Communist Question’ in the 1970s,” *Contemporary European History* 24, no. 2 (2015): 193–211., pp. 201–203.

¹⁷⁶ There is still doubt about the side that first started the contacts. Bernd Rother has highlighted that while Silvio Pons writes that the initiative came from Leo Bauer – SPD-oriented journalist, former part of the KPD until 1950 – a report written by Bauer himself seems to suggest that the Italians proposed to meet first. Cfr. Silvio Pons, “La Formazione Della Politica Internazionale Di Berlinguer: Europa, Nato e Urss (1968-1976),” in *Atlantismo Ed Europeismo*, ed. Piero Craveri and Gaetano Quagliariello (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2003), 589–609., p. 591.

Communist party in government, reproducing the model of the big coalition in Bonn.¹⁷⁷ It was the PCI – not the Socialist Party, and not the small Social democratic party –¹⁷⁸ that represented a reliable interlocutor among the leftist forces in Italy, despite its ideological belonging to the communist sphere. While the SPD, during the first years of contacts (up to 1970) was interested in talking with the PCI mostly because of the détente general strategy, and as a political maneuver to be used against the East German propaganda, the Italians aimed at using the connection with the strongest social democratic party in Europe to enlarge their prestige both in internal politics and in international alliances.¹⁷⁹ Bernd Rother has emphasized the peculiar consideration given to this relation by the Italian side, by reporting a sentence of the German journalist Karl-Ludolf Hübener in front of the SPD direction in 1971: «Willy Brandt receives, by the Italian communists, such an attention and a faith that sometimes cross into enthusiasm».¹⁸⁰ There has been a consistent discussion about this relation among historians and political scientists. Some have described it as a “social democratization” of the PCI, that still retained communist symbology, others have maintained that the Party kept advocating a radical societal change.¹⁸¹ On the German side, most scholars have been skeptical about a radical drift. Nevertheless, what could certainly be claimed – following Rother’s idea – is that Willy Brandt’s high *sensibility* and lively participation in the changes that were characterizing European and particularly Italian communism had important generational reasons: due to his age (he was born in 1913) he was linked to the pre-Nazi workers’ movement and still interested in a critical discussion on the tensions between communists and social democrats that had led to their division between 1917 and 1921.¹⁸²

Despite these episodic contacts with the SPD, the PCI continued to collaborate directly with the German Democratic Republic, to strengthen its political presence in Italy and to contrast the still privileged relationship between the Western German government and the Italian one. Nothing really changed in terms of official positioning: Italian communists kept organizing pro-GDR propaganda

¹⁷⁷ Raffaele D’Agata, “‘Sinistra Europea’ e Relazioni Transatlantiche Nei Primi Anni Settanta: Ideologia e Politica,” *Studi Storici* 47, no. 3 (September 2006): 673–703., p. 678.

¹⁷⁸ As a matter of fact, the PSI and the PSDI were bitter for not being considered as interlocutors. If we follow the report written by the Italian communist journalist and politician Sergio Segre on the meeting with the press office of the SPD Leo Bauer (the report is cited in D’Agata., p. 679: FIG, APCI, Fondo Estero, “Rdt”, 1968, mf. 0552, pp. 1514-1528, *Rapporto di Sergio Segre sul colloquio con Leo Bauer a Roma il 2 ottobre 1968*) then we read that – in the words of Bauer – Brandt would have thought that only four social democratic parties still had a relevant function in Europe: the English, the German, the Swedish and the Austrian. For Brandt, in France and Italy it was at least worth trying to open a dialogue with the strong communist parties.

¹⁷⁹ Rother, “Era Ora Che Ci Vedessimo.”, p. 65.

¹⁸⁰ Archiv der Sozialen Demokratie in der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Bonn, Nachlass Leo Bauer, 10, *Bericht von Karl-Ludolf Hübener über die Konferenz “Die italienischen Kommunisten und Europa”*, Rom, 23-25.11.1971, 2 Dez. 1971. Quoted in Rother, “Era Ora Che Ci Vedessimo.”, p. 61.

¹⁸¹ Ivi, p. 62.

¹⁸² Ibidem.

and trading with the country.¹⁸³ The real fracture was happening in the backstage, in internal party communication. Here, the progressive deterioration of the PCI-SED relations had already started with the “Havemann case” in 1966,¹⁸⁴ but was further damaged following the Prague facts, especially due to the repressive action of the Warsaw pact’s tanks against Dubcek’s reformist attempts. In this occasion, the Italian communists – together with the French ones and differently from the SED – clearly distanced themselves from the actions led by Soviet Union,¹⁸⁵ sympathizing instead with the increased political liberalization promoted by the Prague Spring.¹⁸⁶ The chill between Italian communists and Soviets continued during mid-1968, when a delegation of the PCI travelled to Moscow for the International Congress of communist parties, and Enrico Berlinguer – who at that time was about to take over the PCI’s leadership – heavily criticized the Brezhnevian theory of “limited sovereignty” of the Eastern countries. Deeply irritated, East Berlin took Moscow’s side, and the SED’s secretary responsible for relations with foreign communist parties, Hermann Axen, accused the PCI of substantially abandoning Marxism-Leninism. Berlinguer answered on the pages of the intellectual journal of the party, “Rinascita”, replying to Axen that Lenin had never written anything about the legitimacy of the violation of the sovereignty and independence of a foreign country.¹⁸⁷ This contrast led to years of reciprocal distance between the Italian and the East German communists at the level of official party communication, at least until 1970.

It is interesting to analyze the divisions provoked by the Czech facts through the words of Leo Bauer, journalist close to Willy Brandt, thus representing an external voice in the PCI-SED relation, the third dot of the triangle. Although, indubitably, from a biased perspective, here is how Bauer

¹⁸³ Gianluca Falanga, *Spie Dall’Est. L’Italia Nelle Carte Segrete Della Stasi* (Roma: Carocci, 2014), pp. 39-40.

¹⁸⁴ It will be explained in detail in chapter 3.

¹⁸⁵ Silvio Pons, *La Rivoluzione Globale. Storia Del Comunismo Internazionale 1917-1991* (Torino: Einaudi, 2012), p. 344.

¹⁸⁶ On the international position of the PCI at the end of the 1960s, and on its reaction to the Prague’s spring, also see Silvio Pons, *Berlinguer e La Fine Del Comunismo* (Torino: Einaudi, 2006), s. XIV-XV; quoted in Fiammetta Balestracci, “Zwischen Ideologischer Diversifikation Und Politisch-Kulturellem Pragmatismus. Die Beziehungen zwischen Der Partito Comunista Italiano Und Der SED (1968-1989),” in *Brüderparteien Jenseits des Eisernen Vorhangs. Die Beziehungen Der SED Zu Den Kommunistischen Parteien West- Und Südeuropas (1968-1989)*, ed. Arnd Bauerkämper and Francesco Di Palma (Berlin: Christoph-Links Verlag, 2011), 168–85., p. 167. On the visit of a PCI delegation in Moscow, in mid-1968, and on the refusal by Italians of the Soviet thesis of the “normalization” happened in Czechoslovakia due to the Soviet tanks, and their contestation of the Brezhnevian theory of “limited sovereignty” of the Eastern countries, see Francesco Barbagallo, “Enrico Berlinguer. Il Pci Come Partito Della Democrazia Socialista,” *Studi Storici*, no. 2 (June 2014), pp. 431-432. Barbagallo highlights that the Prague’s spring and Dubcek had been shoot down right because «they had tried to experiment the Italian model, which implanted on the communist log freedom, democracy and pluralism».

A sympathy towards the Prague’s Spring also came from the Western social democratic parties of some countries in Europe, something which allows to further strengthen this element of triangulation I am trying to bring in in this chapter. On this, and on contacts of Czech reformists in exile (e. g. Jiri Pelikán) with Italian communists, see Ben Boel, “Western European Social Democrats and Dissidence in the Soviet Bloc during the Cold War,” in *Entangled Protest. Transnational Approaches to the History of Dissent in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union*, ed. Robert Brier (Osnabrück: fibre, 2013), 151–72.

¹⁸⁷ Falanga, *Spie Dall’Est.*, pp. 38-39.

describes the reactions of the SED delegates to the Czech's representative words at the 12th Congress of the PCI in Bologna in 1969:

Bologna l'11 febbraio, ore 19.45: il rappresentante del Partito cecoslovacco [...] sta per concludere il suo discorso [...] I delegati guardano a sinistra. Là, su una tribuna speciale, sono raccolti gli ospiti dei partiti fratelli. Assieme agli italiani si è levata in piedi anche la maggior parte dei delegati stranieri, tra cui anche gli ungheresi. Colta di sorpresa dalla dimostrazione, si alza anche la delegazione sovietica, seguita, con tentennamenti, dai bulgari, polacchi e per ultimi dai rappresentanti della RDT. Tutti applaudono, tutti inneggiano a Dubcek, solo Albert Norden e i suoi compagni della SED stanno immobili con il volto fisso.¹⁸⁸

Bauer's words are clearly representative of the GDR's attitude, barricaded within a dogmatic and static position,¹⁸⁹ seemingly with even more conviction than the Soviets themselves. The PCI, instead, responded quite differently: Prague explicitly represented the beginning of a slow path towards an explicitly autonomous position from the USSR, in the context of a «gradual crossing of the historical divisions of the European labor movement». The PCI «moved, in conjunction with the other forces of the European left, towards the strengthening and the democratization of the community bodies».¹⁹⁰ This did not mean, however, that for the PCI «the necessity of limiting dissent to Czechoslovakia and normalize relations with the USSR prevailed», at least until 1975.¹⁹¹

These upheavals within the Italian Communist Party and the search for an independent way to communism, constituted a general trend. This process involved the whole international communist world, not least China, which experienced tensions and conflict with the USSR throughout the 1960s. The Italian case, in its connection to the GDR, needs to be inserted in a larger frame of meaning, that Silvio Pons, among others, has well summarized:

Il legame pratico e simbolico con l'Urss non era più sufficiente a tessere una tela unitaria. I partiti comunisti continuavano, nella loro stragrande maggioranza, a reclamare l'appartenenza al movimento, la lealtà verso l'Urss, la fede nella "superiorità" del sistema socialista su quello capitalista. Proprio il legame costituente con lo Stato sovietico, che risaliva alle origini, fu anzi, in ultima analisi, l'ostacolo principale che impedì alla sfida cinese di raccogliere sufficienti adesioni. La defezione della Cina dal "campo socialista" mostrò che un singolo stato comunista poteva sfidare Mosca e distaccarsene in nome dei propri interessi e della propria autodifesa, ma non poteva sostituire la propria leadership a quella sovietica sul movimento, neppure nel Terzo Mondo. Tuttavia, l'Urss si trovava al centro di un campo di forze in contrazione e in via di disgregazione, mentre la sua autorità non era più incontestata. Anche

¹⁸⁸ FIG, APCI, Fondo Estero, "Rdt", 1969, mf 0308, p. 1308, *Un partito comunista indipendente, Il congresso del PCI – di Leo Bauer articolo apparso sul Vorwärts – organo della SPD tedesca – il 20 febbraio 1969.*

¹⁸⁹ I am always referring, here, to the institutional, official positions, as things of course may differ at a grassroots level. For instance, Thomas Militek, using oral history, has shown that (although in a later phase, in the 1980s) experiences of dissent of neighbor Soviet countries such as Czechoslovakia influenced later dissent in the GDR. See Thomas Militek, "Oppositionists in the CSSR and the GDR: Mutual Awareness, Exchanges of Ideas and Cooperation, 1968-1989," in *Entangled Protest. Transnational Approaches to the History of Dissent in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union*, ed. Robert Brier (Osnabrück: fibre, 2013), 55–86.

¹⁹⁰ Agosti, *Storia Del Partito Comunista Italiano 1921-1991.*, p. 98.

¹⁹¹ Ivi, p. 99. About the reaction of the PCI towards 1956 and 1968, and the reasons, see Blackmer and Tarrow, *Communism in Italy and France.*

se Mosca continuava a recitare il rituale dell'unità e a distribuire risorse in tutto il mondo, escluse le forze filo-cinesi, la cieca fedeltà allo Stato-guida era un ricordo del passato. La scissione cinese esibiva i limiti dell'egemonia sovietica. Il sistema mondiale degli stati comunisti era finito per sempre. La nozione del comunismo internazionale come soggetto della politica mondiale era perduta.¹⁹²

2.2.3 The establishment of diplomatic relations with the GDR: changes and continuities

A new phase in the PCI's support to the GDR started to emerge from 1970, the year of the Moscow-Bonn treaty, through which the *Bundesrepublik* recognized the borders with the Eastern European countries born after the end of World War II. The action of the Communist party was no longer directed towards the conflict over the sovereignty and the legitimacy of the GDR, but rather towards an increased collaboration across blocs.¹⁹³

Although it did not represent the solution to the "German question", the signature of the *Grundlagenvertrag* in 1972 surely marked an important evolution, signaling the substantial equality of the two states, at least on a formal level. Also, it opened the way to the international recognition of the GDR by other states.¹⁹⁴ This almost immediately happened for many Western countries, such as Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Denmark and Iceland. On January 18, 1973 it was Italy's turn.¹⁹⁵ France and Great Britain followed immediately after, during the first days of February.

1973 marked in many ways an important caesura. Most importantly, the Italian recognition of the GDR allowed a new freedom of movement across the Iron Curtain in both directions, one that would have not been possible before. From a political-diplomatic historical perspective, it allowed a further enlargement of the already existing commercial contacts with the East. However, that year represented a watershed and a political turn in the PCI's history, too: it was in that very year that Enrico Berlinguer promoted the political strategy of *compromesso storico* ("historic compromise"), a proposal of re-rapprochement between the PCI and the more progressive parts of the DC, developed with the aim of counteracting a highly conservative and authoritarian derive, perceived to be highly possible during that extremely tense period for the Italian republic.¹⁹⁶ The historical compromise can also be seen as «the PCI's own domestic 'detente from above'», as Maud Bracke has read it.¹⁹⁷

By analyzing these well-defined events both in the PCI and in Italy-GDR bilateral relations, one could affirm that 1973 represented a distinct turning point in relations among the Italian left and

¹⁹² Pons, *La Rivoluzione Globale.*, p. 346.

¹⁹³ Andrea La Bella, "I Comunisti Italiani e La Repubblica Democratica Tedesca," in *Italiani in Germania Tra Ottocento e Novecento. Spostamenti, Rapporti, Immagini, Influenze (Annali Dell'Istituto Storico Italo-Germanico in Trento. Quaderni)*, ed. Gustavo Corni and Christoph Dipper, vol. 67 (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2006), 657-77., pp. 672-673.

¹⁹⁴ Fasanaro, *La DDR e l'Italia.*, p. 40.

¹⁹⁵ Lill, *Völkerfreundschaft Im Kalten Krieg?*, pp. 451-452.

¹⁹⁶ For an early comment on the "historic compromise" see Stephen Gundle, "The PCI and the Historic Compromise," *New Left Review*, June 1987.

¹⁹⁷ Bracke, *Which Socialism? Whose Detente? West European Communism and the Czechoslovak Crisis of 1968.*, p. 372.

East German communists. Nevertheless, substantial continuities between the before and the after are also visible and relevant, not only in the never-ended official dialogue, despite the many contrasts and contradictions, but also with regards to administrative contacts at the local level. The sources from the communal archives that I will use in this research will show this, in the following chapters. Magda Martini has well emphasized the nature of reciprocal interests from both sides:

Anche successivamente il PCI, con la sua forte influenza sull'opinione pubblica italiana, fu per la SED uno degli alleati più importanti nei paesi della NATO. D'altra parte per le aspirazioni europeistiche del PCI fu importante mantenere rapporti di amicizia anche con la dogmatica SED; inoltre le conquiste sociali e economiche della DDR continuarono a rappresentare temi di interesse per i comunisti italiani, anche quando le divergenze politiche e ideologiche con la SED divennero incolpabili.¹⁹⁸

While I will widely elaborate on Martini's words in the following chapters, now, proceeding from here, it is possible to state that 1973 did not only represent a clear-cut rupture and a watershed. Discontinuities were evident on the political-ideological level, but continuities in interest were shown on the pragmatic ground.

¹⁹⁸ Martini, *La Cultura All'ombra Del Muro.*, pp. 27-28.

PART 2
**Institutional strategies of bilateral exchange:
analytical frames**

3. National strategies of contact

Highlighting the continuities of relations also after 1973 does not imply disregarding 1973 as a caesura, as recognition was both the main reason why these contacts started in the first place and a junction that in many ways marked a change of pace; however, it surely shifts the central attention away from the political-diplomatic narration¹⁹⁹ and transforms this transnational, municipal story into a new one focused on social-cultural aspects.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the ways in which relations between Italy and the GDR unfolded at the national level, where diplomatic aspects always remain in the background but are not given primary attention. The aim is both to offer the relevant information to understand why town twinnings were conceived and to identify the political-cultural background that made them possible and made the more specific *local* connections flourish. In the chapter, I will interpret the political and cultural maneuvers of the Italian Communist Party and of the political groupings which likewise participated in the connections at the national level as *strategies* that served the interests of both the East German one-party state and the PCI to pursue their own, differentiated aims. In the case of the GDR, the main scope was to gain attention from the new state: before 1973 for diplomatic recognition of its legitimacy; after 1973 to keep increasing the level of information on its political and social realizations. In Italy, for both the PCI and the Center-left governments, the goal was to reach recognition in order to expand commercial exchange with the East. Cultural and political relations were not interrupted after 1973. However, party contacts became drier and, as far as *culture* is concerned, leftist Italians significantly lost fascination towards the GDR and its self-celebration as an antifascist entity, highlighting its contradictions and shifting their views towards dissent – at least at the national level, as my point is right that in the territories the dynamics were different.

I chose to start the chapter right with town twinnings, which are at the center of part 3.1. The decision to include them among the strategies is connected to the necessity of highlighting their relevance as *one* of the many instruments employed to reach recognition, through national and international extended networks. The internal dynamics of twinnings and the specific aspects and mechanisms of contact connected directly to the local level deserve instead a deeper investigation and will be faced in chapters 4 and 5. The international, national and local organizational networks

¹⁹⁹ Unlike some recent publications, such as Laura Fasanaro's one, in which 1973 is chosen as starting point, so as to stress the choice to concentrate specifically on diplomatic relations on an official, mostly governmental level. The reference is to Laura Fasanaro, *La DDR e l'Italia. Politica, Commercio e Ideologia Nell'Europa Del Cambiamento 1973-1985* (Roma: Carocci, 2016).

that bonded these cities, both in Italy and in the GDR, are faced in 3.1.1. This section shows a complex system of parliamentary groups, territorially-based friendship associations, local articulations of parties and labor unions and their involvement in the campaign for recognition and in the contacts with the GDR in general. The local level was a fundamental element of the general strategy. 3.1.1. also includes an overview of all the Italian twinnings with the GDR between the 1960s and 1970s, and a brief description of the reasons why connections were initiated in my seven case studies. In 3.1.2 I focus on the topic of *peace* and its centrality in the town twinning international and national movement. Recalling some previous, brief notes in the methodological/theoretical chapter, in both sections I will highlight the political transversal nature of the twinnings policies, but also the reasons why I chose to specifically work on their communist side. For this part, I will refer to brief references in literature and to some French works, which constitute the basis for my original contribution to the topic.

3.2 is centered on party politics between the *Brüderparteien* SED and PCI.²⁰⁰ At the organizational core of the contacts with the GDR and as a major reference point for discussion was and always remained the PCI, as the SED considered it as its most reliable political interlocutor. These *political* contacts among the two parties were at the center of the propaganda machine. However, mutual relations were not always rosy: they went through significant divergences, ups and downs, detachments and moments of coldness, variously related to misunderstandings, different political stances on international events, and personal dissonances. The image of these contacts is thus always analyzed here by taking into account agreement and dissent, proximity and distance, with the aim of showing the complexity and non-linearity of such relations.

As the main reference point, in Italy, for the *Ddr-Anerkennung* campaign, the PCI was also responsible for *cultural* relations (at the core of 3.3). Culture was first and foremost a propaganda instrument. Italian communists were requested to contribute by managing and organizing events, expositions, concerts and theater plays, mostly through the structure of the Thomas Mann Center. However, besides these official, bilateral contacts, which were strictly planned and controlled, a spontaneous interest towards East German culture also arose among groups of intellectuals, who showed manifold shades of interest but also of critique. Some of these personalities were politically independent: usually, they were antifascist artists, writers, musicians, publishers, often associated to the Thomas Mann Center but not necessarily connected to the PCI; others – linked to the heterodox left, in strong contact with their French counterparts – were not, and therefore had less restrictions in

²⁰⁰ Arnd Bauerkämper and Francesco Di Palma, eds., *Brüderparteien Jenseits des Eisernen Vorhangs. Die Beziehungen Der SED Zu Den Kommunistischen Parteien West- Und Südeuropas (1968-1989)* (Berlin: Cristoph-Links Verlag, 2011).

judging the contradictions of the East German system, but also had more difficulties in travelling to the GDR and getting a direct impression of that world. Lastly, some universities were also particularly active in the exchanges with East Germany. Top-down cultural politics organized by and through the PCI, the critique of the GDR system conducted by Italian and French heterodox intellectuals, and contacts in the academic world will all be taken into account in 3.3.1, 3.3.2 and 3.3.3. Political and cultural contacts have already been widely analyzed by existing literature, which I often refer to, though by elaborating on some unpublished sources and contributing with analytical reflections. This will be the case with the intellectual exchange on town planning and social housing developed through academic institutions. The display of elaborations on architecture and planning issues is particularly relevant as a lead-in to the political-administrative technical exchanges that will be covered in the next chapter.

In the last section, 3.4, I discuss contacts between the national structures of labor unions, the CGIL in Italy and the FDGB in East Germany, which in my view deserve a separate section for three main reasons. Firstly, as from the early 1970s the Italian labor union left the communist-oriented World Federation of Trade Unions; secondly, as both organizations, although clearly in different ways and intensities, were somehow related to the respective parties; and thirdly, as the CGIL was an important outpost for the GDR for the politicization of Italian “guest workers” (*Gastarbeiter*) in West Germany. So far, no systematic and in-depth publication exists on this topic. I therefore rely on some short book chapters and references present in literature, but I also bring my own contribution by reporting and analyzing unpublished sources from the central archive of the CGIL.

These four areas – twinnings, politics, culture, labor unions – are the ones I chose to elaborate on, as, in my opinion, they represented the key fields through which the Italian-East German strategy towards the GDR unfolded. The main aim was diplomatic recognition, but what I want to highlight is that relations in these four areas remained active even later. This idea is key to the development of my arguments on town twinnings in the next chapter.

At first glance, it may appear unusual not to include *economy* and *commerce* in this section, as they have been considered in all the existing works about contacts between Italy (as a whole) and the GDR.²⁰¹ Indeed, they were an important aspect of mutual relations and, starting from the 1960s, they raised a transversal interest among political parties of different sides. As a matter of fact, until the end of the 1950s, bonds between Italy and the GDR were mostly conducted through political-ideological channels, within the left, rooted in a harsh fight against imperialism and in a strong

²⁰¹ I refer to the otherwise rich and complete works by Charis Pöthig and Johannes Lill. See Pöthig, *Italien Und Die DDR.*, and Lill, *Völkerfreundschaft Im Kalten Krieg?*

belonging to the common sphere of international anti-fascism. The 1960s, instead, marked a new beginning, which also favored a relative independence of the cities in international relations. This was the decade in which pragmatic matters, and commercial issues above all, became more essential and led to a softening of political divisions and to an increased political consensus, both from the Italian and the East German side. Commerce with the East and the GDR was of interest both for the Italian Center-left governments with their institutional, economic *Ostpolitik* – which had started after the beginning of Italy's bilateral relations with the Soviet Union²⁰² – and for the PCI. Italian communists kept commercial contacts with the East through various industries and enterprises connected to the party, such as the *Compagnia Centro Orientale* (CoCeOr), from 1960 onwards named *Compagnia Italiana per Esportazioni e Importazioni* (CIEI).²⁰³ In this sense, the GDR represented a strategic access to the Soviet bloc.

The attitude of the Italian Center-left cabinets on this topic represented a significant turn compared to the 1950s, when the centrist Christian-democratic governments were less inclined towards commercial exchanges with the East, being more heavily subjected to the decisions of the Atlantic Alliance.²⁰⁴ Nevertheless, despite the weakness of decisions at a governmental level and the political constrictions due to the Cold War confrontation, already since the early 1950s some slight changes had started to occur at the commercial level: the Italian Institute for Foreign Commerce (*Istituto Italiano per il Commercio Estero*) was active in organizing the participation of Italy at international fairs and expositions, East Germany included, and from 1958 onwards a GDR Chamber of Commerce (*Kammer für Außenhandel, KfA*) was established in Rome.²⁰⁵ A second branch of the KfA was then established in Milan in 1964.²⁰⁶ Until the GDR's recognition in 1973, the Chamber had been the one and only representative institution of the GDR admitted in Italy.²⁰⁷ This lack of official relations was balanced with the permanent participation of Italian factories at one of the most influential fairs in Europe, the *Leipziger Messe*, which took place twice every year, in spring and autumn. Especially after Geneva's conference in 1955, in which safety, disarmament and the

²⁰² Fasanaro, *La DDR e l'Italia.*, pp. 18-19.

²⁰³ Which held the exclusive rights for the sale and purchase of crude potassium salt and other chemical products ever since 1947, even before the official creation of the GDR territorial entity. About this, see Johannes Lill, *Völkerfreundschaft Im Kalten Krieg? Die Politischen, Kulturellen Und Wirtschaftlichen Beziehungen Der Ddr Zu Italien 1949-1989* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2001)., p. 376. The first contacts between the *Sowjetische Besatzungszone* (SBZ)/DDR and the PCI already since 1947 are documented in [BArch], SAPMO, DY 30 IV 2/20/254 (as quoted in Lill., footnote 50, p. 376).

²⁰⁴ Charis Pöthig, *Italien Und Die DDR. Die Politischen, Ökonomischen Und Kulturellen Beziehungen von 1949-1980* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2000)., p. 131.

²⁰⁵ Ivi, pp. 132-33.; Lill, *Völkerfreundschaft Im Kalten Krieg?*, p. 371.

²⁰⁶ Lill, p. 392.

²⁰⁷ Magda Martini, *La Cultura All'ombra Del Muro. Relazioni Culturali Tra Italia e Ddr (1949-1989)* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2007)., p. 24.

possibility of German reunification were discussed – although without practical repercussions on the latter – ²⁰⁸ private enterprises started showing more interest towards commerce with the Soviet bloc and East Germany. Some examples were the car industry (FIAT, Innocenti); the chemical industry (Montecatini, since 1966 Montedison, and Pirelli); the state steel group IRI and the likewise state energy company ENI.²⁰⁹ This tendency was reinforced in the 1960s, when Italy started viewing the Eastern market as an attractive option, and as a way to compete with other, economically stronger countries of Western Europe, such as the *Bundesrepublik* itself, together with Benelux or France.²¹⁰ Fighting for the GDR's recognition was thus both of symbolic and pragmatical importance for the communists, as well as of pragmatical importance for the new Italian, mildly progressive governments, in the aim to unlock restrictions on commerce.

However, the interest was not one-sided. East Germany was first and foremost interested in reaching recognition by the Italian government to strengthen import-export contacts with the West, with the aim of contrasting West Germany as a commercial partner and establishing itself as a successful socialist economy. To reach this purpose, the Soviet-friendly regime kept contacts with companies close with the PCI but was likewise ready to do business with Christian Democratic actors,²¹¹ even though in the 1970s, as Johannes Lill has argued, some of the aforementioned contacts with Italian enterprises initiated in the 1960s reform period did not reach a satisfactory level, due, in his view, to the interruption of the *Neuen Ökonomischen Systems* (since 1967 named *Ökonomisches System des Sozialismus*, ÖSS), and the renewed *Ostorientierung* enhanced by since 1971 new SED's secretary Erich Honecker, who had substituted Walter Ulbricht.²¹²

Why, then, not including economy and commerce as a separate section of this chapter? The main reason is to show my partial disagreement with the established tradition of including the “fields of contact” in the triad of the political, cultural and economic sphere.²¹³ I argue that an interpretative distinction has to be done here, if one aims to go beyond what is by some means a descriptive approach. Politics and culture can be considered as *explicit* tools of propaganda that both sides openly exploited for their reciprocal pragmatic aims. The same goes with town twinnings, labor unions and other mass organizations and associations – even if their positioning as independent units within the social sphere, or as part of political or cultural politics, is debatable. Economy and commerce, instead, were the main *underlying* reasons why such a propaganda was born in the first place: they were the

²⁰⁸ On the Geneva's conference in 1955, see for instance Pöthig, *Italien Und Die DDR.*, pp. 89-93.

²⁰⁹ Lill, *Völkerfreundschaft Im Kalten Krieg?*, p. 407.

²¹⁰ Ivi, p. 16.

²¹¹ Ivi, p. 369.

²¹² Ivi, p. 408.

²¹³ It is the case with Pöthig, Lill, and also Fasanaro's work.

implicit, not much heralded whys and wherefores behind the strains for legitimation and recognition before 1973, and for stabilization of relations after; they did not represent a *strategy* itself, however. For these reasons, I think the political, cultural, and economic sphere should not be put on the same level in interpreting this topic. Economy will instead be treated more in detail as an element of translocal contacts between single administrations in chapter 5.

3.1 Twinnings

3.1.1 Organizational networks: international, national, local

Die Deutsche Städte- und Gemeindetag war eine auf freiwilliger Mitgliedschaft beruhende Vereinigung der Städte, Gemeinden und Landkreise der DDR. Er hatte den Stand einer gesellschaftlichen, formal außerhalb des Staatsapparates stehenden Organisation, die aber dem „politischen System der sozialistischen Institutionen“ angehörte.²¹⁴

This is the description provided in 2009 by the archivists and workers of the *Bundesarchiv* who took care of the reordering and restructuring of the documents of the *Deutscher Staedte- und Gemeindetag* (DZ 4). It defines the DSG as a volunteer-based union of cities, municipalities and counties of the GDR, that formally had the status of a social organization outside the state apparatus but de facto belonged to the political system of socialist institutions. It was created in 1955 and headed by Friedrich Ebert (from 1957 to 1964) and Walter Kresse (1964-74). In the GDR, the organization represented the reference point, for the establishment of town twinnings with both socialist and non-socialist countries, included West Germany, where twinnings can be defined as the practice of pairing towns, with the aim of promoting «cultural, educational, and professional interaction between municipalities and their residents» and exchange of «ideas and experiences across national borders to find solutions for improving urban services and local administration».²¹⁵

For the GDR, the creation of bonds with foreign towns in both European blocs and the Third world, represented a specific strategy planned from above; although the DSG was officially independent, it was in reality subordinate to both the state and party decisions.²¹⁶ Twinnings were

²¹⁴ *Einleitung*, Deutscher Städte- und Gemeindetag, DZ 4, (1951-) 1957-1973 (-1978), bearbeitet von Josefine Bzdok, Sabine Grau, Christiane Ihlius, Ulrike Just, Nguyen Thanh Nam, Nguyen Thuy Binh, Pham Hoai Nam, Ulf Rathje, Berlin Juni 2009, in <http://www.argus.bstu.bundesarchiv.de/DZ4-55987/index.htm?kid=e1fafbfd-c747-49d0-b5bdf0b52c43230>. Last visited on July 5, 2018.

²¹⁵ Kirsi Ahonen, “Town Twinning as a Tool of the Cultural Cold War: Finland and the Two Germanies,” in *Nordic Cold War Cultures. Ideological Promotion, Public Reception, and East-West Interactions*, ed. Valur Ingimundarson and Rosa Magnúsdóttir, Alexsanteri Cold War Series, 2/2015 (Turku: Juvenes Print, 2015), 132–53., pp. 132-133.

²¹⁶ Interesting works about the foreign policy of the GDR are the ones by Wentker: Hermann Wentker, “Continuità e Cambiamento Nella Politica Estera Della Ddr,” in *Riflessioni Sulla Ddr. Prospettive Internazionali e Interdisciplinari Vent'anni Dopo*, ed. Magda Martini and Thomas Schaarschmidt (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2011).; Hermann Wentker, “Aussenpolitik oder Transnationale Beziehungen? Funktion Und Einordnung Der Parteibeziehungen Der SED,” in *Brüderparteien Jenseits des Eisernen Vorhangs. Die Beziehungen Der SED Zu Den Kommunistischen Parteien West-*

state-planned (on center-periphery relations in the GDR, see 4.1) and, in the context of relations with Western countries, followed the purpose of bypassing the Hallstein doctrine²¹⁷ and reaching diplomatic recognition. At least until 1975, East Germans were eager to keep contacts with the PCI, as it was a well-established and well-rooted party on the Italian territory; they were constantly informed about the party's successes and defeats.²¹⁸ The higher was the consensus of the PCI, the more possibilities the GDR had to be promoted and positively received by the communist militants and voters. This kind of communication, or persuasion, was easier, more direct and more effective on the local level: this is why twinnings were a fundamental instrument for the GDR's propaganda abroad and deserve close attention.

A similar network of social and party-oriented associations was present in Italy, too. The actions of the DSG were followed, for instance, by the strengthening of cultural contacts at the local level. In the Italian peninsula, the most active player of the propaganda machine was probably the Thomas Mann Center (see 3.3). Beyond that, a whole variety of organizations and leagues took care of municipal international contacts as a main or secondary activity. It is the case with the League for Friendship Among Peoples (*Lega per l'amicizia dei popoli*), or the League of Democratic Municipalities (*Lega dei comuni democratici*) and the League for Autonomies and Local Powers (*Lega per le autonomie e i poteri locali*),²¹⁹ which fulfilled the more generic role of promoting local autonomy but also worked for international twinnings. Furthermore, a series of Italy-GDR friendship associations were active, together with an official parliamentary group and territorial committees. The sounding boards of these groups were, in the GDR, the journal and association *Städte und Gemeinde*, and in Italy the journal *Comune democratico*.

In Italy, the twinnings' organizational networks were politically heterogeneous: they were usually led by communists, but they also included members of other political parties, which for various reasons were interested in supporting the cause of the GDR's recognition. For instance, these were the words of Luigi Polano,²²⁰ communist representative originally from Sassari (Sardinia) and

Und Südeuropas (1968-1989), ed. Arnd Bauerkämper and Francesco Di Palma (Berlin: Christoph-Links Verlag, 2011), 29–47.; Hermann Wentker, *Außenpolitik in engen Grenzen. Die DDR Im Internationalen System 1949-1989* (München: Oldenbourg, 2007).

²¹⁷ Christina Léon, *Zwischen Paris Und Moskau: Kommunistische Vorstadtidentität Und Lokale Erinnerungskultur in Ivry-Sur-Seine*, *Pariser Historische Studien* 99 (Berlin: Oldenbourg, 2012), p. 237.

²¹⁸ As shown, for instance, by a report found in Neubrandenburg, on the success in 1975 elections: see Neubrandenburger Stadtarchiv (from now on NeuSta), 2.00 AE: 1298, *Kurzeinschätzung der Regional-, Provinzial- und Kommunalwahlen am 15./16. Juni 1975 in Italien*.

²¹⁹ See Archivio Storico della Provincia di Livorno (from now on ASPLI), b. Presidenza Filippelli e Nannipieri, fasc. "Rostock", *Lettera di Antonino Maccarrone a Valdo Del Lucchese, 15 ottobre 1971*.

²²⁰ After the Spanish war, Luigi Polano almost certainly went in exile to Moscow, where he taught in an international school for veterans. Until at least 1941 he worked for the Soviet radio system, to then be appointed by Palmiro Togliatti as responsible of the clandestine radio which transmitted in Italy. After 1945, he came back to liberated Italy and precisely to Sassari, where he covered the role of secretary of the PCI federation and other local roles until 1949. He then became

president of the national committee Italy-GDR, in a letter addressed to the presidents of the Tuscan Provinces of Florence, Livorno and Pisa in 1971:

Cari amici, la presente per informarvi che sono maturati in questi mesi nuovi sviluppi per tutto il movimento delle relazioni con la RDT, suscitati anche dall'azione svolta in questi trascorsi anni dal nostro comitato, dai comitati locali di amicizia con la RDT, dai comuni e provincie che hanno stretti legami con Enti locali della RDT. Fra breve apparirà sulla stampa una Dichiarazione politica firmata da personalità che rappresentano i partiti della sinistra socialista e operaia (PCI, PSI, PSIUP, Indipendenti di sinistra) e da esponenti della DC, dichiarazione che dà notizia della costituzione di un Comitato di iniziativa Italia-RDT. [...] Il Nostro Comitato Nazionale, che si è finora occupato anche di promuovere, facilitare e sviluppare rapporti di amicizia e di gemellaggio fra Comuni e Provincie italiane e Comuni e Provincie della RDT, ha salutato la Costituzione del nuovo Comitato di iniziativa Italia-RDT ed ha dato la sua adesione ideale ed operativa, concordando con i fini che il nuovo Comitato si propone.²²¹

In the letter, Polano informed the administrators about the new developments in relations with the GDR and about the newly constituted “Initiative committee Italy-GDR” (*Comitato d’iniziativa Italia-RDT*), specifically aimed at the achievement of the GDR’s recognition. He highlighted the importance of bonds with East German regional and local authorities in the previous years, plus the presence, in the same new committee, of various personalities of the «socialist and working class left» (PCI, PSI, PSIUP, independent leftists) together with members of the Christian Democracy. The constitution of the committee was the result of a long-term work which had already started in 1956, through letter exchanges between (communist) municipal administrators, that reached their peak shortly before the construction of the Berlin Wall in summer 1961. As Charis Pöthig has reported, in that very year, between June and July, a GDR delegation travelled to Turin to establish first contacts.²²² In the 1950s and in the 1960s,²²³ connections were created with communist-guided municipalities, as they were believed to be the more open towards the cause of diplomatic recognition, for political reasons.

It is challenging to know exactly how many twinnings there were in the 1960s and 1970s. The lists available in the *Bundesarchiv-Lichterfelde* in Berlin²²³ are sometimes misleading, as they also contain *ideas* of town twinning that never really took place. I have checked numerous lists related to the years between 1957 and 1966. Among the twin cities, towns, and smaller centers mentioned in the documents, situated in various Italian and East-German regions, were: Bologna/Leipzig,

representative for three legislations and senator since 1964. On these biographical notes, see Guido Melis, “Luigi Polano,” *Il Movimento Operaio Italiano. Dizionario Biografico* (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1975).

²²¹ ASPLI, b. Presidenza Filippelli e Nannipieri, fasc. “Rostock”, *Lettera di Luigi Polano (Comitato nazionale Italia-Repubblica Democratica Tedesca) ai presidenti delle province di Firenze, Livorno e Pisa; ai sindaci dei comuni gemellati con comuni della RDT – loro sedi, 3 agosto 1971*.

²²² Pöthig, *Italien Und Die DDR.*, p. 325.

²²³ All contained in the files related to relations with foreign cities/*Städtepartnerschaften* (town twinnings). See Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde (from now on BArch), Abteilung DDR, “DZ 4 – Deutsche Städte- und Gemeindetag”, DZ 4 141-173.

Marzabotto/Köpenick (Berlin); Scilla/Lübbenau; Livorno/Görlitz; Reggio Emilia/Schwerin; Milan/Dresden; Casale Monferrato/Meissen; Collegno/Neubrandenburg; Carpi/Wernigerode; Mazara del Vallo/Bautzen; Rocca Priora/Sohland an der Spree; Parma/Weimar; Medicina/Gotha; Pesaro/Eisenach; Pistoia/Gera; Correggio/Auerbach; Genua-Voltri/Aue; Chianciano/Bad Elster; Salsomaggiore/Bad Elster; Sassari/Plauen; Andria/Halberstadt; Cerignola/Schönebeck; Rosignano/Bernau; Raffadali/Waren; Venaria/Prenzlau; Siena/Potsdam. I also relied on another list, mentioned in the proceedings of the first meeting of Italian towns twinned with the GDR, which took place in Florence in 1969. In that document, the following further twinings were mentioned: Mele/Schneeberg; Mirandola/Radebeul, Raffadali/Waren-Müritz, Vietri sul mare/Kahla; Certaldo/Neuruppin; Scandicci/Frankfurt am Oder; Rapolano/Hoyerswerda; Leonforte/Münchernerbsdorf; and Sesto Fiorentino/Oranienburg. The Province of Florence was signaled to be under negotiation with the Province of Dresden.

I have filtered out twinings between small towns and centers, that only appeared once, and have focused on the most quoted ones in the available documents, both in Italy and in Germany; those that had been realized after the diplomatic recognition of the GDR, even if between big cities, were not representative of the kind of strongly communist-guided town, actively involved in the battle for recognition first and in a politically characterized version of twinings after, that I wanted to take into account. It is the case with Florence, twinned with Dresden since the mid-1970s, and Milan, twinned with Leipzig, like Bologna, since 1977.²²⁴ Proceeding from here, I have verified through communal and provincial archives if the contacts had really led to an official twinning contract. In some cases I have discovered new *jumelages*. Interestingly, when the outcome had been positive, it was usually deducible from the condition of the archives and of the materials regarding the twinings: they were well-ordered and had a dedicated section; whereas when the bonds had not been so strong I have encountered more difficulties in finding the actual documents – oftentimes they were spread in the mayors' administrative correspondence or somewhere else, and the archivists themselves were not always aware of their presence and availability. The presence itself, the quantity and the quality of the documents have represented the reason for the ultimate choice of my case studies. Significantly, and perhaps not surprisingly, the Italian towns addressed by the GDR for the town twinings, together with the ones that were more responsive, willing and able to create connections, by not being restricted by prefectures or opposition parties in the local councils,²²⁵ were located in the so-called

²²⁴ Archivio Storico del Comune di Bologna (from now on ASCBO), Fondo Ufficio esteri, b. Lipsia 1973-1986, fasc. "1978", Sottofasc. 5 "Lipsia-invito", *Gemellate Lipsia e Milano*, in "L'Unità", 10 gennaio 1977.

²²⁵ As it happened, for instance, in the case of Siena and Potsdam, which the Prefecture annulled. On this, see ASPLI, b. Presidenza Filippelli, fasc. "Gemellaggi 1965-1969", *Lettera a Silvano Filippelli, Siena, 19 giugno 1969*.

“red” regions of Emilia-Romagna and Tuscany and, in one case, in the industrial belt around Turin, in Piedmont. Quite unsurprisingly, too, the connections were initiated by councils which merged together communists and socialists. Whereas the actual establishment of the twinnings encountered many difficulties, as the GDR was perceived as a dogmatic, authoritarian state. These twinnings were therefore usually formalized between Italian communal and provincial “red” local councils and their *pendants* in the GDR. However, I have made the conscious decision to also include two case studies in which the twinning had been created between local representatives of the labor unions, also connected to the PCI in Italy. This usually happened when there were difficulties in reaching a town twinning agreement and represented a way to circumnavigate the problem. I argue these two case studies are relevant as they are representative of a strong will to create connections with the GDR, even when that was not doable through administrative ways or immediately possible. In general, I will be analyzing seven case studies in this dissertation. I will shortly describe when and where they were born, their nature, their territorial location (the region in which the twinned towns were located, in Italy)²²⁶, the year in which they started and the persistence or non-persistence of the twinning bond today. It is relevant to also highlight the distinction between medium-big towns and medium-small or small towns, as the scale has noteworthy influences in terms of a) political and economic centrality of the twinning; b) on the qualitative level of sociability established through the exchanges; and c) on the expectations, desires and interests that unfolded behind the twinnings themselves.

Starting from the biggest towns, the first twinning is the one between Bologna and Leipzig, initiated between communal administrations of towns that shared similar structural and economic affinities.²²⁷ Here, friendly contacts seem to officially date back to 1962, when Leipzig’s mayor Walter Kresse invited a delegation of Bolognese children to spend their holidays in the GDR, and Bologna’s mayor Giuseppe Dozza to participate to the spring edition of the Leipzig fair in 1962.²²⁸ Dozza, however, replied with a letter in which he explained that he could not reach Leipzig, as he had been denied the extension of the passport validity to the GDR by the Italian Ministry of Internal

²²⁶ As the twinnings were planned from above in the GDR, and almost all the towns were asked to develop twinning contacts, I argue it is not so important to have this information on the German side, but it definitely is for Italy, as it helps explaining why the precise choice of pairing with East Germany was made.

²²⁷ Another important twinning – that I have not directly researched about, though – is the one between Bologna and Zagreb, in the former Yugoslavia. On this, important work has been done by Eloisa Betti and Vladimir Unkovski-Korica, who have hypothesized that Bologna Communists twinned with Zagreb both for raising «the profile of their own city as a showcase» for the PCI in times of Center-left governments, and because Yugoslavia stood side by side with «Khrushchev’s relatively moderate USSR against Mao Tse Tung’s more radical China». The two authors concluded – and I agree with that – that «Showcasing détente from below and their socio-economic models seemed to be an important way for both parties to affect favorable change at the national and international levels». See Vladimir Unkovski-Korica and Eloisa Betti, “Town Twinning in the Cold War: Zagreb and Bologna as ‘Détente from Below’?,” (September 7, 2016).

²²⁸ ASCBO, Fondo Ufficio esteri, b. Lipsia 1960-1972, fasc. “Gemellaggio Lipsia 1962”, *Brief von Adolphs (amtierenden Oberbürgermeister) an Giuseppe Dozza, Leipzig, 29.6.1962.*

Affairs.²²⁹ Before that, already in 1960, there is evidence of a short correspondence between the municipality of Bologna and the East German publishing house *Enzyklopädie*, which had asked some information and data on the commune.²³⁰ Regular contacts started again in 1968, with the quite explicit goal of strengthening commercial contacts through the fair of Bologna, with the communist-oriented municipality acting as a link and a guarantor for communication; enhancing tourism, promoting cultural exchange (such as contacts between the Communal Theater in Bologna and its correspondent in Leipzig, although not always successful),²³¹ and creating connections between artisans and small enterprises. Bologna was also interested in Leipzig due to its old and important university, founded in 1409 and renamed after Karl Marx during socialist times.²³² The official twinning contract was signed on September 8, 1969, as highlighted by a responsible of the cultural department for relations with foreign cities in Bologna; but in fact – he also emphasized – «the friendship pacts are two», the first one being concluded on May 2, 1962 and the second one right in 1969: however, «the Germans seem to ignore the first one».²³³ Despite these and other fluctuations in the intensity of relations, also throughout the following years, due both to political issues and financial reasons, and to shifts in reciprocal interests (which decidedly turned, by the end of the 1970s, towards industrial and commercial aims) the twinning between the regional capital of Emilia-Romagna, red region *par excellence*, and the cultural and exhibition center of Leipzig is still active today.²³⁴

²²⁹ ASCBO, Fondo Ufficio esteri, b. Lipsia 1960-1972, fasc. “Gemellaggio Lipsia 1962”, *Lettera di Giuseppe Dozza a Walter Kresse, Bologna, 9 marzo 1962.*

²³⁰ ASCBO, Fondo Ufficio esteri, b. Lipsia 1960-1972, fasc. “Lettera alla casa editrice Enzyklopaedie”, *Lettera inviata alla casa editrice Enzyklopaedie di Lipsia in risposta alla loro richiesta di alcuni dati sul comune, 9 luglio 1960.*

²³¹ ASCBO, Fondo Ufficio esteri, b. Lipsia 1960-1972, fasc. “Lipsia 1968”. In particular, see «Sono purtroppo spiacente di doverle comunicare che il Ministero del Turismo e dello Spettacolo ha deciso di non autorizzare lo svolgimento delle manifestazioni operistiche già programmate a Budapest ed a Berlino. La preannunciata tournée dei complessi del Teatro Comunale di Bologna in quelle città è pertanto stata sospesa», in ASCBO, Fondo Ufficio esteri, b. Lipsia 1960-1972, fasc. “Lipsia 1968”, *Lettera di Guido Fanti a Kurt Schnell, Camera Commercio Estero Repubblica Democratica Tedesca in Roma, Bologna, 17 settembre 1968.*

²³² ASCBO, Fondo Ufficio esteri, b. Lipsia 1960-1972, fasc. “1972”, Sottofasc. “Lipsia – notizie generali sulla città”, *Lipsia, Bologna 29 dic. 1972.*

²³³ «Mostrano di ignorare il primo». Here a translation issue could possibly subsist – *ignorare* in Italian, in this context, could either assume a negative meaning, implying that East Germans *deliberately* did not want to remember the existence of the pact; or, more simply, that they «seemed to have forgotten» the first pact, with a somehow less strong active emphasis put on the verb. This last one is a linguistic shade that one could consider with reference to a slightly more old-fashioned Italian. For the original document, see ASCBO, Fondo Ufficio esteri, b. Lipsia 1973-1986, fasc. “Anniversario patto di amicizia, ottobre 1974”, *Anniversario patto di amicizia, ottobre 1974.* Actually, in the Stadtarchiv Leipzig there is a copy of the first friendship treaty (*Freundschaftsvertrag*). See Stadtarchiv Leipzig (from now on StadtAL), Stadtverordnetenversammlung und Rat der Stadt Leipzig (from now on StVuR) 1945-1970, Nr. 17269, *Freundschaftsvertrag zwischen den Städten Leipzig (Deutsche Demokratische Republik) und Bologna (Italien), 2. Mai 1962.*

²³⁴ The documents in the ASCBO are stored until 1994; after that year, it is possible that the office which was responsible for twinings (*Ufficio esteri*) was changed, that the municipality internal organization was modified; or, also, that the twinning remained silent for some years for financial or political reasons. However, in a general trend of decreasing of municipal international relations after the end of the Cold War, the twinning appears to be still active today.

Bologna was also twinned with the German Democratic Republic, and in particular with the smaller Suhl, in Thüringen, through the respective local representatives of labor unions (CGIL and FDGB). In this case too, it seems that the first contacts took place quite early, around 1964.²³⁵ The two sides, however, did not physically meet each other before the GDR's diplomatic recognition in 1973, despite them fighting for it. In that very year, for the first time, the Bolognese labor unionists visited Suhl, while the East Germans travelled to Bologna twice, in 1974 and 1976. Looking at the union documents, it seems that these relations were maintained until the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Worth a short mention is also the case of Marzabotto, a little town close to Bologna which was invested (more precisely in Monte Sole) by the vastest civilian massacre operated by Nazi German soldiers between September and October 1944.²³⁶ Because of its history, Marzabotto was asked by Köpenick to start a town twinning, but a strong and real tie could not be formalized, as the local council did not entirely agree on it. Instead, a friendship pact was stipulated.²³⁷

Another important twinning, because of the size of the towns involved and, again, for their political and economic centrality, is the one between the Tuscan port town Livorno and Rostock, concluded between the two provincial administrations (*provincia* and *Bezirk*). After an unsuccessful attempt to establish connections with the communal administration of Görlitz in 1965, the president of the Province Silvano Filippelli managed to establish contacts with the main harbor city of the GDR, Rostock, that lasted until the end of the 1980s.

Taking smaller centers into consideration, there are four more other cities that were twinned with the GDR and are comprised in my case studies. Starting from the Emilia-Romagna region, which hosted most of them, in my work I consider the case study of Reggio Emilia and Schwerin, Carpi and Wernigerode and Modena and Potsdam. The first twinning started in 1966, and, in this case, too, is still active today, although with intermittent periods of inactivity and not with the same intensity of the 1960s and 1970s.²³⁸ The second one started in 1965, between communal administrations, and

²³⁵ Fondo CGIL Camera del Lavoro di Bologna (from now on CGILBO), *Questioni internazionali-Relazioni internazionali*, fasc. "Suhl 1973", *Programma di lavoro e di collaborazione fra la FDGB Direzione provinciale di Suhl e la Direzione provinciale della Camera confederale del lavoro di Bologna per l'anno 1974*.

²³⁶ 800 people died within an operation guided by major Walter Reder and the 16th Panzer Grenadier Reichsführer-SS. The operation, which took place between September 29 and October 5, 1944, was aimed to eliminating the local partisan brigade "Stella Rossa-Lupo", therefore ensuring to the German troops the strategic territory of Monte Sole. On the massacre, see, among many publications, the following monographies: Luca Baldissara and Paolo Pezzino, *Il Massacro. Guerra Ai Civili a Monte Sole* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2009).; Lutz Klinkhammer, *Stragi Naziste in Italia 1943-44* (Roma: Donzelli, 2006).

²³⁷ Beatrice Magni, ed., *Per La Memoria. Il Comune Di Marzabotto Tra Percorsi e Fonti per La Ricerca* (Ferrara: Edisai, Comune di Marzabotto, 2008)., pp. 37-38.

²³⁸ «Stand der Verlagerung der Aktivitäten auf gesellschaftliche Ebene. – aufgrund von Empfehlungen der Arbeitsgruppe PKB wurde die Verbindung Sn–Reg. Emilia nach mehrjähriger Inaktivität wieder aufgenommen, als typische Städteverbindung, in der nach unseren bisherigen Feststellungen die Gesellschaft nicht angeschlossen ist». See

lasted until the early 1980s; the third one was initiated in a quite unusual form, between the labor union of Modena, together with its League of Democratic Municipalities (*Lega dei comuni democratici*) and their equivalents in the GDR. Early contacts had already started in 1961, right after the building of the Berlin Wall, through the communal administrations and thanks to the initiative of Modena's mayor Rubes Triva; the attempt was not however successful. Restrictions and communication difficulties did not allow the creation of constructive contacts, and the labor unions together with the League of Democratic Municipalities ended up representing the only possible instruments to open a channel. In the case of Modena, this multi-levelled twinning lasted until the 1980s. Modena was strongly connected to Carpi, located in its province, which had started first contacts with the town of Wernigerode already in 1963, thanks to the mediation of the Thomas Mann Center.²³⁹ The whole province therefore created a sort of integrated system of relations with the GDR, mobilizing political representatives but also numerous militants. In this context, friendly relations between the FDGB in Halle and the labor union in Reggio Emilia were also established. The explicit aim – in the case of labor unions – was to give birth to a «regional protocol agreement» for a stable cooperation with East Germany, which, after 1973, also included CISL and UIL, the Italian unions connected to Catholics and to the non-Marxist left, joined into a unitary group in 1972.²⁴⁰

The last town that I will analyze is the only one located in Piedmont. It is Collegno,²⁴¹ situated in the industrial belt around Turin,²⁴² together with Grugliasco one of the few completely “red” towns of the area, as well as important center of the Italian resistance against Nazism and Fascism during the Second World War. Both towns were involved in a massacre of 67 people, civilians and partisans (32 of which from Collegno), perpetrated by members of a retreating Nazi military division following Italy's Liberation, between April 30 and May 1, 1945. The massacre determined a retaliation, with the consequent shooting of 29 soldiers of the *Repubblica sociale italiana*, the Italian fascist republic that joined Hitler in Italy's occupation in October 1943.²⁴³ In this case, the twinning with its East German counterpart, Neubrandenburg, had been active since 1965; the contacts had apparently been

Landeshauptarchiv Schwerin (from now on LHAS), 7.11-1, Nr. 719, Z 22/1991, BT/RdB Schwerin, *Jahreseinschätzung der komm. Auslandsbeziehungen des Bz. im Jahre 1977*, 23.11.1977.

²³⁹ Stadtarchiv Wernigerode (from now on StaWe), WR III/1259, Weltföderation der Partnerstädte Band 2, *Luigi Polano a Martin Kilian*, Roma, 29.12.1963.

²⁴⁰ CGILBO, Questioni internazionali-Relazioni internazionali, fasc. “Delegazione in Italia–27 settembre 1976”, *Dichiarazione comune della delegazione della FDGB del distretto di Suhl, della Federazione regionale CGIL-CISL-UIL Emilia-Romagna e della Federazione provinciale CGIL-CISL-UIL*.

²⁴¹ Collegno was also twinned with Sarospatak, in Hungary, and Antony, in France. Both towns were likewise twinned with Neubrandenburg. Sarospatak was the town of Kossuth, the «Hungarian hero» who for many years lived in Collegno.

²⁴² Which includes the centers of Rivoli, Grugliasco, Alpignano and Collegno. See NeuSta, EA 3.00; Agb 6970, 33718, *Convegno internazionale delle città Gemellate “Pace e disarmo”, 18-19 aprile 1985*.

²⁴³ On this, see Daniela Adorni and Marco Sguayzer, *Oltre La Metropoli: Per Una Storia Di Collegno Dalla Ricostruzione Agli Anni Novanta* (Milano: Ledizioni, 2013), p. 30.

commenced on the occasion of an international convention of “martyr cities” (*Martyrenstädte*) that took place right in Grugliasco in 1961.²⁴⁴

These are the case studies I am going to take into account in this dissertation. Throughout the text, however, I will also marginally refer to other cases, that likewise developed, if not as twinings, at least as friendship contracts or preliminary contacts. It is the case with the (only planned, never concluded) twinning between Parma (Emilia-Romagna) and Weimar; Medicina (Emilia-Romagna) and Gotha, Marzabotto (likewise Emilia-Romagna) and Köpenick; Sassari (Sardinia) and Plaue.

As we can see from the examples and the lists in the *Bundesarchiv* in general, in the Italian-East German case there definitely was a communist dimension to the twinings; this is also the one my dissertation is centered around.²⁴⁵ However, the situation was not always clearly defined. Charis Pöthig has written, apparently as a general statement regarding the whole Cold War, that «the twinings were only realized with communist-managed Italian towns».²⁴⁶ This account, however, is not completely correct. It is likely that this inaccuracy might be due to the examination of the German side of the documents only, tied up with a marginal focus on twinings. Further research conducted both on German and Italian archives has shown that (leftist, progressive) Christian Democratic town councils also twinned with the German Democratic Republic, even before its recognition in 1973. It is the case with Piacenza, twinned with Erfurt since 1971, and administered by Erio Ghillani, a Christian Democratic mayor, right between 1970 and 1975. Florence was another example: it had been associated with Dresden since 1978, thanks to the initiative of a communist mayor, Elio Gabbuggiani, but on the pattern laid down by Giorgio La Pira, leftist Christian Democrat and former mayor of the town. La Pira, already from the beginning of the 1950s, was actively involved in the *Fédération Mondiale des Villes Jumelées* (FMVJ), or World Federation of Twinned Towns (WFTT) (see 3.1.2) and acted as facilitator of contacts with East Germany.²⁴⁷

²⁴⁴ See “Grugliasco e Collegno Nella Resistenza: Convegno Internazionale Citta Martiri Del Nazifascismo, 30 Giugno - 2 Luglio 1961. A Cura Del Comitato per Le Manifestazioni Del 1. Centenario Dell’unità d’Italia, 1861-1961.” (Torino: EDI, 1961).

²⁴⁵ In this respect, the Italian case is accompanied by the French one. Christina Léon in particular, in her recent work focused on the “red” center Ivry-Sur-Seine, in the Paris *banlieue*, has dedicated a section to its *jumelage* with Brandenburg, GDR. Léon highlighted the meaning of this decision as connected to its being a communist town governed by proletarian and internationalist ideas, and therefore willing to establish twinings in key points of Central and Eastern Europe. See Léon, *Zwischen Paris Und Moskau.*, p. 235.

²⁴⁶ Pöthig, *Italien Und Die DDR.*, p. 326.

²⁴⁷ For some brief biographical notes on La Pira, see Oscar Gaspari, “Giorgio La Pira, Sindaco Di Firenze. Il ‘Sindaco Santo’, per La Povera Gente e La Pace Nel Mondo,” in *Storie Di Sindaci per La Storia d’Italia*, by Oscar Gaspari, Rosario Forlenza, and Sante Cruciani (Roma: Donzelli, 2009), 177–82.

The FMVJ was born in 1957 in Aix-Les-Bains, France, under the auspices of the organization *Le Monde Bilingue*, a group created in 1951 by former members of the French Resistance.²⁴⁸ Starting as organizer of twinnings between French and English-speaking towns,²⁴⁹ it proceeded from the idea of the necessity for better communication between nations, with the aim of a peaceful coexistence. By putting emphasis on the transnational connections, not only in the frame of Western Europe, it differed for instance from the likewise French group of European federalists, united in “La Fédération – Centre d’Études Institutionnelles pour la Réforme de la Société Française” founded in 1944, or from the German *Rat der Gemeinden Europas* (RGE), supported by the *Bundesrepublik*.²⁵⁰ The twinnings in the FMVJ were organized on the basis of economic and social affinities.²⁵¹

La Pira’s participation in Italy-GDR relations is particularly highlighted on the occasion of the first congress of Italian cities twinned with East Germany, which took place right in Florence on April 19 and 20, 1969. At that time, the town was (still) guided by a Christian-Democratic mayor, Luciano Bausi, that however on April 29 was substituted, for a one-year-period, by the prefectural commissioner Guido Padalino, due to a political crisis caused by the fragility of the Center-left.²⁵² The congress of the Italian towns twinned with the GDR was organized by the Roman “permanent committee for the international colloquia of Dresden and local authorities in Europe”, and hosted in the seat of the provincial local administration (at its head was Elio Gabbuggiani at the time). The event was opened by a greeting by Gabbuggiani himself and, immediately after, by a message of La Pira, in which he explained the (justified) reasons behind his absence due to its role of president of the FMVJ and delivered a clear statement about the necessity for the GDR’s recognition, which in his opinion represented «an essential factor of the historical and political balance of Europe and the world». He proceeded by stressing the need «to mutate the state of affairs into a rule of law – *da mihi factum dab tibi jus*, as the Roman lawyers used to say – and to inaugurate, between the two Germanies, a new period of peace and brotherly collaboration for the good of the whole population of the whole Germany, Europe and the world».²⁵³ This example surely shows how the FMVJ

²⁴⁸ On the birth of the “Monde Bilingue”, see Antoine Vion, “Europe from the Bottom Up: Town Twinning in France during the Cold War,” *Contemporary European History*, 04, 11 (November 2002): 623–40., p. 632. The same article is precious for an overview and interpretation of the French case of twinnings during the Cold War.

²⁴⁹ Union of International Associations, <https://uia.org/s/or/en/1100056924>. Last seen on July 11, 2018.

²⁵⁰ On the foundation of “La Fédération” in 1944, and on the conflict between rival twinning organizations in France, see Vion, “Europe from the Bottom Up.”, p. 628 and p. 636.

²⁵¹ Léon, *Zwischen Paris Und Moskau.*, pp. 235-236.

²⁵² Federico Paolini, *Firenze 1946-2005. Una Storia Urbana e Ambientale* (Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2014)., p. 148.

²⁵³ *Messaggio del Prof. Giorgio La Pira, presidente della Federazione Mondiale delle Città Gemellate*, in “Convegno Dei Comuni Italiani Gemellati Con Comuni Della RDT, Comitato Italiano Permanente per i Colloqui Internazionali Di Dresda Ed Enti Locali d’Europa, Atti Del 1. Convegno Dei Comuni Gemellati Con Comuni Della RDT: Sede Dell’Amministrazione Provinciale, Palazzo Medici Riccardi, 19-20 aprile 1969, Roma 1969.” (Roma, 1969).

represented, in a way, a link between various political actors in Italy and in Europe on the topic of recognition and peaceful coexistence, especially during the 1960s and 1970s.

Going back to the communist side of the twinning movement, however, the FMVJ could sometimes also be used by local administrations in an instrumental way, whenever difficulties with the prefecture occurred. For instance, Ruggero Gallico, former secretary of the PCI in Avellino and member of the Thomas Mann Center, suggested Silvano Filippelli (Livorno) to start new twinings in other directions («for instance the Third World»), to avoid problems in consolidating bonds with socialist cities, especially in East Germany.²⁵⁴ He recommended that Livorno started as soon as possible the procedure of adhering to the FMVJ, connecting to the UN and the UNESCO and habilitating the twinning activity, in order for the Livornese administration to have all the «necessary earmarks» for international relations. He then explained the process, which had to be started with a decision of the local council motivating the cultural, social, moral reasons behind such adhesion. The costs that incurred did not have to be declared from the very beginning but could be decided against the backdrop of concrete activities, from time to time. Gallico concluded that what he proposed was not «a renunciation to a political battle of great value [...] that you have already launched, but, on the contrary, the way, or rather one of the ways, to facilitate that very battle».²⁵⁵ The legal framework, however, was not always clear. Before diplomatic recognition, in some documents, the twinning is referred to as a “friendship pact”, which appears to be the expression designed to define an unofficial friendship that substituted an impossible twinning in the eyes of the Italian government.²⁵⁶

The *agency* of the local PCI was thus enabled and eased by all the associations and organizations described so far, on the local, national and international level, and so was for the GDR towns, which likewise relied on the FMVJ but also on its special, state-organized propagandistic structures and organizations.

3.1.2 “*Abbatere i muri e fare i ponti!*”. Cities for *peace*: a politically transversal movement

In her publication on socialist municipalism during the first half of the Twentieth Century, Patrizia Dogliani, has argued that that movement «expressed a faith in aims and actions that was shared by many Europeans and Americans from a variety of political backgrounds – secular, Catholic, Protestant, liberal, Marxist, Labour». Municipalism was a sort of free space for possibilities where

²⁵⁴ ASPLI, b. Presidenza Filippelli e Nannipieri, fasc. “Rostock maggio 1967”, *Lettera di Ruggero Gallico a Silvano Filippelli, 7 giugno 1966, Fédération Mondiale des Villes Jumelées.*

²⁵⁵ Ibidem.

²⁵⁶ Archivio Storico Comunale di Carpi (from now on ASCC), Carteggio gemellaggio Carpi-Wernigerode, b. Corrisp gemellaggio CP-Wernigerode 62-79 I, fasc. “Corrispondenza varia”, *Nota sui rapporti tra Carpi e la città di Wernigerode (Rdt).*

socioeconomic changes could be implemented, though «without challenging the political creed or legal system of the country involved».²⁵⁷ This transnational transversality of municipalism was evident in the second postwar, too. What I argue here is that, in particular, the topic that linked communist and Catholics, East and West from both sides of the Iron Curtain together, was the one of *peace*, although this concept was seen, developed and presented in very different ways, depending on political belonging. This connection can be well-exemplified by the brief but enthusiastic letter that Giorgio La Pira sent to the mayor of Collegno Ruggero Bertotti after an important visit of Collegno by a German delegation of its twin town and for his commitment to the cause of the FMVJ²⁵⁸: «Dear Bertotti – he wrote – thank you and congratulations for what you did in the occasion of the visit of the German delegation: break down walls and make bridges!» (*abbattere i muri e fare i ponti!*).²⁵⁹ Again, an example of this common battle can be found in the activities of individuals such as Dante Cruicchi, prominent member of the Communist party in the Bolognese area and collaborator of the Bologna municipality on the twinning with Leipzig, among the creators of “Le Monde Bilingue” in 1951, later member of the FMVJ and since 1962 regular collaborator «with distinguished lay and Catholic members of Italian pacifism»²⁶⁰.

As for the Italian Communist Party, Rosario Forlenza among others has highlighted the relevance of peace in the development of municipal foreign policy, and at the same time the centrality of foreign policy, as «a field that was [traditionally] regarded as a preserve of the State by doctrine and legislation», in shaping the political nature of the communist local government.²⁶¹ Forlenza argues that, after the seventh PCI congress in April 1951, the party’s interests shifted towards the problems of peace, together with the democratization of local authorities and the defense of constitutional values. By highlighting this aspect, he suggests that the focus on peace is to be interpreted as a comeback of «domestic policies and the national interest».²⁶² While that certainly constituted a central point in the national political strategy, also as an anti-DC tool, I would add that the foreign policy initiatives undertaken by communist and socialist administrators also widened the

²⁵⁷ Patrizia Dogliani, “European Municipalism in the First Half of the Twentieth Century: The Socialist Network,” *Contemporary European History*, Municipal Connections: Co-operation, Links and Transfers among European Cities in the Twentieth Century, 11, no. 4 (November 2002): 573–96.

²⁵⁸ An important meeting promoted by the municipalities of Turin, Venaria, Verbania and Collegno took place right in Turin in March 1970. The scope of the meeting, coordinated by Bertotti among others, was to create a connecting committee in Piedmont for the twinings’ activities and plan the organization for the VII Congress of Twinned Towns in Leningrad (1970). See ASCO, Gemellaggi, b. Neubrandenburg 1970, fasc. “1970”, *Riunione comitato di gemellaggio, martedì 21 aprile 1970*.

²⁵⁹ ASCO, Gemellaggi, b. Neubrandenburg, fasc. “Organizzazione soggiorno delegazione Neubrandenburg a Collegno, 20-27 settembre 1970”, *Lettera personale di Giorgio La Pira al sindaco di Collegno Ruggero Bertotti*.

²⁶⁰ Riccardo Franchi, “La Cultura Della Resistenza Nella Pagina Pubblica Di Cruicchi,” in *L’artigiano Della Pace. Dante Cruicchi Nel Novecento*, ed. Carlo De Maria (Bologna: Clueb, 2013), 143–72., p. 149.

²⁶¹ Rosario Forlenza, “The Italian Communist Party, Local Government and the Cold War,” *Modern Italy*, 2010., p. 181.

²⁶² *Ibidem*.

perspective beyond national borders, also allowing contacts on the individual level, and not only on the governmental one. However, the positioning of “red” town councils was not to be seen as uniquely positive: Forlenza, again, has stressed that «darker areas» also were to be found, especially in the 1950s. He refers to the too celebrative and propagandistic representation of both the USSR and Stalin as representatives of peace and neutrality by the Italian communists.²⁶³ Whereas the use of the expression “darker areas” well illustrates the acritical attitude towards a system that, behind the propaganda curtains, was far from being peaceful, it does not really picture the importance, for the left-wing town administrations, of the discourse on peace in an anti-DC and anti-Atlantic pact perspective. As deceptive as it was in its almost hagiographic way of referring to the Soviet Union, the communist conception of peace was central in gaining credibility within the Italian public opinion. Peace was a topic every Italian citizens could easily connect to, especially after the harsh years of World War II; at the same time it was a terrain on which communists could challenge the Catholics, by proposing an alternative vision. Ironically, peace became a double-sided instrument in Cold War dynamics: on the one hand it represented a *battleground*, and on the other, it showed *connections* between the two sides, especially on the local level.

Italian leftist administrators strengthened bonds with their *pendants* in other European cities, both in the West and in the East, right within this general context. To this regard, until the 1950s and especially 1956 one of the most powerful instruments of international communist propaganda on peace was the experience of the “Partisans of Peace”, an international pacifist movement led by the Soviet Union, and active between the end of the 1940s and 1956. The movement had branches in every country and was also active in Italy. Despite being formally autonomous, it was de facto promoted by the Communist Party along the directives of Soviet Russia; it was however able to assume original and independent traits. Through the use of both associationism and mass organizations, the call for a bottom-up action as an element of counterpower, legitimated by the high mobilization of militants, and the deployment of the communal and provincial councils, the PCI was able to build a strong mass movement based on “organized pacifism”, promoting many initiatives and also involving the socialists together with various personalities and groupings of different democratic and liberal origin. Therefore, despite its high politicization, the movement was able to reach a larger public, not only within the Italian left but also among a broadly antifascist front.²⁶⁴ This success also represented a tool in the political competition with the Catholic conservative political forces.

²⁶³ Ivi, p. 182.

²⁶⁴ On this, see Sondra Cerrai, *I Partigiani Della Pace in Italia. Tra Utopia e Sogno Egemonico* (Padova: libreriauniversitaria, 2011).

This competition was transformed into a stronger communication in the 1960s. While, from the PCI's side, the dialogue with the social basis of the Catholics had always been present in Togliatti's strategic conception, during these years the idea of building a bridge towards the Catholic world further reinforced, and thus the «convergence between Christian universalism and Communist universalism on the issue of the safeguard of human kind and of the defense of “civilization” from the threat of atomic destruction».²⁶⁵ This argument was likewise used by the leftist, antifascist, and democratic Christian democrats (the so-called *dossettiani*, who were named after the progressive priest, jurist and politician Giuseppe Dossetti)²⁶⁶ already since the late 1950s, with the aim of defining their specific identity vis-à-vis other members of the Italian Christian Democracy – that is, the ruling conservative groups in the government. It became stronger with the start of the previously mentioned Center-left cabinets.

This insistence on the necessity of fighting rearmament and fostering peaceful bonds among people was particularly evident in the movement of twinned towns and in the Italy-GDR network. As a Catholic and an antifascist, La Pira strongly believed in the centrality of cities for peace-building. “*Le città sono vive!*” (“The cities are alive!”) he exclaimed in an expression that would have later become the title of one of his well-known publications.²⁶⁷ In his conception, cities were not simply administrative entities, but also spiritual communities, that therefore needed to take care of the spiritual life of their inhabitants. In that sense, he perceived the town administration as a means – through the administrative realizations – to liberate man from need and hatred. «Do the States have the right to destroy the towns?» – he asked in 1955 – or to «kill these “living units” – true microcosms in which the essential values of the past concentrate, and true irradiation centers for the future history – on which the entire fabric of human society, of human civilization, is built?».²⁶⁸

Florence itself was seen as the city of peace, specifically due to these thoughts which inspired administrative policies, as well as for its international role in the 1950s and 1960s. As previously

²⁶⁵ Andrea Guiso, “L’Europa e l’alleanza Atlantica Nella Politica Internazionale Del Pci Degli Anni ’50 e ’60. Tra Lealtà Sovranazionale e Collocazione Reale,” in *Atlantismo Ed Europeismo*, by Piero Craveri and Gaetano Quagliariello (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2003), 205–48., p. 222.

²⁶⁶ For complete biographical notes on Dossetti, see the works by Enrico Galavotti: Enrico Galavotti, *Il Giovane Dossetti. Gli Anni Della Formazione 1913-1939* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2006).; Enrico Galavotti, “Il Dossettismo. Dinamismi, Prospettive e Damnatio Memoriae Di Un’esperienza Politica e Culturale,” in *Cristiani d’Italia. Chiese, Società, Stato, 1861-2011* (Roma: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 2011).; Enrico Galavotti, *Il Professorino. Giuseppe Dossetti Tra Crisi Del Fascismo e Costruzione Della Democrazia 1940-1948* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2013). Some reflections on Galavotti’s works on Dossetti are contained in Federico Ruozzi, “Per Il Centenario Della Nascita Di Giuseppe Dossetti, Introduzione Alla Lezione Di Enrico Galavotti: Fonti e Problemi per Una Biografia,” E-Review, 2013, <http://e-review.it/ruozzi-tra-dossettismo-e-dossessione>.

²⁶⁷ Giorgio La Pira, *Le Città Sono Vive* (Brescia: La Scuola, 2005)., pp. 166-167. Or. Ed.: Giorgio La Pira, *Le Città Sono Vive*, ed. Fausto Montanari, vol. Alle sorgenti per la meditazione e per la vita (Brescia: La Scuola, 1957).

²⁶⁸ Giorgio La Pira, “Le Città Non Possono Morire,” October 2, 1955, <http://www.giorgiolapira.org/it/content/le-citta-non-possono-morire>.

shown, the first convention of the Italian towns twinned with the GDR took place in Florence. La Pira himself often travelled to the East (such as in Leningrad in 1970) to advance the cause of twinned cities for peaceful coexistence. The main idea was to «unify cities to unify nations, to break down the walls to build bridges».²⁶⁹ This broadly “religious” view on the relevance of local and translocal connections deeply differed from the communist conception of international peaceful coexistence. Nevertheless, La Pira is an example of the way in which this substantial convergence on peace took place. He himself was considered an absolute reference point in the field of local government and international relations, also by communist mayors and administrators, with whom he was in most cases in very good relations.

For communists too, peace became an essential element of their communist-inclined global vision. This was already evident in the 1960s but remained a peculiar trait even later on, for instance in the 1980s, during which a partial resurgence of the Cold War conflict occurred: towns were engaged in the struggle for peace. This is visible, for instance, in the correspondence between the mayor of Leipzig Karl Heinz Müller and the mayor of Bologna Renzo Imbeni, in 1983. In a letter, Müller highlighted that the «proposition of all the politicians of the municipalities of the world» had to be the one of «contrasting the incumbent danger of a war» and «favor disarmament», asking for Bologna’s collaboration on this issue.²⁷⁰ Imbeni, from his side, likewise expressed his disappointment for the negative outcome of Geneva’s negotiations between the USA and USSR, together with his worries for the construction of atomic missiles on both sides. He emphasized that the world citizens’ battle for peace would have found «also in the future», and in agreement with the twin town Leipzig, the «necessary sensibility» in the Bolognese local council.²⁷¹

There was a strong emphasis on the role of municipalities and mayors for the safeguard of peace. However, ever since the 1960s, peace had also been and remained, for communist local councils, one of the devices through which the political struggle in contrast and communication with the central State was operated. Within the politics of internationalism and contacts with the East, peace was the strategic and somehow rhetorical tool through which the international role of towns could be reinforced. The aim of twinnings, for communists, was to bring about «a lasting peace by

²⁶⁹ *Messaggio del Prof. Giorgio La Pira, presidente della Federazione Mondiale delle Città Gemellate*, in “Convegno Dei Comuni Italiani Gemellati Con Comuni Della RDT, Comitato Italiano Permanente per i Colloqui Internazionali Di Dresda Ed Enti Locali d’Europa, Atti Del 1. Convegno Dei Comuni Gemellati Con Comuni Della RDT: Sede Dell’Amministrazione Provinciale, Palazzo Medici Riccardi, 19-20 aprile 1969, Roma 1969.” (Roma, 1969).

²⁷⁰ ACSBO, Fondo Ufficio esteri, b. Lipsia 1973-1986, fasc. “1983”, *Traduzione della lettera di Karl-Heinz Müller a Renzo Imbeni, Leipzig, 25. Oktober 1983*.

²⁷¹ ACSBO, Fondo Ufficio esteri, b. Lipsia 1973-1986, fasc. “1983”, *Lettera di Renzo Imbeni a Karl-Heinz Müller, 24 novembre 1983*.

political means».²⁷² The contacts with the GDR on the local level show this, too. However, the sources allow to state that these exchanges went beyond this *rhetorical* appeal to peace. They represented an instrument of political, communist self-representation, while also strengthening local-specific economic bonds and serving as vehicle for the spreading of technical-administrative skills (see chapter 5).

Overall, twinnings can be read in a variety of ways and through a multiplicity of interpretative levels: as an instrument of power, propaganda and consent in the GDR; as a means for the Italian government to achieve easier commercial communications with East Germany; as a political and pragmatic tool for communist-socialist local administration, and – in the European context and discourse – as a facilitator for peace among peoples. While, in Italy, there was a practice to bond together various (democratic and antifascist) political characters, from the PCI to the progressive Catholics, from the PSI to the PSIUP, it was the Communist Party that was mostly interested in, and responsible for, the rest of the strategic contacts built with the GDR in the 1960s and 1970s. Below, I will give account of the ways these relations unfolded through politics, culture and labor unions in this period. All these stories are somehow parallel to each other.

3.2 Political contacts between agreement and dissent: the *Brüderparteien* PCI and SED

Cultural and recreational organizations, labor unions and other associations linked to work and to education, not least local administrations: the PCI represented the core of a complex system constituted by all these societal institutions. The contacts with the GDR unfolded through all these channels but were organized centrally, by the national leading organs in Rome. A fundamental asymmetry has to be noted in this case: while the same happened with the propaganda machine of the *Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands*, the nature of the GDR as a de facto one-party-system country ensured that all party decisions had to be approved on a state level through a centralized system of decision by party leaders.²⁷³

²⁷² Vion, “Europe from the Bottom Up.”, p. 636.

²⁷³ The SED will be labeled here as a *de facto single party*, although, formally, a multi-party system did exist. Following the so-called “democratic bloc” in the Soviet Occupation Zone, in 1950, for the occasion of the SED’s 3rd Congress, the “National Front” was founded. It represented an enlargement of the previous antifascist, “democratic” block, which gathered all the GDR parties and organizations: the SED, the SED-controlled mass organizations such as the labor union FDGB and the Young Pioneers, and the other party subjects (the CDU, *Christlich-Demokratische Union*; the LDPD, *Liberal-Demokratische Partei Deutschlands*, the NDPD, *Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands*; the DBD, *Demokratische Bauernpartei Deutschlands*). On this, see the old but still exhaustive Enzo Collotti, *Storia Delle Due Germanie* (Torino: Einaudi, 1968), pp. 795-809. The National Front, however, represented an instrument which guaranteed to the SED the almost complete control of the political situation in the country, by issuing a consistent number of seats with a single list of candidates in the *Volkskammer* (People’s Chamber). As Martin McCauley among others has explained, «prospective candidates had to speak a selection meeting (dominated by workers) and only if accepted were they allowed to stand. Many of the CDU and LDPD leaders opposed this procedure since they regarded it as an SED

Bilateral political contacts were heavily dependent on international events. They were marked by official and unofficial meetings and by the preparation of collaboration protocols between the two parties. The extensive nature of the reciprocal work appears as particularly clear in a document signed in 1972, in which the PCI and the SED stated that

il PCI continuerà a mettere al centro della sua azione l'estensione della campagna per il riconoscimento della RDT e la sua ammissione all'ONU. Attraverso l'azione degli Enti locali, i gemellaggi, le visite di amicizia, lo scambio di delegazioni, l'intervento di personalità politiche, sindacali, culturali, questa campagna sta ottenendo risultati sempre più cospicui e si fa strada la necessità, anche a livello delle forze governative, del riconoscimento della RDT sulla base del diritto internazionale. Occorre favorire tutte quelle azioni unitarie che possano accelerare questa presa di coscienza per portarla al suo sbocco necessario. Un valido contributo a ciò danno i Comitati di amicizia fra Italia e RDT ai quali i due partiti si impegnano a fornire tutto l'aiuto necessario.²⁷⁴

However, the interest towards East Germany started well before, with the birth of the German Democratic Republic in 1949. The event was welcomed with enthusiasm by the mass parties of the Italian left – both the PCI and the PSI.²⁷⁵ Charis Pöthig has summarized the reasons why the foundation of an East German state had been celebrated among Italian leftists, individuating them in the attribution of responsibility of German division to the Western Allies, who had for the first time violated the Potsdam agreements; in the accusation to Bonn for causing the alienation of the “two Germanies”; and in the foundation of the “Berlin Republic” as a «historical necessity in order to avoid the back development of Germany».²⁷⁶

The common ground between the PCI and the foreign policy of the GDR «was, firstly, the international link of the PCI with the USSR's interests after 1945». For this reason, the Italians backed the Soviet position on the German question. In 1949, they fully accepted the Soviet view on the GDR as first “democratic and antifascist state” that clearly broke with the Nazi past, while depicting the *Bundesrepublik* (BRD) as the capitalistic state that was not going to pursue a renewed social structure

tactic to eliminate all candidates who were at all critical of the leading role of the communists»: see Martin McCauley, *The German Democratic Republic since 1945* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1983), p. 49. The winning and the composition of the seats in the People's Chamber was determined by a quota and not by total votes, and however, voters could only express a yes/no decision on the list. This way, the SED, by using control methods and menacing the secrecy of vote, ensured communist domination, almost reaching the unanimity. For these reasons, the SED will be labeled here as a “single party” without that being considered problematic. On the SED's history, see in particular the various works by Andreas Malycha: Andreas Malycha, *Die SED: Geschichte Ihrer Stalinisierung 1946-1953* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2000); Andreas Malycha and Peter Jochen Winters, *Die SED. Geschichte Einer Deutschen Partei* (München: Beck Verlag, 2009).

²⁷⁴ FIG, APCI, Fondo Estero, “Rdt”, 1972, mf 053, p. 1565, *Protocollo di collaborazione tra il PCI e il SED per il 1972-1973*.

²⁷⁵ At that time in a *patto di unità d'azione* (“unity of action's pact”) with the PCI and therefore also subjected and backing the Soviet line. This would have slowly changed after 1953 and would have experienced a strong rupture after 1956. On the unity of action, see for instance Aldo Agosti, *Storia Del Partito Comunista Italiano 1921-1991* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1999), and Paolo Mattera, *Storia Del PSI 1892-1994* (Roma: Carocci, 2010).

²⁷⁶ Pöthig, *Italien Und Die DDR.*, p. 59.

and was rather going to stick to nationalist and imperialistic orientations. As stressed by Andrea La Bella, «the spread of this image of the BRD in Italy was in line with the interests of the USSR, which tried to contrast the integration of that country in the political and military Western alliances between 1949 and 1955».²⁷⁷

Traces of Italian visits to the GDR have been found since the early 1950s. For instance, in January 1951, a delegation of Italian communists was present and delivered public speeches at the 75th birthday of the GDR's president Wilhelm Pieck.²⁷⁸ Despite this early representative and ceremonial contacts between the “brother parties” (*Brüderparteien*),²⁷⁹ somehow predictable when considering the nature of the early Cold War, relations between them actually turned out to be «more formal than substantial».²⁸⁰ In this phase, the creation of bonds suffered from many restrictions. On the national level, communication was «severely hindered by the malfunctioning of the postal system and the limited opportunity to send people to Italy».²⁸¹ As a matter of fact, the circulation of GDR citizens to countries outside the Soviet sphere was strictly controlled by the Allied Travel Office (also Allied Travel Board), a special bureau managed by the three West occupying powers (USA, England and France). Therefore, the PCI constituted the only channel through which it was possible to develop reciprocal contacts.²⁸²

A common element was the use of the antifascist tradition in both countries, respectively as a weapon against the *Bundesrepublik* and as the founding “myth” of the Italian Republic. Antifascism

²⁷⁷ Andrea La Bella, “I Comunisti Italiani e La Repubblica Democratica Tedesca,” in *Italiani in Germania Tra Ottocento e Novecento. Spostamenti, Rapporti, Immagini, Influenze* (Annali Dell’Istituto Storico Italo-Germanico in Trento. Quaderni), ed. Gustavo Corni and Christoph Dipper, vol. 67 (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2006), 657–77., pp. 658-659.

²⁷⁸ FIG, APCI, Fondo Estero, “Germania Rdt”, 1951 (II), mf 0341, p. 1189-1193, *La delegazione italiana alla celebrazione del 75esimo anniversario della nascita del compagno Wilhelm Pieck – Berlino = 2, 3, 4 gennaio 1951; Intervento di Rita Montagnana alla seduta solenne convocata dal C. C. del Partito socialista unificato tedesco in occasione del 75esimo compleanno del compagno Pieck. Berlino 3/1/51.*

²⁷⁹ Arnd Bauerkämper and Francesco Di Palma, eds., *Brüderparteien Jenseits des Eisernen Vorhangs. Die Beziehungen Der SED Zu Den Kommunistischen Parteien West- Und Südeuropas (1968-1989)* (Berlin: Cristoph-Links Verlag, 2011).

²⁸⁰ Martini, *La Cultura All’ombra Del Muro.*, p. 10.

²⁸¹ Pöthig, *Italien Und Die DDR.*, p. 121.

²⁸² The possibility of travelling towards East Germany had been challenged, for instance, especially in the 1950, by political adversaries and propaganda professionals. One example for this is the clerical publishing house ABEL in Bologna, which used priests and preachers for anticommunist propaganda. On this, see Marco Fincardi, *C’era Una Volta Il Mondo Nuovo. La Metafora Sovietica Nello Sviluppo Emiliano* (Roma: Carocci, 2007), p. 32. One example on this in relation to the GDR is the historically poor and clearly partisan leaflet edited by Tommaso Toschi and Benigno Benassi in 1953, so before the building of the Berlin Wall, on «travel experiences in the territory of East Germany». In such leaflet, by presenting partial testimonies and presumably or at least very likely falsified interviews to people “in the streets”, mostly in West Germany, the two priests aimed at a «clear denial» of the «usual red statement along which Italian communists cannot go to the East as the Italian government does not give the permission [...] We go to the East with an ordinary passport; and if Grotewohl’s Germany did not deny the passage on the highway via Leipzig, we would have even reduced the expenses of almost a half. To the East, anyway, one can go whenever one want. See Tommaso Toschi and Benigno Benassi, *Vita Segreta Di Gente in Clausura: Esperienze Di Un Viaggio in Territorio Della Germania Est* (Bologna: EDB, 1953), p. 6.

and Resistance, employed to foster state legitimacy, as a «system-sustaining ideology»,²⁸³ became the cornerstone of the whole strategy of bilateral contacts in the 1950s, for the Soviet Union and the popular democracies but also for the communist parties of the West. Creating strong ties based on this idea between the two countries, was relatively easy on the level of propaganda.²⁸⁴ This emphasis on antifascism, humanism and democracy was much more important to Italians in their reading of the GDR state and society than the communist utopia itself. The Soviet and the SED hierarchies were aware of this, and therefore presented the GDR not as a “popular” state – differently from what happened with other Socialist republics – but as a “democratic” one.²⁸⁵

The personal experiences of the postwar political leaders in German resistance against Hitler also had a particular effect on Italian antifascists. More than a simple statement or an idea, the awareness of belonging to the same history of struggle was a truly powerful element in the sympathy that many (mostly communist) Italians had towards the GDR. Many of those – politicians, mayors and local administrators, and outstanding figures of the new Italian republic born in 1946 – had mostly been antifascists and partisans. This constituted an extremely strong, almost sentimental, identity component. Some of these new postwar leaders had met each other inside internment camps; others even earlier, in the 1930s, during the Spanish civil war, or in exile, where – be it in France or in Soviet Russia – they had shared the same political education. Therefore, international bonds were also sustained and reinforced by these personal contacts among Italian and German communists. One prominent example on the national level was Franz Dahlem, who had got to know Italian communist leaders from his exile and interment days in France. After 1945, he reconnected with some of them, in particular with Eugenio Reale, member of the PCI’s National Direction (somehow comparable to what the *Politbüro* represented in the communist parties of the Eastern bloc) and responsible of economic contacts for the Party. Johannes Lill has suggested that this personal interaction has significantly contributed to the fostering of the first economic relations between the PCI and the SED. Through the establishment of manifold commercial agencies, the PCI concluded contracts which guaranteed its rights of exclusive representation of the GDR companies on the Italian market.²⁸⁶

During the early Cold War, which also coincided with the peak of the Stalinist power, the two parties were substantially aligned, due to antifascism, and to the necessity of a strong positioning for one of the two political-cultural paradigms that divided the world. Even the first, internal earthquake in the Soviet bloc and in the GDR did not result in a political breakup between the PCI and the SED.

²⁸³ The expression has been used by Peter Monteath, “Narratives of Fascism in the GDR: Buchenwald and the ‘Myth of Antifascism,’” *The European Legacy* 4, no. 1 (1999): 99–112, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10848779908579948>, p. 101.

²⁸⁴ Pöthig, *Italien Und Die DDR.*, pp. 119-120.

²⁸⁵ Martini, *La Cultura All’ombra Del Muro.*, p. 20.

²⁸⁶ Lill, *Völkerfreundschaft Im Kalten Krieg?*, pp. 361-398.

On June 17, 1953 the Soviet tanks and the GDR authorities violently repressed a workers' and people's uprising, which had started the day before in East Berlin, as a protest against the augmentation of work norms in the factories. The events probably happened too shortly after Stalin's death to determine a wave of collective indignation. In a historical phase marked by a not yet fully established de-Stalinization and by a still strong cohesion of the international communist movement under the guidance of Moscow, the PCI reacted by supporting the pro-Soviet line. We can suppose that an internal discussion had taken place, but there is no documentary evidence of any criticism in the party archives. Official newspapers and journals aligned with the PCI (and the PSI) and justified the SED and the Soviet tanks, even if its action had been cruel, violent and contradictory, in repressing the same workers that the state had promised to support and defend. Times were not yet mature to show even a minimal dissent towards the Soviet (and consequently the East German) position.²⁸⁷

The situation, instead, changed three years later. 1956 saw the official condemnation of Stalin's crimes by Nikita Krusciov and, in October and November, the blood-stained repression of reformist attempts in Budapest on the part of the Soviet tanks. The contacts between the PCI and the SED that had been established after the war in the name of solidarity and antifascism, experienced some changes after that point.²⁸⁸ Unlike the PSI, the PCI officially supported the action. Nevertheless, for the first time the Budapest facts revealed signs of real dissatisfaction towards the repressive action and dogmatic attitude of Moscow.²⁸⁹ We can assume that the decreased attention that Italian communists dedicated to the GDR in their press might also connected to this. Johannes Lill has emphasized the shift in the use of propagandistic keywords in the treatment of the GDR in the press: if the argumentative line had previously been mostly centered on a magnification of the "workers' and peasants' state", after 1956 the mantra was a constant critique of the *Bundesrepublik*.²⁹⁰

This phase of transition and instability did not last many years.²⁹¹ Already from the very

²⁸⁷ On the view of the Italian left on the 1953 uprising, I might mention my unpublished MA thesis: Teresa Malice, "Berlino Est, 17 Giugno 1953. Lo Sguardo Della Sinistra Italiana Sulla Rivolta Operaia Nella DDR" (Università di Bologna, 2013). On the uprising in general, see Stefan Wolle, *Der Tag X. 17. Juni 1953* (Berlin: Links, 1995).; Malcolm Byrne, ed., *Uprising in East Germany 1953: The Cold War, the German Question and the First Major Upheaval Behind the Iron Curtain* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2001).; Hans Bentzien, *Was Geschah Am 17. Juni? Vorgeschichte Verlauf Hintergründe* (Berlin: edition ost, 2003).; Manfred Hagen, *DDR, Juni '53. Die Erste Volkserhebung in Stalinismus*, (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2002).; Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, *17. 6. 1953. Volksaufstand in Der DDR. Ursache, Abläufe, Folgen* (Bremen: Temmen, 2003).; Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, Armin Mitter, and Ulrich Mählert, eds., *Der 17. Juni 1953. Ein Aufstand Für Einheit, Recht Und Freiheit* (Bonn: Dietz, 2003).

²⁸⁸ Martini, *La Cultura All'ombra Del Muro.*, p. 28.

²⁸⁹ On the PCI's position towards the Budapest facts and the line on communist or communist-oriented press, see Alessandro Frigerio, *Budapest 1956. La Macchina Del Fango. La Stampa Del PCI e La Rivoluzione Ungherese: Un Caso Esemplare Di Disinformazione* (Torino: Lindau, 2012).

²⁹⁰ Lill, *Völkerfreundschaft Im Kalten Krieg?*, p. 129.

²⁹¹ For an analysis on these years (1956-1964), which takes the PCI and the *Parti Communiste Français* into account, in a comparative perspective, see for instance Marc Lazar, *Maisons Rouges. Les Partis Communistes Français et Italien de La Libération à Nos Jours* (Paris: Aubier, 1992).

beginning of the 1960s, changes in internal and foreign politics of both countries led to an increased attention towards the diplomatic recognition of the German Democratic Republic. This also resulted in the constitution of the Italy-GDR Committee in 1961, right in the year in which the Berlin Wall was built. The Committee's aim was to start relations and exchanges between the two countries, favoring reciprocal knowledge.²⁹² In this operation of progressive rapprochement to the GDR, some Italian parliament members of the communist area played as key members, in particular Luigi Polano and Ruggero Gallico. The two were at the center of a vast network of contacts, which tried to raise awareness towards the cause of an East German recognition through a constant, connective work between the Parliament, the Communist Party, the labor union and the political-administrative and associative dimension – in other words, all the areas that were believed to be more perceptive towards the GDR's cause because of political proximity. That was the starting point to also involve other political forces – something which, as we have seen, started happening since 1962.

This increased commitment for the recognition of the “workers’ and peasants’ state”, however, went hand in hand with growing political-ideological contrasts between the PCI and the SED. In December 1963, for instance, a delegation of Italian communists travelled to East Berlin to take part in a seminar about the foundations of the SED's political views. In that occasion, Italians criticized various aspects of the GDR system and questioned the grounds of its legitimacy and self-legitimacy. Apparently, some of the participants were not even convinced that the diplomatic recognition was the right path to follow in order to solve the German question.²⁹³ Less than one year later, the subject of the debate was shifted on the so-called Yalta Memorial, the document written by Palmiro Togliatti in 1964 and published after his death the same year. The memorial represented his political testament, in which he expressed severe critiques to the Soviet Union and the foundations of an “Italian way to socialism”.²⁹⁴ After the text first appeared on the PCI's intellectual journal “Rinascita”, its impact was so strong in Europe that even the dogmatic SED could not avoid publishing it. However, the fact that the party's *Politbüro* convened a meeting on September 10, 1964 in order to discuss the memorial, shows how burning the issue was in the GDR.²⁹⁵ As Carlo Spagnolo has explained, an Italian way to socialism was perceived as problematic and unacceptable, as it

²⁹² Archivio storico CGIL nazionale (from now on ACGIL), Ufficio relazioni internazionali, Rapporti sindacali con i paesi esteri – Europa orientale, b. Repubblica democratica tedesca 1955-1986, fasc. “Germania 1963”, *Lettera di Luigi Polano alla segreteria della Camera confederale del lavoro di Roma*, 12.7.1963.

²⁹³ Lill, *Völkerfreundschaft Im Kalten Krieg?*, p. 204.

²⁹⁴ Carlo Spagnolo, *Sul Memoriale Di Yalta. Togliatti e La Crisi Del Movimento Comunista Internazionale (1956-1964)* (Roma: Carocci, 2007).

²⁹⁵ Lill, *Völkerfreundschaft Im Kalten Krieg?*, p. 209.

directly challenged the Soviet model of the dictatorship of proletariat adopted by the SED, and the legitimacy itself of the division of Germany into two fields, the imperialist and the antifascist one.²⁹⁶

Nevertheless, by only looking to official reports, it is difficult to really capture the quality of the reciprocal relations. This is especially true on the GDR's side, as the highly propaganda-driven SED members seemed to plainly express a positive view whenever Italian delegations were receptive and uncritical towards their line, while, in opposite situations, they accused them of insufficient knowledge of the reality of socialist countries.²⁹⁷

A real rupture never happened. However, the criticisms and distancing that followed the publication of the Yalta memorial created reciprocal mistrust. Despite the interest developed towards the GDR's realizations as a socialist country, the increasing sensibility of the PCI towards «the issue of individual liberties and human rights» made the Italian communists «less inclined in justifying the SED's decisions».²⁹⁸ The same happened on the GDR's side. To this regard, it is interesting to look into a report by Sergio Spiga, member of the PCI in Bologna,²⁹⁹ written in 1967 after his visit to the region of Karl-Marx-Stadt at the beginning of August of the same year. His task was to give a series of lectures centered around the following topic: “The economic and political situation of the Italian working class and the PCI's fight against the monopolistic exploitation”.³⁰⁰ Despite the general positivity of the experience, and the interest that East Germans had showed towards the PCI, Spiga noted that their positions diverged significantly, with perplexities and disagreements, for instance on labor unions and their autonomy and on culture. Apparently, East Germans had stated that the positions of the PCI did «not represent general values with international validity, but only results of our [of the PCI] national experience». Spiga concluded by reporting his impressions about a seemingly scarce reciprocal information about each other: East Germans did not seem to be prepared at all on the PCI's theoretical and political positions and struggles; he attributed this fact to the lack of books and documents on the Italian Communist Party in their libraries.³⁰¹

²⁹⁶ Spagnolo, *Sul Memoriale Di Yalta.*, p. 173.

²⁹⁷ Lill, *Völkerfreundschaft Im Kalten Krieg?*, p. 213. On the communication techniques and modes of the GDR, in comparison with the Soviet Union, see the work by Stephan Merl, *Politische Kommunikation in Der Diktatur. Deutschland Und Die Sowjetunion Im Vergleich*, Das Politische Als Kommunikation, Band 9 (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2012).

²⁹⁸ Martini, *La Cultura All'ombra Del Muro.*, p. 21.

²⁹⁹ Former partisan in the Bolognese Liberation war, and assessor to financial statements for the Province of Bologna between 1970 and 1975. See https://www.cittametropolitana.bo.it/portale/Il_Consiglio_ricorda_Sergio_Spiga.

³⁰⁰ Fondazione Gramsci Emilia-Romagna (from now on FIGER), Archivio PCI Federazione Provinciale di Bologna (from now APCIBO), Convegni, seminari, iniziative e manifestazioni, Iniziative e manifestazioni, b. 2, fasc. 8, *Relazione sul ciclo di conferenze tenute dal compagno Sergio Spiga in Germania Est, 1967*.

³⁰¹ *Ibidem*.

The communication between the two sides further deteriorated in 1968.³⁰² As mentioned in the last chapter, both Brandt's advent in West Germany and Prague's events represented a radical turn: for the PCI, the "democratic" politics of the GDR had «lost reliability, because of the predominant function performed by the Eastern German troops in Prague's invasion»; at the same time, however, the new Brandt's cabinet and the '68 movements had «mitigated the diffidence towards Bonn».³⁰³

The years between 1969 and the diplomatic recognition came to an exterior calm. If on the one hand the personal bonds between the PCI's secretary (1972-1984) Enrico Berlinguer and the SED's head (1971-1989) Erich Honecker were close – the two had met as young communists at the *Festival der Jugend* ("Festival of Youth"), early in 1951 – there was no substantial communication during this period beyond the movement for diplomatic recognition: contacts seemed to be relegated to formal initiatives, while at the same time a mild dissent towards the GDR started to emerge within some personalities related to the PCI (see 3.3.1).

This state of affairs would have characterized the following years too, even after recognition. The key to understanding SED-PCI contacts lies in their relation with the Soviet Union and in the ambiguities of the PCI's positioning within the international communist family: in 1975 Berlinguer, although denouncing the illiberal features of the Soviet society, still reaffirmed «the economic, social and "moral" superiority of socialist societies with regard to the capitalistic world».³⁰⁴ Flores and Gallerano maintain that Eurocommunism itself – the political-ideological project developed by Berlinguer's PCI together with the French and Spanish communist parties, which aimed to a "third way" between communist ideology and an idealistic vision of praxis – was born more as reflection of hostilities towards the Soviet Union rather than as the result of a real convergence between the three parties.³⁰⁵

The official proclamation of the Eurocommunist political initiative, in 1976, was much criticized by the dogmatic SED.³⁰⁶ If on the one hand the East German party recognized the strategic

³⁰² On this process, and on the impact of Eurocommunism on the PCI-SED relations, see Fiammetta Balestracci, "Zwischen Ideologischer Diversifikation Und Politisch-Kulturellem Pragmatismus. Die Beziehungen zwischen Der Partito Comunista Italiano Und Der SED (1968-1989)," in *Brüderparteien Jenseits des Eisernen Vorhangs. Die Beziehungen Der SED Zu Den Kommunistischen Parteien West- Und Südeuropas (1968-1989)*, ed. Arnd Bauerkämper and Francesco Di Palma (Berlin: Christoph-Links Verlag, 2011), 168–85.

³⁰³ Martini, *La Cultura All'ombra Del Muro.*, p. 21.

³⁰⁴ Marcello Flores and Nicola Gallerano, *Sul Pci. Un'interpretazione storica* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1992), p. 80.

³⁰⁵ *Ibidem*.

³⁰⁶ 1976 (August 5, in particular) was also the year of the "incident" which saw the death of the Italian truck driver Benito Corghi on the GDR border. On the ambiguities and open questions (also political ones) that surround that event, see Pertti Ahonen, "Defending Socialism? Benito Corghi and the Inter-German Border," www.history.ac.uk, n.d., <https://www.history.ac.uk/ihr/Focus/Migration/articles/ahonen.html>. On Borghi's case, also see the controversial (non-scientific) publication: Bruno Zoratto, *Gestapo Rossa. Italiani Nelle Prigioni Della Germania Est* (Milano: Sugarco, 1992).

reasons for the PCI in elaborating such a vision, especially the idea of building a democratic and antifascist bond in a capitalistic country, on the other hand, ideologically, it stood against a project based on the will of building socialism by negating the foundations of Marxist theories.³⁰⁷ After 1976, the differences became more evident on the ideological level.³⁰⁸ Also, 1976 represented a standstill for Italian communism: while it had reached the highest peaks of consent just the year before, its difficulties in keeping up with the new “reformist” role while simultaneously sticking to Marxism-Leninism, together with its indecisive oscillation between conservation and innovation, led it to be checkmated at the Italian general elections of June 1976, opening the way for Bettino Craxi’s PSI.³⁰⁹

For these reasons, in this dissertation I will not dwell into this period in relation to international relations, as I find the one before richer and more ambiguous, in terms of assessment of a new way of “being communists”, for the PCI, also through relations with an Eastern country. The local communist societies are, I believe, a privileged point of view from which to observe this process. However, a remark needs to be done: regardless all the (numerous) upheavals, manifestations of dissent and ideological clashes, the bond between the SED and the PCI was never definitely broken until 1989, as it was perceived as indispensable from both parts. Therefore, the PCI continuously kept offering the SED the possibility to spread the GDR’s realizations, for instance by inviting the party representatives to conferences and meetings and to the annual editions of the *feste de “L’Unità”* (festivals of “L’Unità”, the official newspaper of the PCI), and spreading informative material. The PCI was likewise hosted in the GDR, although with smaller spaces and less possibilities of expression.³¹⁰ The collaborative work was usually regulated by annual work programs, which included concrete proposals. An early plan for 1960, for instance, envisaged ideas about a general improvement of communication through regular meetings, but also through the reciprocal choice of

³⁰⁷ Balestracci, “Zwischen Ideologischer Diversifikation.”, p. 178. On Eurocommunism and the SED, also see Laura Fasanaro, “L’eurocomunismo Nelle Carte Della Sed,” *Mondo Contemporaneo*, no. 3 (2006): 63–95.; Francesco Di Palma, “Eurocommunism and the SED: A Contradictory Relationship,” *Journal of European Integration History*, no. 20:2 (2014): 219–31.; Francesco Di Palma, “Der Eurokommunismus Und Seine Rezeption Durch Die SED (1968-1976). Einige theoretische Bemerkungen,” *Jahrbuch Für Kommunismusforschung, Hrsg. von Der Stiftung Zur Aufarbeitung Der SED-Diktatur, Berlin*, 2012, 233–48.

³⁰⁸ See, for the Spanish case, José M. Faraldo, “Entangled Eurocommunism: Santiago Carrillo, the Spanish Communist Party and the Eastern Bloc during the Spanish Transition to Democracy, 1968–1982,” *Contemporary European History* 26, no. 4 (2017): 647–68.

³⁰⁹ This is the (socialist) view as proposed by Massimo L. Salvadori, *La Sinistra Nella Storia Italiana* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2001), p. 160. I employ this view here as I am concentrating on the party line and ideology, aware of the critics that such socialist interpretations have received, of concentrating *exclusively* right on the line ruling class, the communist ideology and the relation with democracy. See Flores and Gallerano, *Sul Pci*. On the PSI before and after Craxi, see Wolfgang Merkel, *Prima e Dopo Craxi. Le Trasformazioni Del PSI* (Padova: Liviana, 1987). [Or. Ed.: Wolfgang Merkel, *Die Sozialistische Partei Italiens: Zwischen Oppositionssozialismus Und Staatspartei* (Bochum: Brockmeyer, 1985).]

³¹⁰ Martini, *La Cultura All’ombra Del Muro.*, pp. 31-32.

the press correspondents and the sending of leftist journalists and personalities of the political and cultural world to the GDR.³¹¹

3.3 Culture and cultural policies

3.3.1 Culture's nest. The Thomas Mann Center

The history of cultural relations between Italy and the GDR, in a way, could be read as a parallel story to the one of party contacts, as official bilateral politics were developed for strategic political reasons and in constant connection with the PCI and the SED. However, the cultural interest towards the East German state also transcended the communist party, resulting in intellectual reflections by minor political forces of the left or in the involvement of independent personalities who already had previous, personal bonds with the GDR. Among these early “pioneers”, as Magda Martini has defined them, were for instance the painter Gabriele Mucchi or the literary critic Cesare Cases.³¹² However, even if relations manifested themselves through these autonomous developments, the party contacts later became essential, as the PCI's structure and organization constituted a facilitator for the GDR in communicating with Italy. Cultural contacts are therefore to be interpreted in this swing between party politics and independent interests. Over time, the moments of agreement and disagreement, increased or decreased intellectual cooperation did not necessarily coincide with the historical caesurae that characterized the relations among parties and international politics,

As with the parties, the relation regarding cultural politics is asymmetrical, too. East German intellectuals did not have the possibility to travel to the West and to Italy, and when this happened, due to exceptional circumstances, they were highly controlled both by the GDR authorities and the Italian ones. It is mainly for this reason that more stable contacts through the PCI started to be perceived as necessary. While in the years immediately after the war both countries were more focused on the resolution of their internal problems – respectively reconstruction and state-building from scratch – from the mid-1950s onward the first official interactions started taking place. At the beginning of 1954, the PCI launched the first connections, through Paolo Robotti, responsible for contacts with friendship societies in the socialist countries in the PCI Central Comitee. Robotti established a bond with the “Society for cultural relations” (*Gesellschaft für kulturelle*

³¹¹ FIG, APCI, Fondo Estero, “Rdt”, 1959, mf 465, p. 0195, *Proposte concrete formulate dalla Sezione esteri del SED e del PCI in data 29.10.1959*.

³¹² Martini, *La Cultura All'ombra Del Muro.*, pp. 84-90. On the figure of Cesare Cases, also see Michele Sisto, “Gli Intellettuali Italiani e La Germania Socialista. Un Percorso Attraverso Gli Scritti Di Cesare Cases,” in *Riflessioni Sulla Ddr. Prospettive Internazionali e Interdisciplinari Vent'anni Dopo*, ed. Magda Martini and Thomas Schaarschmidt (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2011).; Michele Sisto et al., “Un Fuorilegge Della Critica’. Cesare Cases Critico Militante Negli Anni Cinquanta,” in *Per Cesare Cases* (Alessandria: Edizioni dell’Orso, 2010), 99–118.

Verbindungen), a GDR organization which would have been given the name of “League for Friendship among peoples” (*Liga für Völkerfreundschaft*) later in 1961. However, after acting as a link, the PCI passed the baton to a group of personalities, academics and intellectuals who took over the concrete commitment of building cultural relations between the countries.³¹³ For instance, the Italian music composer Luigi Nono started an extensive correspondence with his East German counterpart Paul Dessau, whereas the theater director Giorgio Strehler had an intense, though short intellectual exchange with Bertolt Brecht.³¹⁴ More than by ideology, the contacts were kept together by antifascism and personal affinities.

1957 represents a real breakthrough, as these first, episodic and non-organic contacts took an institutional shape for the first time with the official institution of the *Centro Thomas Mann* (CTM) in Rome. Stable collaborators of the CTM were the communist senator Antonio Banfi, who was its president until his death (after him came the – likewise communist – archaeologist and historian Ranuccio Bianchi Bandinelli and the PCI’s MP Franco Antonicelli), the MP Luigi Polano, and the academics Paolo Chiarini and Mazzino Montanari.³¹⁵

While the Center was mainly composed of intellectuals who were not necessarily connected with the PCI, the financing of the projects passed through the two parties and especially the SED, which was highly interested in maintaining a propaganda outpost in Italy.³¹⁶ Despite these strong political bonds, in Italy the non-political and broadly antifascist nature of the Center was repeatedly emphasized by its members, together with its centrality in diffusing German culture as a whole in Italy. More recently the Marxist historian Enzo Collotti, who was not a member of the PCI but travelled to the GDR with the support of the Center³¹⁷ and was among its founding fathers, has further explored this point.³¹⁸ Talking about his interest in East Germany in the early 1960s, which stemmed

³¹³ Martini, *La Cultura All’ombra Del Muro.*, pp. 95-96. Also see BArch, SAPMO, DY 30 IV 2/20/61, *Gespräch zwischen Paolo Robotti und Genossin Keller am 9.9.54*, quoted in Lill, *Völkerfreundschaft Im Kalten Krieg?*, p. 279.

³¹⁴ Until Brecht died, in 1956, in East Berlin.

³¹⁵ Martini, *La Cultura All’ombra Del Muro.*, pp. 95-103.

³¹⁶ Balestracci, “Zwischen Ideologischer Diversifikation.”, p. 180.

³¹⁷ The GDR financed many visits for study and research; Enzo Collotti, for instance, went there through the *Istituto Giangiacomo Feltrinelli* in 1962. The at that time director of the Institute (Giuseppe Del Bo) personally took contact with the *Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus* in Berlin. Collotti’s travel was seen by Del Bo as a way to deepen contacts among the two institutions. On this, see SAPMO-BArch, DY30/IV 2/9.07/107, *Giuseppe Del Bo a Bruno Kaiser, 13 giugno 1962*, quoted in Marco Paolino, “La Storiografia Marxista Italiana e La Storiografia Della DDR,” in *Proměny Diskursu České Marxistické Historiografie*, ed. Bohumil Jiroušek and České Budějovice (Jihočeská univerzita v Českých Budějovicích, Filozofická fakulta, 2008), 65–71., p. 67.

³¹⁸ About Enzo Collotti, see the collection of essays Simonetta Soldani, *Enzo Collotti e La Memoria Del Novecento* (Firenze: Firenze University Press, 2011).; and Enzo Collotti, *Impegno Civile e Passione Critica*, ed. Mariuccia Salvati (Roma: Viella, 2010).

from intellectual reasons, he stated that the main political motivation for a sympathetic look towards the GDR was antifascism, which in West Germany was almost prohibited.³¹⁹

Still in 1969, in a pamphlet published for the CTM's 10th anniversary, emphasis was put on the fact that the association had derived «its name from a big writer who was able to move from explicitly non-political positions to the serene statement of a culture that looks and judges, beyond every brawl, where the path of man towards a better future becomes established». Furthermore, the Center was described as a melting pot of «people of different political tendencies, that find a common platform in antifascism and in a firm will of peace and understanding», with some of them explicitly refusing «Marxism both as a theoretical doctrine and as an economic and social basis for the construction of a Socialist state».³²⁰

These official statements did not necessarily correspond to the ongoing processes. Firstly, from the mid-1960s, the “ideological bonus” of antifascism was progressively losing its poignancy.³²¹ Secondly, the political meaning of the Center and its centrality as a political tool for propaganda was at the core of a lively debate between PCI and SED. A first, early fracture had already become evident after the GDR had decided to build the Berlin Wall in 1961, thus closing the borders with the Federal Republic. At that time, East Germans expected the *Brüderpartei* PCI to approve this new position unreservedly, thus asking for a more radical standing towards the GDR. While, in that occasion, the Thomas Mann Center eventually had to stick to the SED's indications. The dispute between the two sides consisted in the fact that the GDR wanted the Center to be more political³²² and to push its activities forward to reach a broader target, whereas Italians wanted and, in the end, succeeded in keeping a focus on cultural issues and thus a substantial independence. These divergences and communication problems were not made explicit, but they were already evident from confidential, internal correspondences. For instance, the at the time president of the Center Ranuccio Bianchi Bandinelli, after coming back from a trip to the GDR in 1962, reported the following:

Mi sembra che nella RDT si manifesti in pieno la difficoltà di un governo rivoluzionario che è andato al potere senza rivoluzione. Ogni suo atto assume facilmente l'aspetto di imposizione, anziché di necessità rivoluzionaria: sembra, purtroppo, che manchi una adeguata azione chiarificatrice di massa e che troppo spesso si sostituisca all'azione chiarificatrice la parola d'ordine.³²³

³¹⁹ Conversation with Enzo Collotti, Florence, May 13, 2016.

³²⁰ Centro Thomas Mann, Associazione per i rapporti culturali tra l'Italia e la Repubblica democratica tedesca, X anniversario, 1967, p. 5.

³²¹ Martini, *La Cultura All'ombra Del Muro.*, p. 205.

³²² FIG, APCI, Fondo Estero, “Rdt”, 1969, mf 465, p. 0153, *Nota di Sergio Segre sul Thomas Mann, questioni di Partito, Ministeri della cultura e degli esteri, rapporti con la SPD, contatti futuri. Roma, 6 marzo 1969.*

³²³ FIG, APCI, Fondo Estero, “Germania Rdt”, 1962, mf 0502, p. 2601, *Relazione della delegazione della presidenza del Centro Thomas Mann e di intellettuali, andati nella RDT dall'1 all'11 aprile 1962, scritta da R. Bianchi Bandinelli.* Also quoted in Martini., p. 127.

The communication difficulties between the two sides can also be traced in single episodes connected to internal dissidence in the GDR and to some PCI politicians' "misbehavior" in relating to the Federal republic. For instance, over time, the editorial world and the press in Italy started giving more and more relevance to nonconformists of the East German regime. This was the case, in 1966, with Robert Havemann, antifascist physician and philosopher that had been expelled from the SED because of the critical ideas contained in his publication *Dialektik ohne Dogma*, although the regime's official justification was built upon the fact that he had agreed to an interview with a West German newspaper. The book was published in Italy by the publishing house Einaudi³²⁴, translated by a young Italian jurist with sympathies for the GDR, Mario Losano, and introduced by a preface written by Cesare Cases. The preface had been handled carefully, as Cases wanted to defend the freedom of scientific research, but at the same time did not want the book to embody anti-communist arguments.³²⁵ The volume gained consistent attention and was at the center of a lively debate. Communist intellectual Lucio Lombardo Radice reviewed it very positively on the PCI's official newspaper "L'Unità", in 1966. Havemann contacted Lombardo Radice directly, thanking him and taking the opportunity to further strengthen his positions on the necessity to fight Stalinism by relying upon "foreign" communist parties. Lombardo Radice himself, together with other communist intellectuals, mobilized to avoid his ban from the East German Academy of Sciences (*Akademie für Wissenschaften*), though without positive results. Despite the unsuccessful outcome, the episode served as a reminder of the PCI's role as a relatively independent movement within the communist world. While the PCI's line was considered as almost heretical by East Germans, in fact it was simply limited to defending freedom of science. As it emerges from a letter written by seven Italian philosophers on "L'Unità", the ground idea was the acknowledgment of the difficulties the GDR experienced in building an antifascist and socialist state despite the proximity to a strong imperialist front, but at the same time the suppression of every internal dissent (especially scientific), considered as a threat to the socialist system.³²⁶ Lucio Lombardo Radice and its position on the Havemann episode were heavily criticized by East German authorities.³²⁷ Further divergences between the two sides would appear later in 1976, when the dissident songwriter Wolf Biermann was deported from the GDR.

³²⁴ Robert Havemann, *Dialettica senza dogma (prefazione di C. Cases)* (Torino: Einaudi, 1965).

³²⁵ Martini, *La Cultura All'ombra Del Muro.*, p. 167.

³²⁶ "L'Unità", 5 aprile 1966, *Una lettera sul caso Havemann*.

³²⁷ Martini, *La Cultura All'ombra Del Muro.*, pp. 181-182. Lucio Lombardo Radice would have also been protagonist of other episodes of dissidence connected to the expulsion from the GDR of the dissident musician Wolf Biermann. Nevertheless, this episode will not be taken into consideration in this work, which stops before.

Magda Martini has suggested, with regard to the intellectuals, that for many of the artists, historians, scientists, thinkers, directors born in the 1920s and 1930s the will of keeping a contact with the GDR was mostly directed towards an interest both in antifascism and in the internal relations within the Cold War system.³²⁸ On a merely intellectual level, it seems that their main interest, more than in the actual GDR's realizations, was rooted in the long tradition of German history and culture, or in the contacts with specific personalities, not entirely aligned with the regime. It is the case, for instance, with the historian Walter Markov,³²⁹ who kept teaching in East German universities despite divergencies with the SED. Markov was in close contact with Enzo Collotti, whereas, as written, Paul Dessau corresponded with the composer Luigi Nono. However, in Collotti's opinion, the latter had practically no interest towards aesthetic manifestations such as socialist realism.³³⁰

Research institutes in history, social sciences and politics were also involved in the exchanges, sometimes with the help of the CTM. Taking a step back, in 1958, a first attempt to link together two Marxist institutes was made, in the attempt to establish a mutual cultural collaboration. The Roman Gramsci Institute hosted a congress on the personality of Antonio Gramsci, and invited professor Albert Schreiner from the History Institute of the Academy of Sciences in Berlin. Schreiner's intervention seems to have been more political than historical, and perhaps disappointing for Italians, as he openly admitted that his knowledge of Gramsci was limited.³³¹ However, the courtesy of the visit was returned and in the same year the communist historian and professor in Florence Ernesto Ragionieri together with Franco Ferri, member of the PCI, travelled to Berlin and entertained the attendants to the meeting at the *Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus* on various topics, among which was the PCI's strategy of finding convergences between communists and Catholics, towards which East Germans were particularly curious. That Italian visit to the GDR would have been repeated two years later, while East German professors were often hosted in international conferences organized by the Gramsci Institute.³³² The *Istituto Giangiacomo Feltrinelli* in Milan was also central in the relations with East Germany. For instance, in 1962, it acted as a conduit for Enzo Collotti, one of its collaborators, to conduct some research. The director of the Institute at that time, Giuseppe Del Bo, personally took contact with the *Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus* in Berlin. Collotti's travel was

³²⁸ Conversation with Enzo Collotti.

³²⁹ On Walter Markov, see Sven Heitkamp, *Walter Markov. Ein DDR-Historiker Zwischen Parteidoktrin Und Profession. 2003.* (Leipzig: Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung, 2003).

³³⁰ Conversation with Enzo Collotti.

³³¹ SAPMO Barch, DY30/IV 2/20/255, *Anhang zum Bericht über die Gramsci-Studientagung in Rom 11.-13. Januar 1958*, quoted in Paolino, "La Storiografia Marxista Italiana e La Storiografia Della DDR.", p. 68.

³³² Paolino., p. 69-71.

seen by Del Bo as a way to deepen contacts among the two institutions.³³³ Feltrinelli and his foundation - while they do not seem to have had direct political contacts, or at least I was not able to find them – were interested in the books published in the GDR, and managed to obtain a huge amount of them, as is shown by their vast catalog, still accessible today.³³⁴

A different argument should be made for cultural relations organized through friendship associations, inserted within a propagandistic discourse with the explicit aim of advertising the recognition of the GDR. In these cases – be it for strategic political reasons or as a support network – the Thomas Mann Center always constituted both the beating heart and the reference point for relations with the GDR. Before recognition, it was the safest and easiest instrument to establish a communication between the parts. From its very birth, it administered the contacts with the GDR through the *Liga für Völkerfreundschaft* and, from 1963 onwards, with the *Deutsch-Italienische Gesellschaft*, an organization born right within the League that was concerned with all the practical and bureaucratic matters for Italians who wanted to travel to East Germany.³³⁵ In the context of the campaign for the diplomatic recognition of the GDR, various committees and delegations of Italian parliament members were organized through the Center. While these delegations were mostly constituted by PCI members, they were hosted by East Germany, coherently with the interest showed by the Center-left cabinets MPs of different political parties. The political variety of people joining the delegations became more and more evident as recognition approached. So in 1961 the National Committee Italy-GDR (Comitato Nazionale Italia-RDT) was born among socialist and communist MPs. Another parliamentary group was founded among various MPs (communists, socialists, PSIUP members, leftist Christian Democrats) in 1965, while in 1969 the moment came for the foundation of the Italian Committee for the GDR's recognition (*Comitato Italiano per il riconoscimento della RDT*). Lastly, a Committee for Italy-GDR initiative (*Comitato di iniziativa Italia-RDT*) was founded at the end of 1972. The initiative Committee and the National Committee melted together in the National Association Italy-GDR (*Associazione nazionale Italia-RDT*) after the GDR's recognition in January 1973, while the CTM, after some initial difficulties, kept existing, though transferring most of its activities in Venice.³³⁶

³³³ On this, see SAPMO-Barch, DY30/IV 2/9.07/107, Giuseppe Del Bo a Bruno Kaiser, 13 giugno 1962, quoted in Paolino., p. 67.

³³⁴ See Fondazione Giangiacomo Feltrinelli (from now on FGF), Topografico “DDR”.

³³⁵ Martini, *La Cultura All'ombra Del Muro.*, p. 26. For its statute, see StaWe, WR III/1259, *Statut der “Deutsch-italienischen Gesellschaft in der DDR”*: «Die Deutsch-italienische Gesellschaft ist eine Vereinigung von Bürgern der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, die sich zum Ziel setzt, die freundschaftlichen Beziehungen zwischen der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik und der Republik Italien zu pflegen, zu vertiefen und zu erweitern».

³³⁶ On all these committees and organizations, and on the destiny of the Thomas Mann Center, see Martini.

3.3.2 Italian heterodox leftist intellectuals and the early GDR

The political-ideological polarization determined by the early Cold War mechanisms made it difficult to avoid simplifications in expressive modalities and systematic distortions of events. Every circumstance, included the discourse on the German issue, was debated against the backdrop of the two prevailing paradigms, namely the pro-US and the pro-Soviet ones. With regard to the GDR, this happened, for instance, in front of the repression of the workers in East Berlin in June 1953 by the Soviet tanks and the East German authorities. The two dominant interpretative alternatives in the public discourse in Italy were basically a pro-Soviet faithfulness to the line, in the case of the PCI, or a complete detachment.

Outside this rigid frame, it was complicated for more differentiated perspectives to find their space. In fact, most of the times they remained hidden or unknown to Italian society, as they did not fit in the Cold War setting. This was also the case with the alternative reflections at the center of this short subsection, which were characterized by a high level of complexity, depth and intellectual analysis, as well as by a political view which was collocated outside from and to the extreme left of the PCI. These evaluations circulated among a restricted group of minority French and Italian politicized intellectuals, who did not have any contacts with the Thomas Mann Center. Therefore, these points of view cannot be inserted in a discourse about the relational system between Italy and the GDR because there was neither sympathy towards nor direct contacts with that system. Despite their absolute marginality, I believe it is important to highlight their very existence, as they signal a weak but significant critical reception and intellectual reaction against Stalinism, its totalitarian deviations, and its residual traces, throughout the 1950s. At that time, a similar critique was simply not conceivable inside the PCI and even the PSI, as it will appear from some documents presented hereunder.

The first birthplace of these alternative perspectives on the GDR was actually France, and in particular the political-philosophical organization *Socialisme ou Barbarie* (SouB), active in Paris. SouB was born in 1946 as an internal group of the International Communist Party, namely the 4th Trotskyist International. In 1949 the group permanently broke up with the Trotskyists and started independent activities, de facto constituting the minority of a minority.³³⁷ politically, it mixed a substantial acceptance of the Marxist-Leninist historical tradition, and an original, anti-Stalinist and libertarian view. Its attention was mostly directed towards the working and subaltern classes' issues.

³³⁷ Daniel Blanchard, "Socialisme Ou Barbarie. Prospettiva Rivoluzionaria e Modernità," in *L'altronovecento. Comunismo Eretico e Pensiero Critico*, ed. Pier Paolo Poggio (Milano: Jaca Book, 2011), p. 173.

Right on the newly born German Democratic Republic, SouB started an in-depth documentation work, as at the time of its foundation it had been interpreted as a signal of the formation of a new type of workers' revolutionary politics.³³⁸ Inside the SouB group, it was mainly Benno Sternberg, Rumanian, Jewish and sociologist, who extensively studied the Eastern German situation and in particular the condition of the working class, publishing his reflections under the names of Benno Sarel and Hugo Bell. He was one of the first in Europe to direct the spotlight on the working class itself, thus looking at the uprising of 1953 and its consequences in a different way, highlighting its revolutionary aspect from the workers' perspective, and its political and economic consequences until the end of the 1950s.³³⁹ Two parts of his examination, which first appeared on the SouB journal, were later collected in a volume, titled *La classe ouvrière en Allemagne orientale* and published in France in 1958.³⁴⁰

The analyses of SouB first arrived in Italy in the second half of the 1950s, thanks to the intellectual activity of Danilo Montaldi, writer, translator and politician who, after participating as a young boy in the Italian communist Resistance, had decided to leave the communist party in the second half of the 1940s, to embark on a more independent path.³⁴¹ Montaldi was a sensitive connoisseur of the French workerist reality and acted as fundamental link between those works and an enlightened – although not antagonist – environment related to Italian, leftist publishing houses, such as Einaudi in Turin. Through Montaldi, Sarel's 1958 publication circulated, until it ended up in the hands of Raniero Panzieri, at that time executive of the Italian Socialist Party and collaborator of the publishing house Einaudi, as responsible of a book series on social sciences.

Panzieri was a peculiar character inside the PSI, and his activity was often labeled as minoritarian and provocative by the ruling groups. Right about that time Panzieri – who is today universally considered as one of the founding fathers of what would have later taken the shape of Italian *workerism*, from the late 1960s onwards – started to be more consistently interested in the

³³⁸ Harald Wolf, "Die Revolution Neu Beginnen. Über Cornelius Castoriadis Und 'Socialisme Ou Barbarie,'" *Archiv Für Die Geschichte des Widerstandes Und Der Arbeit* 15 (1998): 69-112.

³³⁹ For an analysis on the workers' conditions in East Germany in the early 1950s, see Hugo Bell, "Le Stalinisme En Allemagne Orientale 1," *Socialisme Ou Barbarie*, September 1950.; Hugo Bell, "Le Stalinisme En Allemagne Orientale 2," *Socialisme Ou Barbarie*, February 1951. While the Berlin's revolt was the topic of an essay published on the review „Les Temps Modernes“: Benno Sarel, "Combats Ouvriers Sur l'avenue Stalin," *Les Temps Modernes*, 1953.

³⁴⁰ Benno Sarel, *La Classe Operaia Nella Germania Est* (Torino: Einaudi, 1959). The German edition would only be published in 1991, after the reunification: Benno Sarel, *Arbeiter Gegen Den 'Kommunismus'. Zur Geschichte des proletarischen Widerstandes in Der DDR (1945-1958)*, (Göttingen-Berlin: Trikont, 1991).

³⁴¹ About Danilo Montaldi, see for instance Costanza Bertolotti and Paolo Capuzzo, "Danilo Montaldi (1929-1975)," *Studi Culturali* IV, no. 3 (December 2007).; Paolo Capuzzo, "Recensione a G. Fiameni (Ed.), Danilo Montaldi (1929-1975): Azione Politica e Ricerca Sociale," *Storicamente* 2, no. 46 (2006).

specific issues of the working class.³⁴² Panzieri's increased sensibility towards such topics was put in action in the editing and translation of various publications. Among these were, for instance, *Diario di un operaio* by the member of SouB Daniel Mothé, and also Sarel's book, translated by Alberto Caracciolo.³⁴³ Sarel's work must have really grabbed Panzieri's attention, if he was planning to publish a review of the book on "Mondo nuovo", the journal of the leftist group of the Socialist Party. However, the initiative was eventually refused, in all likelihood *also* due more to personal disagreements with the at the time director of the journal, Lucio Libertini.³⁴⁴ The latter, who had been with Panzieri a member of a leftist, but *autonomist* group inside the PSI, had been called by Basso at the direction of "Mondo Nuovo", and Panzieri had perceived that as a small betrayal.³⁴⁵ Against that background, the review proposed by Panzieri was labeled by Libertini as a polemic piece. Panzieri was accused of deliberately avoiding focusing on the problems of the Italian working class and of using, instead, the GDR as an instrument to touch upon the problem of residual Stalinism in Eastern countries and thus provoking the Socialist party and in particular the PSI leftists, raising a political quarrel.³⁴⁶

It is difficult to determine exactly to what extent the refusal was based on a personal contention or on a specific strategy placed in action by the Socialist Party, in order to not polemically engage with the issue, even two years after the 1956 events. In Panzieri's words in a letter to a friend in 1960, "Mondo nuovo" had «[...] refused my collaboration, rejecting an article about East Germany I wrote

³⁴² About this: Sergio Bologna, "Workerism Beyond Fordism: On the Lineage of Italian Workerism," Viewpoint Magazine, December 15, 2014, <https://www.viewpointmag.com/2014/12/15/workerism-beyond-fordism-on-the-lineage-of-italian-workerism/>.

³⁴³ Sarel, *La Classe Operaia Nella Germania Est*.

³⁴⁴ About Lucio Libertini, Raniero Panzieri and the various souls of Italian critical Marxism in general, see the doctoral dissertation by Marica Tolomelli, published in German: Marica Tolomelli, *"Repressiv Getrennt" Oder „organisch Verbündet“. Studenten Und Arbeiter 1968 in Der Bundesrepublik Deutschland Und in Italien* (Opladen: Springer, 2001). Tolomelli argues that, while in Italy one cannot talk about a "New Left" as an analytical category, it is possible to trace some groupings of "critical Marxism" which help the de-dogmatization of orthodox Marxism. Among these is workerism, which embryonically started within the theoretical organ of the PSI left "Mondo operaio" (1958), founded right by Libertini and Panzieri, but was really born only with the Turin experience of the journal "Quaderni Rossi" (1961), guided by Panzieri. About the left-wing of the PSI, part of which gave origin to the workerist group, see Tommaso Nencioni, "Tra Autonomia Operaia e Autonomia Socialista. La Cultura Politica Della Sinistra Del Psi (1956-1963)," *Ricerche Di Storia Politica*, December 2015.

³⁴⁵ «In quei mesi Panzieri, in grave rottura con il gruppo dirigente della sinistra (Vecchiotti, Valori, Gatto, Lami) [...] vedeva nella proposta, che mi fu fatta di dirigere 'Mondo Nuovo', un tentativo di Vecchiotti e di Valori di dividerci e di assorbirmi, e nella mia accettazione un cedimento, e un poco un tradimento». See Stefano Merli, *Teoria e impegno nel modello Panzieri*, in Panzieri, Raniero. *Lettere 1940-1964*. Edited by Stefano Merli and Lucia Dotti. Venezia: Marsilio, 1987., p. XXXVI. To those comments, and to the accuse of political provocation, Panzieri answered as follows: «[...] lasciamo stare la questione di come e perché me ne parli solo oggi. Nulla di eccezionale veramente c'è in quell'articolo. È uno dei tanti per i quali – quando si faceva "Mondo Operaio" – tu accettasti la collaborazione con me: esplicito abbastanza da contrastare con i "responsabili silenzi" delle gerarchie. Era questo una volta un point d'honneur comune per noi due. Tutto porta a tenerlo fermo oggi più di prima». See *Panzieri a Libertini, 21 settembre 1959*, published in Raniero Panzieri, *Lettere 1940-1964*, ed. Stefano Merli and Lucia Dotti (Venezia: Marsilio, 1987)., p. 216.

³⁴⁶ *Libertini a Panzieri, 19 settembre 1959*, published in Raniero Panzieri, *Lettere 1940-1964*, ed. Stefano Merli and Lucia Dotti (Venezia: Marsilio, 1987)., p. 218.

months ago, with open political motivations!».³⁴⁷ In the review, Panzieri appeared to embrace Sarel's reflections, highlighting that «in the conditions of a bureaucratic planning, as it happens with capitalism, the workers remain oppressed, since the product flees away from them as soon as they have created it». The workers were still «alienated and substantially foreign to the society they lived in». ³⁴⁸ Panzieri, then, touched upon the uprising of 1953 in the GDR, which had started in the factories and had consequently spread throughout the entire society:

Con le giornate di giugno, la lotta operaia, maturatasi nelle fabbriche, sul banco di prova della pianificazione centralizzata, esce dalla fabbrica, si impone a tutti i gruppi sociali. Ma le giornate di giugno presentano anche un altro aspetto: alla rivendicazione operaia, che è nata dalla fabbrica, dalla coscienza dei problemi della pianificazione, e si è proiettata sul piano generale della società come richiesta di gestione sociale, si mescolano i richiami genericamente democratici e liberali, di cui sono portatori contadini e ceti medi, e ai quali – nota il Sarel – non si sottrae del tutto la stessa classe operaia: l'identità stabilita dal regime tra pianificazione e centralismo burocratico in qualche modo s'impone a tutta la società.³⁴⁹

These reflections constitute the only traces of independent reflections on the early GDR, being completely external to the network system centered around the Thomas Mann Center. In this specific case, the link with East Germany was France. Panzieri was perhaps one of the few, in Italy, to focus, in a critical way and in the early Cold War political discussion, on the contradictions of the East German state, which on the one hand aimed at being presented as the “workers' and peasants' state”, but on the other violently repressed the requests and the necessities of those same categories it had promised to defend, pushing down their political initiative. In a moment in which the PCI still stuck to the Soviet line, and its former ally, the PSI, was apparently not yet eager to directly face the contradictions of the East German state, Panzieri openly and clearly stated that the bureaucratic planning did not differ much from the capitalistic industry:

Dell'azienda capitalistica moderna la pianificazione burocratica ripete forme e metodi di conduzione e di organizzazione del lavoro; riproduce la cristallizzazione della divisione del lavoro, la considerazione degli operai come mera forza-lavoro. D'altra parte, la pianificazione ha ragion d'essere soltanto come mezzo di formazione di una comunità operaia, come riconoscimento del lavoro, come subordinazione dell'economia. Non si può dunque rinunciare alla collaborazione operaia. Ma la contraddizione produce di necessità una serie di mistificazioni e “surrogazioni”: ad un'autentica partecipazione operaia si

³⁴⁷ FGF, Fondo Panzieri, fasc. 35 – Corrispondenza 1960, *Lettera a Lilli* [Maria Adelaide Salvaco], 25 marzo 1960.

³⁴⁸ Never published, but available for consultation in the FGF archives, and included in a collection of Panzieri's writings edited by Stefano Merli. See Raniero Panzieri, “La Classe Operaia Nella Germania Comunista,” in *Spontaneità e Organizzazione. Gli Anni Dei “Quaderni Rossi” 1959-1964. Scritti Scelti*, ed. Stefano Merli (Pisa: Biblioteca Franco Segantini, 1996), pp. 14-15.

³⁴⁹ Panzieri., pp. 14-15. Also in FGF, Fondo Panzieri, Fasc. 5 – Note, appunti e relazioni, *Recensione di Benno Sarel* (“La classe ouvrière en Allemagne orientale” *Essai de chronique, 1945-1958*).

sostituiscono incentivi estranei, artificiosi, tra loro contraddittori, di carattere ideologico e materiale; alle istituzioni di gestione si sostituiscono – come dice il Sarel – istituzioni di pseudo-gestione.³⁵⁰

The previously mentioned contrasts with “Mondo nuovo” are representative of a difference of views that was mostly confined to internal issues of the Italian Socialist Party, but that also had an impact on the international reference points of the political characters involved. If we consider, for instance, Lelio Basso, we can see that he was oriented towards different models than Panzieri. Basso was and would be on several occasions elected as democratic socialist deputy and senator until the 1970s. A prominent member of the PSI left-wing, he was among the founding members of the PSIUP, a new party born in 1964 from those socialists who did not agree with the party line of collaborating with the DC in the Center-left governments.³⁵¹

Giancarlo Monina has told me that Basso *may* have travelled to the GDR very early after its foundation, around 1949/1950, with a group of democratic lawyers (“Giuristi democratici”), as that was his background.³⁵² However, I have not been able to find any archival evidence of it. Looking at the documents, he surely had developed an interest towards the German world and the German question, but his contacts were mostly in the West, and as an anti-Stalinist it is very likely that he did not have much sympathy towards the GDR. There is also no trace of direct intellectual production by Basso on East Germany. However, we could speculate that his ideas on the German Democratic Republic were somehow comparable to the ones of his friend Johannes Agnoli, with whom he entertained a frequent correspondence.³⁵³ Agnoli was a German-Italian Marxist political scientist, who was close to Basso’s political position in Italy and – in Germany – had first, since the late 1950s, been a member of the SPD, and afterwards, starting from the early 1960s, of the *Sozialistische Deutsche Studentenbund* (SDS), the German socialist student union which rebelled against the SPD itself. As a left-wing academic, who was also in contacts with scholars such as Wolfgang Abendroth, he fought for the GDR’s recognition on the international level, thus having some problems with West German authorities. His difficulties clearly appear from a letter he sent to Basso in 1964:

³⁵⁰ FGF, Fondo Panzieri, Fasc. 5 - Note, appunti e relazioni, *Recensione di Benno Sarel* (“*La classe ouvrière en Allemagne orientale*” *Essai de chronique, 1945-1958*).

³⁵¹ About Lelio Basso, see for instance the recent work Giancarlo Monina, *Lelio Basso, Leader Globale: Un Socialista Nel Secondo Novecento* (Roma: Carocci, 2016).; but also Paolo Mattera, “L’alternativa Democratica. La Difficile Scommessa Di Lelio Basso Tra Destalinizzazione e Centro-Sinistra,” in *Annali Della Fondazione Lelio e Lisli Basso* (Roma, 2005).

³⁵² Conversation with Giancarlo Monina, May 11, 2016.

³⁵³ Agnoli was also among the curators of “Reforms and Revolution”, a collection of essays in honor of Lelio Basso after his death: See Johannes Agnoli, *Riforme e Rivoluzione: Scritti in Onore Di Lelio Basso*, ed. Fiorella Aymone, Ada Sivini Cavazzani, and Giordano Sivini (Bari: De Donato, 1968). On Lelio Basso and Wilhelm Hoegner (SPD), characterized as “difficult outsiders” in politics, see the recent essay by Jens Späth: Jens Späth, “Two ‘Difficult Outsiders’? Anti-Fascism, Anti-Nazism and Democracy in Lelio Basso and Wilhelm Hoegner,” in *Does Generation Matter? Progressive Democratic Cultures in Western Europe, 1945-1960*, by Jens Späth (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 151–70.

Barbara ha l'impressione che l'Università mi abbia talmente coperto [sic!] di lavoro e di lavori o appunti per impedirmi di "politisieren". Qualche cosa ho fatto, concentrandomi più sul lavoro sindacale nella IG Metall di Berlino, dove si svolgono regolarmente corsi d'istruzione per giovani funzionari della Germania occidentale. I tentativi di impedire il mio lavoro politico li devo in gran parte ai compagni della SED, che gentilmente mi diedero l'onore di citazioni e lode nella Radio DDR e nell'organo Neues Deutschland. Un tale onore è – come puoi immaginare – alquanto controproducente. Ma non importa. L'importante è che a quanto pare la situazione politica e economica della DDR sta visibilmente migliorando – con conseguenze imprevedibili sull'opinione pubblica di Berlino occidentale. Non si tratta ancora di uno sblocco verso posizioni più libere, più spregiudicate. Ma qualcosa si è messo in moto.³⁵⁴

In the letter, Agnoli explained that his political work was being blocked, and that one of the reasons was the action of the «SED's comrades», who gave him «the honor of quotes and praises in the Radio DDR and on their organ Neues Deutschland». He defended his work for the GDR's recognition, highlighting in quite an ironic fashion the apparent way «the political and economic situation of the GDR was visibly improving – with unpredictable consequences on the public opinion of West Berlin». He also pointed out the possibility, as also claimed by his wife Barbara Görres, that the University was giving him more work to prevent him from conducting his political action.³⁵⁵ He then analyzed with a clear-headed view the developments of the PCI in Italy and praised Basso's decision – which took place a few months before – to give birth to the PSIUP, as a small party which could conduct a «democratic and socialist pressure» on the PCI, keeping it to the left and towards more open positions. It has not been possible to find Basso's answer in his archive, nor other explicit position papers on the GDR. However, Basso's name appears in a 1963 document – when he was still in the national direction of the PSI – which lists the participants to the international colloquium, in Bruxelles, about the «negotiated solution of Germany's problems», together with communist (Giuseppe Lo Jacono, Mario Roffi) or socialist (Paolo Vittorelli, Guido Pollice, Franco Zappa) exponents and MPs and (communist) members of the Thomas Mann Center (Luigi Polano, Sergio Segre, and Rosa Spina, the CTM secretary).³⁵⁶ This could suggest that he was, if not actively involved, at least interested in a pacific solution of the German issue and therefore, as his friend Agnoli, in the international diplomatic recognition of East Germany, too. Another clue of a possible interest comes from a letter that Basso received in 1972 by Barbara Spinelli, leftist politician, journalist, and daughter of the pioneer of European federalism, as well as a communist heterodox, Altiero Spinelli, and the German-Jewish political activist Ursula Hirschmann. Spinelli contacted Basso after publishing a

³⁵⁴ Fondazione Lelio e Lisli Basso-ISSOCO (from now on ISSOCO), Fondo Basso, Serie 25 – Corrispondenza, *Lettera di Johannes Agnoli a Lelio Basso, Berlino 2.6.64.*

³⁵⁵ ISSOCO, Fondo Basso, Serie 25 – Corrispondenza, *Lettera di Johannes Agnoli a Lelio Basso, Berlino 2.6.64.*

³⁵⁶ Archivio Storico del Comune di Modena (from now on ASCMO), Segreteria generale, 1963, *Comitato Italia-Repubblica Democratica Tedesca. Oggetto: Costituzione della Società Tedesco-Italiana nella RDT, Roma, aprile 1963.*, delib. n. 13702.

pamphlet on the GDR.³⁵⁷ In her letter, she asked to get in contact with his foundation (ISSOCO) and asked for Basso's expert opinion on the publication, emphasizing that she perceived it as a «good formulation of the international position and the internal contradictions» of the GDR and that she hoped to bring forward the debate on a topic that too often had been forgotten by the Italian public opinion. She then mentioned that, for reasons related to the Institute (the Roman think-tank *Istituto Affari Internazionali*, IAI, founded by her father and with which she collaborated) she had to «restrict the part dedicated to internal politics and ideological reasons» that she would have instead gladly developed.³⁵⁸ Basso's «interest» towards the GDR appears thus to have been a derivative one, as we do not have evidence of his own work or commitment on this topic. We could hypothesize that he kept following the German issue from an intellectual point of view, but what is clearly visible is that he always followed other political-ideological reference points, different than what socialism in Eastern Europe had ended up representing: as a Marxist, he was much more supportive of the Luxembourgian tradition, of whom he was a great expert; and the main group of scholars on Rosa Luxembourg was in West Germany at that time, not in the East, although, as Basso himself clearly knew, her publications and thoughts were stored in (East) Berlin, at the *Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus*.³⁵⁹ However, he showed appreciation also towards initiatives that involved these studies in the GDR. This is demonstrated, for instance, by a letter he received by the Spanish communist Mauricio Perez, whom from Halle, in 1971, informed him of the constitution of a small grouping of «Rosa Luxembourg's friends» in the GDR, which gathered German and Spanish comrades.³⁶⁰ Basso answered that he was interested in knowing the activities of the group and collaborating, firstly as he was trying to organize a similar experience in Italy; and secondly, because he had been trying for a long time to collect the Polish and German works of Luxembourg to translate them into Italian. However, in order to reach that aim, he needed the help of «other comrades».³⁶¹ The interest in the GDR was thus, in this case, instrumental, as only there could Basso reach the documents he was interested in. Anyway, all these entanglements between Italy, the two Germanies, and the manifold characters of the international Left prove that the 1960s after all showed, within the world of heterodox Marxism too, an epoch of convergences.

3.3.3 Academic exchange across the Iron Curtain

³⁵⁷ Barbara Spinelli, *Presente e Imperfetto Della Germania Orientale* (Bologna: Istituto Affari Internazionali-II Mulino, 1972).

³⁵⁸ ISSOCO, Fondo Basso, Serie 25 – Corrispondenza, *Lettera di Barbara Spinelli a Lelio Basso, Roma 26/4/72*.

³⁵⁹ ISSOCO, Fondo Basso, Serie 25 – Corrispondenza, *Roma, 28 settembre 1971. Lelio Basso a Mauricio Perez*.

³⁶⁰ ISSOCO, Fondo Basso, Serie 25 – Corrispondenza, *Mauricio Perez a Lelio Basso, Halle 22.9.1971*.

³⁶¹ ISSOCO, Fondo Basso, Serie 25 – Corrispondenza, *Roma, 28 settembre 1971. Lelio Basso a Mauricio Perez*.

In 1961, three young architects of the IUAV (*Istituto Universitario di Architettura*) in Venice visited the GDR. Moved by great curiosity towards the East German developments, the three were not exactly disciplined in following the prearranged tours offered by their guide, but in so doing, they were able to get a better feeling of the real atmosphere. Overall, they were satisfied about the trip, although they detected what they perceived to be the shortcomings of architecture in the country and a substantial lack of interest towards innovative paths.³⁶²

The interest that stemmed from that experience, especially from the side of Carlo Aymonino, continued during the early 1970s, when the architect promoted a new expedition in the GDR, organized with the support of the Thomas Mann Center, at the invitation of the *Deutsch-Italienische Gesellschaft* and with the collaboration of the German Academy of Constructions (*Deutsche Bauakademie*).³⁶³ The thoughts formulated on that occasion were collected in two documentation notebooks (*Quaderni di documentazione*) dedicated to the development of the East German cities, respectively published in 1971 and 1973 for the IUAV internal publishing.³⁶⁴ The first book is dedicated to realizations in the town planning and architecture in the GDR. The second one is a comparative work between the physical and functional structure of some leftist, medium-sized Italian cities and two equivalents in different socialist countries. Among these was Merseburg, in the GDR. This trip in 1970 saw a different scenario compared to the one encountered in 1961 and reflected the increasing industrialization of the country. As the architects noted down:

Le discussioni ci hanno tuttavia chiarito [...] i complessi problemi che si sono dovuti affrontare – nelle particolari condizioni della RDT – per immaginare, organizzare e realizzare delle strutture urbane condizionate dalla prospettiva di costruzione del socialismo in un paese europeo sempre più industrializzato.³⁶⁵

The result was that, despite a fundamental skepticism and a cultural distance that often led to divergent opinions, the “institutionalized” GDR and its concrete realizations could become a model to be observed in its developments over time. The attention on this niche also constituted a way to fill the knowledge gap on the construction of the “socialist town” within a specific field of scientific-cultural interest, that of architectural sciences.

³⁶² Archivio Centro Thomas Mann, volume luglio-dicembre 1961, *Lettera di Aymonino del 6 dicembre 1961*, quoted in Martini, *La Cultura All'ombra Del Muro.*, p. 151.

³⁶³ Lorenzo Spagnoli, *Architettura e Urbanistica Nella Repubblica Democratica Tedesca* (Bologna: Cappelli, 1975), pp. 24-25.

³⁶⁴ Martini, *La Cultura All'ombra Del Muro.*, p. 212.

³⁶⁵ Carlo Aymonino and Gruppo Architettura IUAV Venezia, “Quaderni Di Documentazione 1: Anno Accademico 1970-1971: Alcune Realizzazioni Di Urbanistica e Architettura Nelle Città Della Repubblica Democratica Tedesca: Metodi e Tecnologie” (Venezia: Istituto universitario di architettura, 1971), p. VII.

Whereas the first notebook made the effort to identify the East German peculiarities and to operate a first analysis of the operative principles which distinguished the GDR's declination of socialist town planning from capitalist society, the second notebook, through a direct comparison, made a further step in two directions. On the one hand, in general, it constituted a limited attempt to connect university research with real issues related to the transformation of urban assets. On the other, it was a way to connect a specific problem to analogous situations. As a matter of fact, the second book had been conceived as a study connected to the assignment received by the IUAV from the leftist communal administration of Pesaro, in the Marche region, to draft an extensive plan on the social use of the historical center of the town. By looking at the cases of leftist-administrated Italian towns, the architects aimed at offering concrete solutions, for instance in relation to the dimension and role of the central areas of the towns or for the exemplary value of the planning interventions.³⁶⁶ The very fact that a communist-oriented local administration had taken inspiration from the politicized researchers of the IUAV to construct a detailed town planning is a signal of the enormous attention dedicated to the declination of the town structure in a way that aimed at creating a differentiation by an increased attention to all the social and political manifestations of daily life. Noteworthy is also the fact that the architects decided to take the GDR as a central study experience, in both publications. Far from referring only to the Soviet school, the GDR had elaborated autonomous elements, as the researchers had highlighted, by noting that «except for the statements of respect towards the principles of the historical socialism, very rare are the generative relations».³⁶⁷ Moreover, the GDR was taken as an example of “socialist well-being”, because of the «socio-economic relevance presented by this republic against the homogeneous background of the European socialist area». Proceeding from such premises, Pasquale Lovero, in his essay, emphasized the originality of the «balance configuration between the economic, social, cultural and political components on which the GDR's well-being rests».³⁶⁸ An exclusive characteristic of the GDR was also the «direct correspondence, without exceptions, between the ‘social’ sector and the ‘construction’ sector», something that represented «one of the most strategic traits of the economic planning of the GDR».³⁶⁹

³⁶⁶ Introduzione, Gruppo Architettura IUAV Venezia, “Quaderni Di Documentazione 2: Anno Accademico 1973-1974: Le Città Medie Italiane: Struttura Fisica e Funzionale Delle Aree Centrali (Bologna, Modena, Ravenna, Rimini): Le Città Medie Dei Paesi Socialisti: Struttura Fisica e Funzionale Delle Aree Centrali (Merseburg, Spalato)” (Venezia: IUAV, 1973).

³⁶⁷ Pasquale Lovero, *Bilancio delle comunicazioni e della discussione*, Aymonino and Gruppo Architettura IUAV Venezia, “Quaderni Di Documentazione 1: Anno Accademico 1970-1971: Alcune Realizzazioni Di Urbanistica e Architettura Nelle Città Della Repubblica Democratica Tedesca: Metodi e Tecnologie.”, p. 125.

³⁶⁸ Pasquale Lovero, *Bilancio delle comunicazioni e della discussione*, Aymonino and Gruppo Architettura IUAV Venezia., p. 133.

³⁶⁹ Ivi, p. 134.

The declared objective of the GDR's architects and town planners was to renovate and develop the functional structure of the existing cities, so that «work, life, education and leisure time, strictly related to the production and life modalities of social times, [could] develop in the best way, with an increasing possibility for social exchanges, both ideal and material».³⁷⁰ This is what Bruno Flierl, East German architect hosted by the IUAV at a conference in 1970, had stressed during a speech in Italy. The city was conceived as a “social fact”. While Italian communist architects and administrators were far from embracing the dogmatic way of conceiving towns in such a socialist way, and despite their awareness about the system's contradictions, they still appreciated the positive aspects of socialist town planning in the GDR, as well as the effort that the country was applying in saving the historical heritage, together with specific characteristics of the single centers, some of them heavily bombed during World War II. In this sense, the “Law on the reconstruction of GDR cities and of the capital of Germany, Berlin”, promulgated in September 1950, constituted the reference point for the postwar urban planning.³⁷¹ Both this attention to the social and political aspects of the town and the will to preserve and safeguard the historical identity of the towns can be regarded as elements of interest and inspiration for Italian leftist administrations, as the second documentation notebook suggests.

On a theoretical level, Italians pointed out four principles that allowed a diversification with the capitalist society: standardization as a central means for urban uniformity; a right balance between the total population of a city and the working population; the city center as a political-administrative directional artery; the structuring of the city on the basis of district units.³⁷² These elements were reflected in what was described by some of the Italian researchers involved as a “healthy town”, where green areas dominated and a sort of “sociological well-being” was promoted, by devoting «part of the town to its economic-productive destiny».³⁷³ Socialist cities as complete and well-functioning structures were believed to be possible only if a substantial social homogeneity was reached. On this point, Carlo Aymonino highlighted the relevance of this perspective for Italian leftist administrations:

Ed è in tale prospettiva che il problema della città socialista non è e non può essere compito o patrimonio dei soli paesi socialisti; ma investe anche noi, nell'analisi e nella progettazione. Nell'analisi in quanto la città socialista non nasce dal nulla, ma affonda le sue radici ed eredita nelle contraddizioni di quella

³⁷⁰ Bruno Flierl, *Problemi della trasformazione socialista delle città nella Repubblica democratica tedesca* (conferenza tenuta presso IUAV nel giugno 1970), Aymonino and Gruppo Architettura IUAV Venezia. p. VII.

³⁷¹ Gianni Fabbri, *Dresda: il problema del “Centro-Città” nelle scelte per la ricostruzione*, Aymonino and Gruppo Architettura IUAV Venezia., p. 59.

³⁷² Aymonino and Gruppo Architettura IUAV Venezia., p. 5.

³⁷³ Ivi, p. 75.

capitalistica; nella progettazione, in quanto i modi d'uso innovatori investono, anche se non ancora egemonicamente, le attuali strutture urbane, la loro forma, la loro destinazione.³⁷⁴

The whole process of transforming the capitalistic elements into socialist ones was read as a strive, a work-in-progress, something to aim at, that would have been reached once the “new structures” corresponded to new ways of living, working, studying, etc.³⁷⁵ For Italians, East Germans had understood that a detachment from the capitalistic town was necessary, although they had not yet reached the socialist utopia. Despite these shortcomings and incomplete elements, Italians also identified the micro-level as the only layer in which certain flexibility margins were possible, whereas the general structure, characterized by a subordination of the planning choices to economic choices, was rigid. At the micro-level, the debate with the population about these issues was relevant.³⁷⁶ Paolo Borghero and Augusto Romano Burelli, by looking at the town of Merseburg, concluded on positive notes, praising the German Democratic Republic's approach to planning for its advanced grade of socialization of the production's means and the development reached by its productive forces.³⁷⁷

A detailed, more descriptive and less politically based attention towards the developments of architecture and town planning in Eastern Germany also came from another university pole, the Polytechnic University in Milan. There, professor Lorenzo Spagnoli, in particular, published a book in which – proceeding by some historical publications – he retraced the implementation of the five-years plans in the GDR and followed the town planning projects, starting from the postwar cities' reconstruction's policies, by explaining the fundamental regulations on the matter and the structural differences between the cities, and finally sketching some preliminary conclusions on the introduction of new construction criteria in the 1970s, through an overcome of the previously strong dialectic among a hierarchical and administrative city center and the residential areas.³⁷⁸ Together with this large overview, the Polytechnic research group, composed by Spagnoli himself and others, also edited the publication in Italian of a series of articles published in East Germany, specifically with a focus on the work of the architects Junghans, Schmidt, Zeuchner and Wessel, and specialized on the town structure of the city of Rostock.³⁷⁹

³⁷⁴ Ivi, p. 9.

³⁷⁵ Ibidem.

³⁷⁶ Ivi, p. 62.

³⁷⁷ Paolo Borghero, Augusto Romano Burelli, *Merseburg*, Gruppo Architettura IUAV Venezia, “Quaderni Di Documentazione 2: Anno Accademico 1973-1974: Le Città Medie Italiane: Struttura Fisica e Funzionale Delle Aree Centrali (Bologna, Modena, Ravenna, Rimini): Le Città Medie Dei Paesi Socialisti: Struttura Fisica e Funzionale Delle Aree Centrali (Merseburg, Spalato)”, p. 95.

³⁷⁸ Spagnoli, *Architettura e Urbanistica Nella Repubblica Democratica Tedesca*.

³⁷⁹ Kurt Junghans, “La Residenza e La Costruzione Della Città Nella Repubblica Democratica Tedesca” (Milano: Politecnico di Milano, Facoltà di Architettura, Gruppo di ricerca Cislighi, De Benedetti, Spagnoli, Spinelli, 1976).

Although architecture issues were the most prolific, relations between universities were not limited to that discipline. Most of the first intellectuals interested in the GDR in the 1950s and early 1960s were connected to universities. Among them, for instance, was Cesare Cases, hosted by the *Institut für Romanistik* at the University of Leipzig in a delicate moment, in proximity with the Budapest's crisis in 1956. Again, among the members of the first exploratory delegation in the GDR, before the official creation of the Thomas Mann Center in 1957, were numerous academics, such as Remo Cantoni, philosophy professor in Rome, or the socialist Giulio Pietranera, professor in political economy at the University of Messina.³⁸⁰

Contacts were lively at the local level, too. Franco Ghinosi, provincial secretary of the Center of cultural relations with foreign countries in Modena, Emilia Romagna, wrote at the beginning of 1963 many letters trying to finalize an agreement with professors of universities in the GDR, to have them present at an important congress against diabetes that was being organized by the University of Modena, not without many difficulties due to travel limitations.³⁸¹ Again, in 1971, in the frame of the twinning between Bologna and Leipzig, the vice dean of the Leipzig University “Karl Marx” Horst Moehle came as a visitor to the University of Bologna, to discuss a possible enlargement of common cultural activities.³⁸² During his stay there, he met various personalities and academics of the municipality and the university: among them, the new mayor (successor of Giuseppe Dozza and Guido Fanti) Renato Zangheri,³⁸³ but also the well-known professors Bertini, Susini, Ghezzi, and Izzo, mostly teaching at the faculty of pedagogy and education. After the diplomatic recognition, exchanges became easier. So, for academics such as the historian Giuseppe Vacca, member of the PCI Central Committee and professor of history of political thought at the University of Bari – who asked to deepen his knowledge of German language and to carry on writing a research on Mehring and the II International in Berlin³⁸⁴ – it was simpler to be hosted.

3.4 Between parties and workers' policies: the Italian and East German labor unions

In the methodological chapter, I have pointed out that asymmetry and reciprocity are categories that traverse the whole dissertation. As a matter of fact, the working class was both the

³⁸⁰ Lill, *Völkerfreundschaft Im Kalten Krieg?*, p. 281.

³⁸¹ ISTORECO Modena (from now on ISTOREMO), Archivio Federazione provinciale PCI Modena (APCIMO), b. 1963, fasc. 805 “RDT Corrispondenza con la Repubblica Democratica Tedesca DDR”, Lettere varie di e per Franco Ghinosi.

³⁸² ASCBO, Fondo Ufficio esteri, b. Lipsia 1960-1972, fasc. “Lipsia dicembre 1971”, *Visita a Bologna prorettore Università Karl Marx, prof. Moehle*.

³⁸³ For short biographical notes on Zangheri, see Sante Cruciani, “Renato Zangheri, Sindaco Di Bologna. Un Professore Alla Guida Della Città Rossa,” in *Storie Di Sindaci per La Storia d'Italia*, by Oscar Gaspari, Rosario Forlenza, and Sante Cruciani (Roma: Donzelli, 2009), 197–201.

³⁸⁴ FIG, APCI, Fondo Estero, “Rdt”, b. 1974 (II), mf 076, p. 869, *Al CC della SED, dalla segr. Del PCI (Cossutta)*, 3 aprile 1974.

raison d'être and the reference class of communism and its organizations, as well as, more pragmatically, the main political target of both Italian and East German labor unions. These aspects were shared by both sides, and thus signaled a fundamental reciprocity. Asymmetry, instead, was to be seen on the organizational level and in the intensity of the application of the principle of “democratic centralism”. This was to be traced back to the state structures themselves.

In Italy, the democratic settlement of the postwar era saw the possibility for the existence and the presence of different political actors within labor unions. During the first years of antifascist unity following Mussolini's 20-years-long regime, and during the reconstruction period, the union was unitary. However, this did not last long. The breakdown process of the unitary structure started in 1948 and ended in 1950, when the *Unione Italiana del Lavoro* (UIL) and the *Confederazione Italiana Sindacati Lavoratori* (CISL) were born. While the UIL gathered all of the non-Marxist left (social democratic and republicans), the CISL grouped the Catholics. Between them was the Italian General Confederation of Labor (*Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro*, CGIL), which represented the communists and the socialists and, with minor changes, was named after the postwar unitary organization. In the 1950s the CGIL, which defined itself as classist and anti-capitalist and aimed at the protection of the working class, experienced major contrasts with the CISL, which was backed by the Christian Democratic governments and tried to gain strength by negotiating its presence in factories through a tactic based on moderation and collaboration with the enterprises.

In foreign relations, coherently with its political proximity with the PCI, in 1945 the CGIL had become part of the World Federation of Trade Unions (WTFU), the global class confederation that united the unions of the communist movement, thus becoming the party's outpost of workers' policies in international relations and developing contacts with the Eastern bloc. This also explains its substantial role in organizing trips of delegations of workers and technicians to the German Democratic Republic, not only during the 1950s, but also later, up until the fall of the Berlin Wall. The first contacts with the GDR trace back to the first half of the 1950. During this period, informal contacts and ideas for a collaboration were established, for instance, between the CGIL in Genua and the *Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund* (FDGB) in Aue, or between Leipzig and Milan.³⁸⁵

The structure and organization of the CGIL and the FDGB reflected the ones of the parties to which they were connected, although with different intensity. Although, generally speaking, the position of the CGIL can be interpreted in accordance with the PCI's line, internal dissent also occurred. A critical moment in this sense coincided with the international crisis of 1956. In this

³⁸⁵ ACGIL, Ufficio relazioni internazionali, Rapporti sindacali con i paesi esteri – Europa orientale, b. Repubblica democratica tedesca 1955-1986, fasc. “Germania 1963”, *Dichiarazione della Camera del Lavoro di Milano e della FDGB di Lipsia*.

occasion, the CGIL issued a communiqué which condemned the Soviet invasion of Hungary. This positioning, supported by the CGIL's secretary Giuseppe Di Vittorio, raised criticisms inside the PCI and a conflict with the party's secretary Palmiro Togliatti. Despite these and other difficulties in the balance between party and labor union, however, the CGIL fundamentally remained attached to the PCI.³⁸⁶ Those events opened a lively discussion about the conception of the union as *cinghia di trasmissione* ("transmission belt") of the party, carried out by Di Vittorio. A little more than ten years later, the new labor union's secretary Agostino Novella tried to get back on Di Vittorio's ideas. In the end, both were invited to revise their positions, in the first case, or resign, in the second one. So, in the Italian case, despite the attempt of taking distance from the party, also marked by the decision to declare the incompatibility between leading positions in the party and in the union, the two institutions remained linked in the end.

Of a definitely stronger degree was the relation between the FDGB and the SED, in East Germany. Just like all the other mass organizations in the GDR, the union was an instrument for the political-ideological power of the SED and was centrally and hierarchically organized. The FDGB had no autonomy from the party and the state, it only acted as political tool, being essential for the organization of the East German, antifascist, anti-imperialist working class.³⁸⁷ Taking these premises into account and following the reports and the declarations on experiences of the Italians in and with the GDR over time, it is possible to keep track of their initial period of enthusiasm towards East Germany, up until the following disenchantment, and of the developments of bilateral relations in general.

In one of the documents about a visit of the CGIL national delegation to East Germany in 1955, the participants noted down, seemingly without second-guesses, that they had had «the concrete demonstration» of various facts. For instance, the workers' salary could «be considered sufficient, and given the fact that everyone work[ed], one has a demonstration of the existing situation of well-being». Again, Italians observed that «workers participate[d] actively to the co-direction of the factories, which are property of the people, and to the elaboration of the planning of production. Regarding this, the unions [held] a major role both in the problems connected to production and in national life». But the most passionate comments were dedicated to social assistance and youth politics. Describing the GDR factories' clinics, Italians emphasized the possibility for all workers, during working times and without losing their retribution, to use them «not only for medical care, but

³⁸⁶ On this, see Adolfo Pepe, Pasquale Iuso, and Simone Misiani, *La CGIL e La Costruzione Della Democrazia* (Roma: Ediesse, 2001)., pp. 194-199.

³⁸⁷ On the FDGB, see Christoph Kleßmann, *Die Doppelte Staatsgründung. Deutsche Geschichte 1945–1955*, 5. Aufl. (Göttingen: Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung, 1991)., pp. 129-135.

for everything they needed. For instance: dental fittings, X-rays, cure of rheumatic pains, in some cases also small operations, etc. In a textile factory» – they wrote down – «we have also seen rooms furnished with beds which laborers can use to benefit from resting periods also during working time». The same, delighted look was dedicated to children’s structures: the CGIL’s visitors saw «marvelous kindergartens, sport equipment, technical schools of all grades for the education of new technicians, serene and joyful holidays in the manifold Pioneers’ parks, among which one was named after Palmiro Togliatti». Again, they highlighted a «deep democratic youth education, that was educated on Nazi barbarism, also through the organization of visits to the former extermination camp of Buchenwald». ³⁸⁸ As noted in the previous chapters for the party, too, the GDR’s commitment in eradicating Nazism from German society and fighting for a peaceful Europe were an extremely strong argument. This is also an explanation for Italians’ fervor in describing the union’s officials as all young and reporting one of their standard mottos: «We work so that war won’t be part of this earth anymore». ³⁸⁹

In this early phase of the Cold War, the anti-imperialist, antifascist commitment and the memories of the war functioned as a glue in the transnational and trans-bloc workers’ solidarity. Here is why – although with a more ideological and politicized vocabulary – a similar enthusiasm was shown by GDR workers towards their Italian colleagues. This attitude appeared, for example, in the case of the transport workers of Karl-Marx-Stadt, who, in 1955, sent solidarity messages to the port workers in Genua on strike against the shipowners:

Cari compagni,
noi, lavoratori dei trasporti della città Carlo Marx seguiamo con grande interesse l’eroica lotta che voi state conducendo contro gli attacchi e le misure arbitrarie degli armatori e del Governo reazionario Scelba che hanno per obiettivo il peggioramento delle nostre condizioni di lavoro e di vita, nonché l’abolizione dei diritti da voi acquisiti e delle libertà sindacali.
Noi, lavoratori dei trasporti, guardiamo con orgoglio alla stretta unità del vostro fronte operaio contro il quale sono andate ad infrangersi tutti i tentativi degli armatori di rimettere in attività il porto. [...]
I partecipanti alla seconda conferenza dei delegati dell’industria dei trasporti, i quali si sentono legati a voi portuali di Genova dai più forti e sinceri sentimenti di solidarietà, vi inviano i loro più cari e fraterni saluti di solidarietà. ³⁹⁰

Still around 1957, the CGIL’s national archive presents extremely detailed reports of visits to GDR factories. What appears as striking, due to the tensions originated after 1956 and the peculiar

³⁸⁸ ACGIL, Ufficio relazioni internazionali, Rapporti sindacali con i paesi esteri – Europa orientale, b. Repubblica democratica tedesca 1955-1986, fasc. “RI Germania 1955”, *Relazione sul viaggio di studio nella Repubblica Democratica Tedesca*, s. d.

³⁸⁹ Ibidem. Or.: «Noi lavoriamo perché la guerra mai sia più parte di questa terra».

³⁹⁰ ACGIL, Ufficio relazioni internazionali, Rapporti sindacali con i paesi esteri – Europa orientale, b. Repubblica democratica tedesca 1955-1986, fasc. “RI 1955 Germania”, *Traduzione della dichiarazione di solidarietà con gli eroici portuali di Genova, Federazione trasporti – esecutivo distrettuale – Città Carlo Marx*, s. d.

CGIL's positioning towards the issue, is the completely acritical narration, which substantially reports the East German point of view: the study is exhaustive, without signs of unease towards the GDR's system. However, the reports seem to suggest that the enthusiastic and unbiased admiration of a couple of years earlier was more focused on political elements, whereas in this case the appreciation and positive assessments were directed towards realizations and technical resolutions of practical issues. For instance, while visiting a factory producing tulle, laces and curtains in Dresden, Italians highlighted the high quality of the yarn, exported from Egypt and the USSR, and noted down the necessity to «point out the big effort and capacity of all the workforces, that were able to reconstruct and rebuild the activities of this big industrial complex destroyed by the war, and without the old Direction».³⁹¹ Even more positive notes were delivered by the same delegation after the visit to a wool spinning factory in Hainsberg: «This factory has been managed by workers since 1953; here, too, they have all those assistance institutions», but a particular attention deserved the «marvelous daycare, located in the villa of the old capitalist, and that today became the house of the workers' children». At the time of the visit, the children, boys and girls, were playing on the grass»; «the villa is surrounded by a huge park and has been adapted to host the little ones. Here, too the rooms for their toys are not missing». The most surprising aspect, for Italians, was the children's education: «their toys are not the reproduction of war tools, but reproduction of everything that the man needs for its pacific work».³⁹²

Further positive aspects were noted during the visit of a so-called “bachelorette house”, and namely a place that hosted young women who lived too far away from the working place to be able to return to their houses every day. Describing a conviviality moment in which the Italian delegation sang “Bandiera rossa” and told stories about the glorious partisan from Turin Dante di Nanni, the delegation's participants noted that in the house «the girls have the possibility to study and to take specialized courses. Confronting these institutions with our boarding schools – managed by the nuns – the difference is enormous». Here – they continued – «every girl is free to be herself, even though she receives educational training from the directors of the “House”».³⁹³

The years between the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the following decade appear to have led to a more detached view on the reciprocal relations – or perhaps this impression is connected

³⁹¹ ACGIL, Ufficio relazioni internazionali, Rapporti sindacali con i paesi esteri – Europa orientale, b. Repubblica democratica tedesca 1955-1986, fasc. “Germania 1956-57”, *Relazione schematica fatta alla fabbrica tulli e pizzi e tende (stoffe di decorazione) di Dresda Spitzke, il 27.5.1957.*

³⁹² ACGIL, Ufficio relazioni internazionali, Rapporti sindacali con i paesi esteri – Europa orientale, b. Repubblica democratica tedesca, 1955-1986, fasc. “RI Germania 1956-57”, *Relazione schematica sulla visita alla fabbrica di filatura di lana artificiale di Hainsberg, il 28.5.1957.*

³⁹³ ACGIL, Ufficio relazioni internazionali, Rapporti sindacali con i paesi esteri – Europa orientale, b. Repubblica democratica tedesca 1955-1986, fasc. “RI Germania 1956-57”, *Visita alla casa “delle nubi”. Effettuata il 30.05.1957.*

to the fact that most of the documents of these period are official ones. Regardless of the geographical level – national or local – it seems that the trips organized for heterogeneously composed delegations (with mixed participants, both union leaders and accompanying workers or, anyway, representatives with less political responsibilities) were more productive in terms of the actual study of the GDR's conditions and realizations. Naturally, when the leaders were involved, the meetings were probably more controlled in terms of reporting. This element would substantiate the idea of micro-historical relations, bringing a new perspective to bilateral contacts across the Iron Curtain.

Still in 1959, these official documents, which recorded exchanges and meetings between the FDGB and the CGIL, are characterized by an extensive use of highly ideological expressions. For instance, the two parts highlighted that considering «the two diverse social systems, and namely that a state of workers and peasants exists in the GDR, while a monopolistic capitalist one dominates in Italy [...] the two Confederations will bring further the action to realize their union objectives and tasks of social progress and improvement of the life and work conditions of workers». The same document later mentioned the defense of retributions and the fight for the extension of «union rights and democratic freedom of workers».³⁹⁴ This last mention to democracy makes us doubt that this document was entirely shared by the CGIL. The leaders may have agreed to sign the common statement for propaganda reasons with the aim of a clear positioning within Cold War mechanisms, despite the awareness about the GDR's contradictions with regard to this point. However, this attitude can also be explained with the fact that both sides had a more important aim than just bilateral, friendly relations. As a matter of fact, at the very center of both programs was Western Germany. Italians and East Germans asked themselves to what extent was it possible to politically co-opt West German workers, through increased contacts with the *Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund* (DGB).

First and foremost, this strategy would have been beneficial for East Germany, which could have used the favor of the Western working class as a political leverage in the intra-German conflict, but most of all as a practical way to stop the flee of East German workers to the West and try to invert the tendency. But the Italians were also interested in addressing and appealing to Italian emigrant “guest workers”, the so-called *Gastarbeiter*, that right at the beginning of the Sixties had massively started arriving in West Germany, due to economic and industrial measures adopted by the national government. The CGIL wanted to oppose the increasing influence that the Italian Catholic union (CISL) had on the emigrant workers, in cooperation with the CDU-leadership of the Federal Republic.

³⁹⁴ ACGIL, Ufficio relazioni internazionali, Rapporti sindacali con i paesi esteri – Europa orientale, b. Repubblica democratica tedesca 1955-1986, fasc. “1959 Germania Or.”, *Dichiarazione comune della CGIL e della FDGB*.

Both the CGIL and the FDGB then had a reason to conceive a strategy to discredit the conservative government of West Germany. This line was pursued for the whole decade.

Nevertheless, despite this common aim, the 1960s brought about some misunderstanding and divergences: with the entry of the socialists in government with the DC in 1963, the CGIL needed to bring about strategic changes, starting to be more concentrated on economic problems rather than on political ones. This shift was perceived negatively by the FDGB. At the same time, Italian unionists started to more significantly highlight the deficiencies and contradictions of the GDR's system, by also referring to its mass organizations.³⁹⁵ Perhaps as a result of this, the FDGB seemed to operate a detachment from the common work on West Germany, as an Italian member of the CGIL noted in 1964:

Per quanto riguarda la Germania occidentale e l'emigrazione, abbiamo potuto constatare e ci è stato detto che tanto l'Ufficio internazionale che gli altri Uffici stanno attraversando una fase di riorganizzazione. Ciò spiegherebbe anche il ritardo e le esitazioni a formulare un giudizio sul nostro piano di lavoro. Tra l'altro, tutti coloro con cui ho parlato sembravano ignorare che prima ci aiutavano e poi hanno cessato di aiutarci nel campo dell'emigrazione. Anche se inizialmente ho attribuito tale stato di cose alla fase di riorganizzazione, questo atteggiamento mi è sembrato abbastanza strano e, a pensarci bene, è forse l'espressione di una tattica dilazionatoria, dovuta al fatto che il problema non è ancora stato risolto. Malgrado le esitazioni e le resistenze incontrate, ho l'impressione che potremo migliorare i nostri rapporti e la nostra collaborazione, trovando punti di incontro e di azione comune.³⁹⁶

Italian CGIL unionists were probably referring to this episode, when writing about unspecified «misunderstandings» and «misconceptions of the past», after a summit with the East German union in 1966. Their idea, however, was to possibly overcome the issue and proceed with a common plan, by recalibrating the work towards the *Bundesrepublik* along new lines and taking the recent political changes – namely, the start of the *große Koalition* in West Berlin – into account.³⁹⁷

1967 seems to have signaled the calm before the storm. That same year, the CGIL's delegate Gastone Marri, after visiting the GDR for a mission on security problems in the factories, called for a more real collaboration, stating that

I risultati ottenuti, non soltanto di pura conoscenza, sembrano anche emblematici per quanto riguarda il tipo di rapporti che possono e, a mio avviso, debbono essere incrementati coi sindacati dei paesi socialisti. Se la CGIL deve avere, come sembra opportuno, una propria attività internazionale e una propria forma specifica di internazionalismo, lo scambio di delegazioni incaricate di indagare singoli aspetti, ben circoscritti e di notevole contenuto tecnico-sindacale, appare, a condizione che preparazione preliminare e composizione delle delegazioni siano coerenti con l'obiettivo che si vuole perseguire, una

³⁹⁵ Pöthig, *Italien Und Die DDR.*, pp. 322-323.

³⁹⁶ ACGIL, Ufficio relazioni internazionali, Rapporti sindacali con i paesi esteri – Europa orientale, b. Repubblica democratica tedesca, 1955-1986, fasc. “Germania or. 1964”, *Relazione sull'incontro tra gli uffici internazionali CGIL e FDGB (Berlino, 9 marzo 1964)*, E. Vercellino.

³⁹⁷ ACGIL, Ufficio relazioni internazionali, b. Delegazioni sindacali, fasc. “Programma delegazioni 1969”, *Incontri con FDGB, aprile 1966*.

via feconda, capace di far conseguire una reale conoscenza delle reciproche situazione [sic!] che è poi la condizione anche di una reale solidarietà, stima, amicizia reciproca, non più proclamata in documenti generici e rituali.³⁹⁸

In this document it is possible to spot a return to a technical attention on practical issues, whereas some of the references in the quote already suggest that a big issue was at the forefront for the CGIL, namely the development of a specific form of internationalism. This may have already referred to the long-term discussion inside the CGIL about the opportunity of leaving the World Federation of Trade Unions. The socialist humble group inside the union had already started pushing to overcome this bond already from the mid-1960s. Nevertheless, the proposal had always encountered the opposition of the union's majority: even if the communist exponents did increasingly criticize bureaucratic centralism and dogmatism, they still refused to make a further step by breaking with the organization. This is explainable as a reflex of the still strong political decisions of the PCI over the union. Similarly with what happened in party relations, a fracture did not occur after the Prague facts, even if both the CGIL and the secretariat of the WTFU itself, based in Prague, had condemned the Soviet intervention. At that time, the FDGB was strongly aligned with the USSR and had no intention whatsoever of criticizing its line. A detachment only became possible in the first half of 1970s, when the PCI started to act more independently from the Soviets. Consequently, the CGIL left the WTFU. These difficulties with the membership in the federation, and the FDGB's discontent with the matter could explain the long silence – detectable in the CGIL's archive – between 1967 and 1974.

The dialogue between the East German and Italian labor unions was revived only after the GDR's diplomatic recognition. In the 1980s, it would assume very practical connotations: detailed attention would be dedicated to productive sectors and economic growth. The CGIL would keep a constant observation and a positive assessment about the role of the union in a country that increasingly invested on technical, scientific and industrial development. This is reflected, for instance, in Luigi Marcolungo's short analysis published on the official journal of the CGIL "Rassegna sindacale", many years later, in 1982. In the article, the author elevated the GDR as a «[...] "strong" society, where the union also plays an important role in the integration of the centrifugal forces, perhaps not dissimilarly to the Federal Republic, beyond the ideologized self-images that the different systems love showing». That model was maybe distant «from the way of conceiving social

³⁹⁸ ACGIL, Ufficio relazioni internazionali, b. Rapporti con i paesi dell'Europa occidentale, fasc. "1967", *Informazione sui risultati conseguiti dalla delegazione Inca-CGIL in missione di studio nella RDT ospite della FDGB, sui problemi della sicurezza del lavoro, 29 novembre, 15 dicembre 1967. Gastone Marri, Roma, 21 dicembre 1967.*

conflict and the role of the union in the Italian experience»; but maybe – concluded Marcolungo – «right for [that] reason, is [was] worth a close study».³⁹⁹

³⁹⁹ ACGIL, Ufficio relazioni internazionali, Rapporti sindacali con i paesi esteri – Europa orientale, b. Repubblica democratica tedesca 1955-1986, fasc. “DDR 1984”, “L’altra faccia della Germania” Luigi Marcolungo, in “Rassegna sindacale”, 25 marzo ’82, pp. 36-37.

4. Red areas and communist towns: developments, similarities, asymmetries

It is quite surprising to observe that some of the most acute reflections on local administration in the German Democratic Republic can be found in a volume that has little to do with communist structures, or related associations and organizations, as they were described in the previous chapter. In 1964 Michele Salvati, economist and political scientist from Cremona, published his analysis on local administration in the GDR in the first of the research notebooks promoted by the Institute for the Science of Public Administration (*Istituto per la Scienza dell'Amministrazione Pubblica*, ISAP) in Milan, and dedicated to the study of this topic in Europe.⁴⁰⁰ The promoters and heads of the ISAP could certainly not be defined as leftist or communist-oriented: its general director Feliciano Benvenuti, was a Christian Democrat, although one who was very sensitive towards the issue of regional autonomies and had been able, over time, to work in the direction of promoting the shift of the DC's hostile position in relation to administrative decentralization towards a milder one.⁴⁰¹ A similar discourse could be made for Pietro Bucalossi, MP, well-known oncologist and at that time president of the Institute, who came from the actionist experience (connected to the republicanism and liberal socialism of the *Partito d'azione*)⁴⁰² and had been part of the Liberation movement since the end of 1943, sticking to a liberal tradition rather than to a communist one.⁴⁰³ In 1964 he was elected mayor of Milan.⁴⁰⁴ Despite their political belonging, both of them were extremely aware of the importance of the issue of local autonomies and decentralization, and their amelioration, even though they often met considerable resistance from their political groups. Since the postwar period autonomy had been considered a defining aspect of leftist mass parties, the Italian communists and socialists, which often administrated local governments together. Paolo Biscaretti di Ruffia himself, the curator of the volume, was a non-Marxist, well-known and authoritative scholar of constitutional law, who nevertheless considered it necessary to approach the study of Eastern countries' law, always trying to keep a scholarly distance and avoid political preconceptions. He was so committed to the study of the Eastern bloc, that Oscar Gaspari has written, perhaps way too sharply, that he, too fell

⁴⁰⁰ Michele Salvati, "L'amministrazione Locale Nella Repubblica Democratica Tedesca," in *L'amministrazione Locale in Europa*, ed. Paolo Biscaretti di Ruffia, vol. 1, U.R.S.S. - Repubblica Socialista Cecoslovacca - Repubblica Popolare Polacca - Repubblica Democratica Tedesca (Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 1964), 519–634.

⁴⁰¹ See Lucio Franzese, *Feliciano Benvenuti. Il Diritto Come Scienza Umana* (Napoli: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1999).; Ettore Rotelli, *Feliciano Benvenuti. Partecipazione e Autonomie Nella Scienza Amministrativa Della Repubblica* (Venezia: Marsilio, 2011).

⁴⁰² Giovanni De Luna, *Storia Del Partito d'Azione* (Torino: UTET, 2006).

⁴⁰³ "Pietro Bucalossi," Camera dei Deputati, Portale Storico, <http://storia.camera.it/deputato/pietro-bucalossi-19050809>. Last seen on July 18, 2018.

⁴⁰⁴ John Foot, *Milano Dopo Il Miracolo: Biografia Di Una Città* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 2001).; or. ed. John Foot, *Milano since the Miracle. City, Culture, and Identity* (Oxford-New York: Berg, 2001). John Foot, *Milano since the Miracle. City, Culture, and Identity* (Oxford-New York: Berg, 2001).

into the misconception of «thinking about the Soviet model as an ideal one also in terms of local authorities».⁴⁰⁵ Michele Salvati, instead, had a different political connotation. Starting from the end of the 1960s, after a series of academic experiences between Italy and Germany in the field of administrative law, he would start participating to intellectual reflections together with a wing of the Italian New Left, close to journals such as “Quaderni piacentini”, of which he had already been a collaborator.⁴⁰⁶ His position in the journal was formalized in 1971, when his first article appeared.⁴⁰⁷ In 1964, however – before starting that experience – he was busy writing his review on the studies he made about East Germany, starting from some East and West German journals and essays. Despite the substantial lack, or considerable shortage, of available materials at that time, he was able to produce an analysis which, in my view, was at the same time *super partes* and well-documented. He also appeared to be not particularly biased by political perspectives or critiques, probably along the research guidelines that the ISAP had set.

In his essay, Salvati took stock of the characteristics of the East German local bodies, analyzing their history and evolutions after the end of World War II, when the GDR was still a territory of the Soviet Occupation Zone. He then touched upon the creation of the GDR in 1949, and various turning points and mutations which took place over the 1950s. These related to a series of debates and reforms on the themes of *decentralization* and *democratization*, on their relation and the possibility of combining them together effectively, and on a parallel look at the Italian situation. Salvati observed the centralization that followed the big 1952 administrative reform in the GDR, after which the *Länder*, or regions – traditional administrative bodies of the German and long-term administrative history – were abolished, and substituted by the more easily controllable *Bezirke*, or districts. The author then launched two essential observations. The first one was related to expenses, that in «our law» (the Italian one) were «largely left to the initiative and the financial possibilities of the local authority (for instance in terms of urban planning, health, education, etc.)».⁴⁰⁸ The second one regarded on the one hand, the position of the local authorities as substantially *subordinated* to the central one, along the lines of democratic centralism; but, on the other, also their function as coordination centers for the various territorial levels, directed to the achievement of an increased popular participation from below, and therefore of a better functioning of the central mechanisms.

⁴⁰⁵ Oscar Gaspari, “Il Modello Emiliano Nella Lega Dei Comuni: Continuità e Contraddizioni Del Progetto Reformista Di Zanardi e Dozza Nel Movimento Comunale Italiano,” in *Il “Modello Emiliano” Nella Storia d’Italia: Tra Culture Politiche e Pratiche Di Governo Locale*, ed. Carlo De Maria (Bologna: Bradypus, 2014), 75–99., p. 97.

⁴⁰⁶ Michele Salvati, “Intervento,” Convegno “Vittorio Bachelet. A Trentacinque Anni Dal Suo Sacrificio (1980-2015) (Nomos, January 2015), http://www.nomos-leattualitaneldiritto.it/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Salvati_Nomos-1_2015.pdf.

⁴⁰⁷ Michele Salvati, “L’Origine Della Crisi in Corso,” *Quaderni Piacentini*, March 1972.

⁴⁰⁸ Salvati, “L’amministrazione Locale Nella RDT.”, p. 534.

It is right from this synthesis of Salvati's observations that I wish to start, in delineating the issue of "red" local administrations and their transnational relations through twinnings – as it seems to me that his essay is of significant utility both from a thematical and a methodological point of view. When looking at the topics, it helps to better frame the problem of center/periphery relation,⁴⁰⁹ the continuous dynamics of play and the attempts of integration and dialogue between *decentralization*, in relation to the central state, and *democratization*. These topics can be faced in relation to both countries taken into account, Italy and the GDR, but with a structure – that does not aim at being comparative in the strictest sense, not even in the perspective of an asymmetrical comparison;⁴¹⁰ but rather wants to shed light on some of the characteristics of local administrations from both sides of the Iron Curtain, and the views on them, as operated by the protagonists of those times. Michele Salvati, in this sense, is a privileged observer, due to his academic background; but by *protagonists* I am first and foremost referring to (Italian) mayors and administrators who observed the East German administrative system from outside and analyzed it in relation to the topics that interested them in that historical juncture; those on which they could find potential convergences, although not always harmonically. The speeches, correspondence, notes of these administrators that I will include here need to be deprived of the ideological discourse that permeates them, even though, it is inseparable from their analyses themselves. What I wish to do in this chapter is to read *behind* these words and critically take into account each and every term and point of view expressed. The administrative sources related to the exchanges between Italian and East German towns will help me focus, then, on the *relational* aspects, in a perspective of "reciprocal views" (*sguardi reciproci*) on communist-oriented local administration in the East and in the West. In using these instruments, however, I cannot avoid briefly delineating a contextual frame related to the way the administrative structures developed in the two countries from the immediate postwar until the 1970s, and to their position (of continuity or discontinuity) towards previous traditions.

It is in this perspective that I will analyze the birth and development of postwar red areas and communist towns in both countries, between similarities and asymmetries. 4.1 is dedicated to the GDR and to town administrations treated as *cells of the central state*, without a high degree of *organizational* autonomy – in terms of financing and policy development and political guidelines – but, as Michele Salvati suggests, with a significant role in terms of ability to raise consent. In 4.2, instead, I will consider red-oriented Italian towns, analyzed as *political organs*. Here, I face the way

⁴⁰⁹ For a reflection on *center* and *periphery* as historiographical categories, see Paolo Capuzzo and Chiara Giorgi, eds., *Centro e Periferia Come Categorie Storiografiche. Esperienze Di Ricerca in Italia Spagna e Portogallo*, Carocci (Roma: 2009, n.d.).

⁴¹⁰ Jürgen Kocka, "Asymmetrical Historical Comparison: The Case of the German Sonderweg," *History and Theory* 38, no. 1 (1999): 40–51.

the issue of autonomy was read by these leftist administrators in the immediate postwar and how it grew, developed and modified in the light of national and international political and social changes until the mid-1970s. In 4.3, I will touch upon a definition of (always Italian) red regions/areas and subcultures and then, in three subsections, I will focus on specific cases – that is, the territories in which the Italian towns twinned with the GDR were located. There, the postwar communist (and socialist) local power had defined itself in the light of autonomy from the central state ruled by the Christian Democracy, and, at least until the early 1960s, in direct opposition to it. The emphasis on these regional and local peculiarities serves as a background for the actual analysis of translocal convergences across the Iron Curtain (chapter 5). While the sections about the Italian and the East German state are presented separately, the whole discussion is faced here with the help of documents which have emerged in the context of town twinnings and other relatable contexts, so as to always make the effort to highlight *connections* and *reciprocal views*.

4.1 GDR: towns as cells of the central State

The GDR was built upon the principle of the unity of public administration. It was the «most evident reflection of the political principle of democratic centralism», as Michele Salvati put it.⁴¹¹ The territorial authorities were organs of the state power, and not autonomous bodies.⁴¹² Therefore, local policies were also strictly state-financed and state-controlled. Writing about local administrations and the local/national relation in the GDR necessarily implies touching upon the topic of state/society relations, one of the most debated historiographical problems in the history of the GDR, and upon the related issue of the way *power* was exercised both by the state and the local governments, through democratic centralism.

Over time, numerous scholars have asked themselves whether it makes any sense to talk about the East German social sphere as separated from the political one or if they need to be analyzed together. During the early Cold War, rather unsurprisingly, the way scholars treated political and social questions recalled this Cold War's ideological *Spaltung*, being either based on a Marxist understanding of society⁴¹³ or on Western perspectives. Historiographical works in the West concentrated mostly on political structures and communist policies.⁴¹⁴ On paper, they were believed to be scientifically more reliable and more diversified, due to the democratic environment in which

⁴¹¹ Salvati, "L'amministrazione Locale Nella RDT.", p. 540.

⁴¹² Ivi, p. 544.

⁴¹³ Corey Ross, *The East German Dictatorship* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

⁴¹⁴ Gregory Witkowski, "The German Democratic Republic: State Power and Everyday Life," *History Compass* 5, no. 3 (2007): 935–42.

they had been developed, but in fact, beyond the scarcity of sources, they relied upon an «explicitly moralizing stance against the illiberal SED regime and a fundamental, unequivocal denial of its legitimacy».⁴¹⁵ In the 1950s, this approach coincided with a painting of the GDR against the backdrop of the totalitarian categories. After a shift from this tendency starting from the 1960s, the reunification, which brought as a dowry the discovery of the Secret Police's (*Stasi*) archives, marked a return to what has been called *Totalitarismus-Schule*.⁴¹⁶ This group included, for instance, the political scientist Sigrid Meuschel, who maintained that the party had consolidated its control over every sector of organized human life, such as economy, science, culture.⁴¹⁷ This idea has been shared by Klaus Schroeder, who argued that in East Germany both the history of power and domination and the history of society extensively connected.⁴¹⁸ By calling the GDR a (*spät-*)*totalitären Versorgungs- und Überwachungsstaat* ("late totalitarian welfare and control state"), Schroeder put surveillance, care and maintenance in the same discourse. Furthermore, a central key concept that he employs in his analysis is the incapability of the SED State to implement social reforms. Despite interpretative diversities and definitions, common to both Meuschel and Schroeder is «the tendency to deal only with the formal system of power and thus the adoption of a decidedly 'top-down' perspective».⁴¹⁹

If on the one hand these totalitarian approaches have seen a rebirth in the 1990s, mostly because of the revelations on the size and the power of the *Stasi*, on the other they have been challenged from various perspectives and with manifold intensities. The first group of scholars who openly questioned the totalitarian school was mostly composed of German social historians, in the 1990s. They shared the general belief that more attention needed to be directed to the fact that social structures in the GDR had not been annihilated, but to a certain extent had limited and even shaped political power. Nevertheless, within this large family further heterogeneity has also appeared. Alf Lüdtke – mostly known for his works on *Alltagsgeschichte*, or history of everyday life –⁴²⁰ advocated

⁴¹⁵ Ross, *The East German Dictatorship*., p. 8.

⁴¹⁶ On this, see Witkowski, "State Power and Everyday Life."

⁴¹⁷ Sigrid Meuschel, *Legitimation Und Parteiherrschaft in Der DDR* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1992).

⁴¹⁸ Klaus Schroeder, *Der SED-Staat: Geschichte Und Strukturen Der DDR 1949-1990*, 3rd ed. (Köln: Böhlau, 2013)., S. XV.

⁴¹⁹ Klaus Schroeder, *Der SED-Staat. Partei, Staat Und Gesellschaft 1949–1990* (München: Hanser, 1998)., pp. 512-546. This discourse actually applies to dictatorships in general. Be it in Soviet regimes, or in fascisms, the two elements of consensus-building and repression are always in interplay.

⁴²⁰ See Alf Lüdtke, "Alltagsgeschichte - Ein Bericht von Unterwegs," *Historische Anthropologie*, no. 11 (2003): 278–95.; Alf Lüdtke, *The History of Everyday Life. Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Ways of Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995). If *Alltagsgeschichte* can generally be referred to as a kind of "history from below", some differences need to be highlighted when confronting it, for instance, with the Italian and French micro-history, not only because of the provenience itself, but in the methods and the use of sources. On this, see Andrew I. Port, "History from Below, the History of Everyday Life, and Microhistory," *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* 11, no. 2nd edition (2015): 108–13.

for the use of the expression *durchherrschte Gesellschaft* (“thoroughly ruled society”).⁴²¹ The expression has later been taken up by Jürgen Kocka, who, however, accorded more importance to the influence of the political system on social interactions than Lüdtke, although their argument is very similar: they both argued that East German society was «to a large degree an artificial product of political power»,⁴²² and pleaded for an overturning of the main problem connected to social history, though, at the same time, admitting that «it would be false to assume that party and state rule totally shaped and determined society». ⁴²³

A further contribution to this debate came from Ralph Jessen, who reflected on the German Democratic Republic’s social system during socialism by highlighting continuities with the period before 1945. He contended that «there was no socialist “zero hour”»⁴²⁴ and that East Germany «was not a tabula rasa upon which the party could build a new society». ⁴²⁵ Social structure resulted from a complex balance of residual elements of old processes and «ideologically-derived dictatorial attempts». ⁴²⁶ This approach, which represented the embryonic form of Jessen’s thoughts in 1995, was further developed in a publication he authored together with Richard Bessel. ⁴²⁷ Introducing new issues that arose from these theoretical discussions as a starting point, the two historians have maintained that the relation between political domination and social change is more complex than the notions employed by Kocka and Lüdtke seem to suggest. *Continuities* with pre-socialist German history need to be mentioned in this context, but also a heavy dependence from the Soviet Union and the geopolitical proximity of the Western German capitalist counterpart, which led, in their opinion, to a weakening of the SED’s totally pervasive influence cannot be disregarded. ⁴²⁸ These approaches

⁴²¹ Alf Lüdtke, “‘Helden Der Arbeit’ - Mühen Beim Arbeiten. Zur missmutigen Loyalität von Industriearbeitern in Der DDR,” in *Sozialgeschichte Der DDR*, ed. Hartmut Kaelble, Juergen Kocka, and Hartmut Zwahr (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1994). Also see Alf Lüdtke, “Die DDR Als Geschichte: Zur Geschichtsschreibung Über Die DDR,” *Aus Politik Und Zeitgeschichte* B36, no. 98 (August 1998): 3–16. Here I am using the translation of the term *durchherrschte Gesellschaft* as proposed by Witkowski, “State Power and Everyday Life,” p. 937. Mary Fulbrook has translated it as “society drenched through with political authority”, see Mary Fulbrook, “Democratic Centralism and Regionalism in the GDR,” in *German Federalism. Past, Present, Future* (New York-Oxford: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 146–71., p. 149. The word *Herrschaft* is to be intended in its Weberian sense of chance of commands being followed by a specifiable group of subjects. In English, usually *Herrschaft* is translated as “domination”, or “rule”.

⁴²² Jürgen Kocka, “Eine Durchgeherrschte Gesellschaft,” in *Sozialgeschichte Der DDR*, by Hartmut Kaelble, Jürgen Kocka, and Hartmut Zwahr (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1994), 547–53., as translated in Ross, *The East German Dictatorship.*, p. 49.

⁴²³ Kocka, “Eine Durchgeherrschte Gesellschaft.”

⁴²⁴ For a discussion of “zero hours”, although in a previous period, see Hagen Schulz-Forberg, ed., *Zero Hours. Conceptual Insecurities and New Beginnings in the Interwar Period* (Bruxelles: Peter Lang, 2013).

⁴²⁵ Ralph Jessen, “Die Gesellschaft Im Sozialismus. Probleme Einer Sozialgeschichte Der DDR,” *Geschichte Und Gesellschaft* 21 (1995): 96–110.

⁴²⁶ Ross, *The East German Dictatorship.*, pp. 48-49.

⁴²⁷ Richard Bessel and Ralph B. Jessen, *Die Grenzen Der Diktatur: Staat Und Gesellschaft in Der DDR* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht, 1996).

⁴²⁸ Ross, *The East German Dictatorship.*, p. 50.

all engage with the broader problem of state/society relations in the GDR.⁴²⁹ However, how is this issue relevant in analyzing *local* power in the GDR?

New stimuli have relatively recently been provided by one of the most prominent non-German scholars on the GDR, Mary Fulbrook, famous for her much debated but fascinating and – in my opinion – substantive definition of the East German state as a “participatory dictatorship”, which indicates (in an only apparently contradictory way) the non-democratic nature of the state, while at the same time emphasizing the various degrees of popular support it received from citizens. These were kept faithful through a variety of tools – from commitment towards communist ideals, to more forceful and unpleasant methods, such as the continuous surveillance by the Stasi and, ultimately, fear.⁴³⁰

In her works, Fulbrook has also focused on relations between local and regional realities and the central state. She has claimed that the state presence was all-pervasive, in many ways and in relation to the local administration, too. To her, the focal point in the study of center/periphery discourse is to be identified in 1952, year in which the administrative reform was established. In 1945, under the Soviet military control, four new regions (*Länder*) were created, five with Berlin, with the right, at least in theory, to legislate on issues that did not conflict with central directives. In 1949, the GDR was born as a formally federal state, consisting of those five regions, and presenting both an upper and lower house of Parliament.⁴³¹ The 1952 reform replaced the *Länder* with 14 districts (*Bezirke*) plus East Berlin (so 15 in total), and 219 counties (*Kreise*).⁴³² The third layer of the administrative structure was constituted by the towns (*Städte*). Focusing purely on the *organization* of the national and local structures, and not on local traditions and identities – this topic is more complex –⁴³³ scholars have highlighted that the substitution of *Länder* with small-size territorial entities was aimed at achieving an easier control by the central state. The new system was thus more functional to democratic centralism.⁴³⁴ As Fulbrook herself has put it:

⁴²⁹ For a cultural approach, see Martin Sabrow, “Dictatorship as Discourse: Cultural Perspectives on SED Legitimacy,” in *Dictatorship as Experience. Towards a Socio-Cultural History of the GDR*, ed. Konrad Jarausch (New York-Oxford: Berghahn, 1999), 195–212.

⁴³⁰ Mary Fulbrook, *The People’s State. East German Society from Hitler to Honecker* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), pp. 235–269.

⁴³¹ Fulbrook, “Democratic Centralism and Regionalism,” p. 150.

⁴³² *Ibidem*.

⁴³³ On this point, see the works of Jan Palmowski: Jan Palmowski, *Inventing a Socialist Nation: Heimat and the Politics of Everyday Life in the GDR, 1945-90* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).; Jan Palmowski, “Learning the Rules: Local Activists and the Heimat,” in *Power and Society in the GDR 1961-1979. The “Normalization of Rule”?*, by Mary Fulbrook (New York-Oxford: Berghahn, 2008), 151–80.; Jan Palmowski, “Regional Identities and the Limits of Democratic Centralism in the GDR,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 41, no. 3 (July 2003): 503–26.

⁴³⁴ On this point, for a general overview on nationalism and the necessity of state control on the local territorialities by the postwar communist countries, see Francesco Privitera, “Trasformazione Dello Stato e Local Governance in Europa Orientale: Fra Regionalismo e Nazionalismo,” in *L’Europa Dei Comuni. Origini e Sviluppo Del Movimento Comunale*

Having removed the intervening layer of the Länder, the new system was designed to achieve an integrated system from the highest to the lowest levels – from the central organs of party and state down through the parallel state and party bodies in the Bezirke and Kreise through the level of the basic organizations in the factories, combines and residential areas.⁴³⁵

These changes realized by the central state were linked to the general reorganization carried out in July 1952, in the context of the so-called phase of *Aufbau des Sozialismus* proclaimed during the second SED conference in Berlin.⁴³⁶ Already since 1949, Walter Ulbricht had claimed the necessity of starting socialism-building, but in that moment he did not proceed further, most likely because of the unfavorable opinion of Stalin, who seems to have considered it premature, not least because of the possibility of a reunification with West Germany at the time.⁴³⁷ When this possibility faded away in the political agenda,⁴³⁸ the Soviet and the GDR authorities agreed on strengthening the state identity, through an increased isolation from outside, which coincided with an enlarged attention on internal issues. Therefore, the re-militarization of the state and the increase of borders control, in collaboration between the Soviet police and the East German so-called “people’s police” (*Volkspolizei*), was paired with a careful planning in terms of agricultural collectivization, with the aim of achieving a 25% growth by 1955, and with the enhancement of industrial production. This isolation was at the same time exploited as a tool for propaganda: the necessity to define the identity of the GDR through closure was twisted by East Germans towards West Germany, depicted as the enemy which was creating the closure, through its German-German policy and the *Hallstein Doktrin*.

Going back to Fulbrook’s point, however, this high degree of centralization is evident when looking at the local level’s organizational machine. This point already emerged from the concurrent reflections of well-informed Italian observers and connoisseurs of Germany. Michele Salvati’s 1964 analysis had already undertaken a similar direction. Basing himself on West German bibliography and journals, on some materials available for the GDR, and on the French text by Georges Castellan *DDR. L’Allemagne de l’Est* (Paris, 1955),⁴³⁹ the author drew the progressive making of the new socialist administrative structure, showing the mutation from the initial decision to reform «forms of local autonomy which were not dissimilar from those existing in non-socialist countries»,⁴⁴⁰ to an

Europeo Dalla Fine Dell’Ottocento Al Secondo Dopoguerra, ed. Patrizia Dogliani and Oscar Gaspari (Roma: Donzelli, 2003), 273–87.

⁴³⁵ Fulbrook, “Democratic Centralism and Regionalism.”, p. 151.

⁴³⁶ Andreas Malycha and Peter Winters, *Die SED. Geschichte Einer Deutschen Partei* (München: Beck Verlag, 2009).; also see Hermann Weber, *Die DDR 1945-1990*, 5. aktualisierte Auflage (München: Oldenbourg, 2012)., pp. 28-60.

⁴³⁷ Dietrich Staritz, “Die Sed, Stalin Und Der „Aufbau des Sozialismus“ in Der DDR. Aus Den Akten des Zentralen Parteiarchivs,” *Deutschland Archiv*, no. 7 (1991): 690–92.

⁴³⁸ Fulbrook, “Democratic Centralism and Regionalism.”, p. 150.

⁴³⁹ George Castellan, *D.D.R., L’Allemagne de l’Est*, Collection Esprit, “Frontière Ouverte” (Paris: éditions du Seuil, 1955). Castellan’s point of view is assimilable to the French heterodox left’s positions described in 3.3.2.

⁴⁴⁰ Salvati, “L’amministrazione Locale Nella RDT.”, p. 522.

increased uniformity led by the state. In his analysis, however, Salvati also highlighted an explanatory criterion that, he claimed, represented the maximum problem of political-administrative life of a socialist state and had not been grasped, in his opinion, even in the most serious West German works on the local administration of the GDR – namely, the constant effort and attempt to make *democratization* and *delocalization* coherent with each other, along the principle of the so-called “double dependence”.⁴⁴¹ This last one was defined as the melting of the necessity both for the formation of a unitary, national discipline and for democratic participation of the local communities to the building of such discipline.⁴⁴² Despite the obvious distance in time, space, tradition – Salvati wrote in 1964 Italy, while Fulbrook wrote in a British academic context in the early 2000s, with much more research and sources under her hands – their explanations of the GDR’s local space by some means find points of contact that should be considered.

Another personality of that time worth considering in looking at this issue is the president of Livorno’s Province Silvano Filippelli, who has provided us with an insight of what a communist local administrator could think about some aspects of the GDR’s town policy. Filippelli was present at the third colloquium of the cities and local authorities in Europe, which took place in Dresden, GDR, in 1966. On that occasion, delivering a speech titled “The municipality, nucleus of social life”, he defined the town councils in the Eastern bloc as follows: «in the socialist countries, probably, the character of basic social unit is the one that better defines the municipality, as part of a homogeneous whole, the state body, articulated in the local autonomies».⁴⁴³ The authoritarian state system of the GDR was described, in positive terms, as a «homogeneous whole». This sympathizing attitude was confirmed one year later, in 1967, when Filippelli himself and other Italian communal elected administrators participated to the celebrations for the country’s 25 years. As the *East Germans* wrote in a report drafted in Italian and stored in the Livornese provincial archive:

È stata accolta la [...] constatazione che, nel loro campo d’attività, le rappresentanze popolari locali realizzano largamente la democrazia socialista, affinché esse – *quando impongono le deliberazioni prese dal VIII congresso della SED* – rispondano in modo sistematico e proficuo alla loro responsabilità per il miglioramento della situazione degli alloggi, per prestazioni comunali di servizio, per l’assistenza medica, per lo sviluppo di un alto livello d’istruzione e di cultura, per le possibilità dello sport e della ricreazione e non per ultimo al fine di garantire la legalità, di proteggere e di assicurare la proprietà socialista. In una discussione vivace svoltasi a seguito della conferenza, la parte italiana ha sottolineato

⁴⁴¹ This approach to critique, which contraposed the principle of local autonomy in the Western conception and tradition and the centralistic organizational principles of East Germany, for Salvati did not make sense, and the only way to criticize local administration in the GDR, for him, was to attack centralized planning itself, or the aims behind it, as decided by the SED.

⁴⁴² Salvati, “L’amministrazione Locale Nella RDT.”, pp. 545-547.

⁴⁴³ ASPLI, b. Presidenza Filippelli, fasc. “Colloquio città enti locali d’Europa, Dresda 1966”, 3 *Colloquio internazionale delle città e degli enti locali d’Europa, Dresda, 16/19 maggio 1966, “Il Comune, nucleo della vita sociale”, relazione del prof. Silvano Filippelli, presidente della provincia di Livorno.*

ripetutamente: *Noi partiremo nella convinzione che tutto ciò che avete creato nella RDT, quello che siete riusciti a realizzare, sul campo materiale e ideale, ha le sue origini nei rapporti socialisti di potere.*⁴⁴⁴ Tali rapporti di potere Vi hanno consentito tutto questo, in quanto sapete, tutto quello che vogliamo riuscire a fare da noi, in Italia, per i comuni e per gli uomini lavoratori, lo possiamo solo imporre per mezzo della lotta più dura contro le forze reazionarie.⁴⁴⁵

Italians emphasized that everything that was implemented in the GDR, at the level of the «local popular representations», everything that they «were able to realize, in the material and in the ideal field, [had] its origins in the socialist relations of power». Instead of criticizing the strong degree of power that the SED had on local areas, Italian administrators celebrated it: even in its hierarchical features – which were anyway either accurately hidden or remained, at least apparently, unnoticed – the SED’s control was painted as a positive one. It allowed to properly finance local realizations destined to the well-being and equality of all workers and citizens. As East Germans further highlighted in the same occasion: «in front of the chronic financial misery of Italian municipalities, of their always increasing mountains of debts and their continuous prices’ rises», the interest of the Italian elected administrators towards the financial policy of the GDR seemed to them «more than understandable».⁴⁴⁶

Right financial issues were a fundamental topic. The budget of local entities was, for the GDR, the basis that defined both the aims of administrative actions and the tools that were necessary to realize them. The budget of the GDR was unitary, in line with the rest of the Soviet Union. This meant that all the profits and expenses of the public authorities, from the biggest to the smallest one, were registered centrally, thanks to the work of the GDR’s Ministry of Finances, in a hierarchical way, with every administrative unit representing a piece of a whole. Basically, the central authority who had determined the aims that the local institution had to pursue, also needed to find the way to subsidize them.⁴⁴⁷ In the early 1990s, the (West) German sociologist Sighard Neckel has suggested that a distinction could be made on this, maintaining that while *Bezirke* and *Kreise* were at the center of the attention of the GDR state local politics, that was not the case with the local councils of the towns (*Städte*), which were weak and politically powerless, and kept a subaltern role in the administrative implementation of decisions at an upper level. They were conceived as «organs of the socialist state power» with no percentage of autonomy whatsoever. With reference to the town councils, Neckel emphasized the discrepancy between the Marxist original conception of the

⁴⁴⁴ Italics mine.

⁴⁴⁵ ASPLI, b. Presidenza Filippelli e Nannipieri, fasc. “Rostock maggio 1967”, *Impressioni di eletti comunali italiani*.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibidem.

⁴⁴⁷ Salvati, “L’amministrazione Locale Nella RDT.”, p. 536.

Kommune as *lokale Selbstregierung* (local self-government) and its conception in real socialism, indeed as organ of the state.

Starting from these reflections, the question worth asking is then what kind of agency GDR towns and municipalities had, and to what extent could they develop independent policies. Neckel brings to the center of attention the case of housing construction (*Wohnungsbau*), showing the way, at the communal level, it was dominated from above, by the central state or by the responsible area organs of the counties. In one of the documentation notebooks produced by the IUAV University in Venice, the Italian architect Roberto Sordina also explained the degree to which the housing was controlled by the state, by showing the percentages of central financial participation to the administrative projects. According to the 1955 “laws for communal administrations”, the cities were provided with 8 billion (East German) marks for the ordinary administration; and with a fixed contribution for social and sanitary services (57% of the total), for culture (81%), for basic education (89%), and, indeed, for housing (100%). Sordina concluded by highlighting that, de facto, the state was controlling the development of the residential areas in the cities. The local organs simply had an «implementing power» of a plan which had already been entirely elaborated *centrally*.⁴⁴⁸ As it was further specified in the second IUAV documentation notebook: the «bonds between productive unions, the necessary social services, their territorial localization, their relations with the residential developments need[ed] to be decided and programmed at a higher level than the productive units themselves».⁴⁴⁹ The interest of the Italian observers and administrators was therefore not necessarily oriented towards the local realizations themselves, as there was no independent elaboration in this sense: they were concerned about the political consequences of socialism-building on the local realities, which had a direct impact on the financial means that the towns had at their disposal, too.

The examples here show that the nature, or at least the self-conception, of communist towns in East Germany and in Italy can also be described and defined with the help of these reciprocal views. In both cases these communist cities were seen as political organs, although with different backgrounds, intensities and for different reasons. However, there were significant differences, and those define the asymmetrical and non-reciprocal nature of this research, as stated in the methodological chapter. In the GDR, the local power was a small player of the state mechanism, one

⁴⁴⁸ Roberto Sordina, “Considerazioni generali e particolari sulla ricostruzione della città nella Germania Democratica – La Präger Strasse a Dresda”, in Carlo Aymonino and Gruppo Architettura IUAV Venezia, “Quaderni Di Documentazione 1: Anno Accademico 1970-1971: Alcune Realizzazioni Di Urbanistica e Architettura Nelle Città Della Repubblica Democratica Tedesca: Metodi e Tecnologie” (Venezia: Istituto universitario di architettura, 1971), p. 72.

⁴⁴⁹ Gruppo Architettura IUAV Venezia, “Quaderni Di Documentazione 2: Anno Accademico 1973-1974: Le Città Medie Italiane: Struttura Fisica e Funzionale Delle Aree Centrali (Bologna, Modena, Ravenna, Rimini): Le Città Medie Dei Paesi Socialisti: Struttura Fisica e Funzionale Delle Aree Centrali (Merseburg, Spalato)” (Venezia: IUAV, 1973), p. 69.

of its operative arms, with no freedom of choice on realizations, but well-financed. In red Italy, local power was for communists an instrument to oppose to or at least, over time, to access the central state. However, it was more difficult to implement and finance independent policies. The following section is dedicated to this red Italy, and in particular to the declinations of local power in the three areas in which the towns twinned with the GDR were located. By highlighting their political, cultural and territorial peculiarities, I wish to provide a good ground to understand on the one hand the reasons why they chose/were chosen to develop contacts with East Germany, and on the other, the way they developed their interactions with the socialist bloc over the decades.

4.2 Italy: red towns as political organs

In 1947 Giuseppe Dozza, first postwar mayor of Bologna, wrote that new Italian town councils needed to put an end to «Rome's suffocating central role, instituted by Fascism», to surveillance in bureaucracy, to the legitimacy of prefects' statements and that the communes needed to be financially independent in order to reach administrative autonomy.⁴⁵⁰ Dozza's words were a declaration of intents about the way communist municipal politics had to unfold, by both strengthening the bonds among local party leaders and administrators and by moving away from everything that the reactionary central state had represented in the past. The strategic argument that lied behind this view connected local politics and class struggle. Whereas the central state was depicted as the center of power politics, pursuing its practical interests, local governments operated in favor of the working class.⁴⁵¹ These were also the principles that were taught to communist cadres during the postwar years and that were regarded as the basis of communist local autonomy. Local administrators also fought for the inclusion of *autonomy*, in one way or another, in the Italian new Republican constitution, which was promulgated on January 1, 1948. In the end, that issue found its institutional wording in the fifth of the twelve basic principles which represented the first section of the charter, and that had been conceived as work-in-progress targets more than granitic statements.

⁴⁵⁰ Giuseppe Dozza, "La Politica Municipale Dei Comunisti," *Rinascita*, 1947., quoted in Rosario Forlenza, "The Italian Communist Party, Local Government and the Cold War," *Modern Italy*, 2010., p. 180. On this point, also see Luca Baldissara, "Il Comune Nello Sviluppo Della Città. La Definizione Del Ruolo Del Comune Negli Orientamenti Politici Ed Amministrativi Dei Comunisti Bolognesi (1945-1980)," in *Il Fondo Giuseppe Dozza. Repertorio Del Fondo Giuseppe Dozza*, ed. Virginia Sangiorgi and Paola Zagatti (Bologna: Il Nove, 1994), 9–48., p. 11. Also see Pietro Causarano, "L'educazione e La Cultura Nelle Politiche Locali e Regionali Del Secondo Dopoguerra in Italia," in *Autonomia, Forme Di Governo e Democrazia Nell'età Moderna e Contemporanea. Scritti in Onore Di Ettore Rotelli* (Pavia: Pavia University Press, 2014), 79–87.

⁴⁵¹ Anon, "Corso Pratico Sugli Enti Locali per La Leva Dei Quadri Amministrativi" (Roma: La Stampa moderna, 1951)., quote in Forlenza, "The Italian Communist Party, Local Government and the Cold War.", p. 181.

The Republic, one and indivisible, recognizes and promotes local autonomies; implements in those services that depend on the State the fullest measure of administrative decentralization; and accords the principles and methods of its legislation to the requirements of autonomy and decentralization.⁴⁵²

This topic had been widely discussed in the one-year-and-a-half Constituent assembly that preceded the promulgation of the Constitution. There, the representatives of the variegated antifascist parties that had fought the Fascist regime tried to find a political compromise on the formulation of the principles that needed to be at the basis of the new Republican, democratic state. Even before, during the two-year period between 1943 and 1945, the idea of autonomy had developed from the experiences of self-government that had taken place during the Resistance, being conceived as a strong reaction to the centralistic, authoritarian and hierarchical state built by Fascism. Although the phenomenon of the so-called “Partisan republics”⁴⁵³ was far from being vast, it acquired a symbolic value, as it embodied the freedom regained from the regime and emphasized the importance of collective participation, democracy and a bottom-up approach to common interests. In fact, this conception was later toned down, not directly by the Constituent assembly, which widely recognized – as it has been shown – the *principle* of autonomy, but by the later failure of the full implementation of the *legislation* on local authorities, despite the fact that some innovative institutions had been foreseen by the Italian fundamental charter.⁴⁵⁴ It is the case with regions as administrative units. Their creation, as is well known, was envisaged by the section *Titolo V* of the Italian Constitution, but they did not come into existence until 1970.⁴⁵⁵

It is interesting to note that, before 1948, the left mass parties had positioned themselves against the institution of regions, as they feared their strong level of autonomy could undermine the efficacy of reforms on the national level. However, with the end of the so-called governments of antifascist unity, and the 1948 political elections that sanctioned the victory of the Christian Democracy, determining their exclusion from government, they substantially overturned their viewpoint. Leftist parties started to see regions, and local autonomy more in general, as a benchmark

⁴⁵² Translated from Italian into English in Carlo Casonato and Jens Woelk, eds., “The Constitution of the Italian Republic” (Faculty of Law, Department of Legal Sciences, University of Trento, January 2008).

⁴⁵³ For an overview of the single experiences of partisan republics, see Carlo Vallauri, ed., *Le Repubbliche Partigiane: Esperienze Di Autogoverno Democratico* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2013), and the various interpretative contributions on the topic in Toni Rovatti and Roberta Mira, eds., “*Il Paradosso Dello Stato Nello Stato*”. *Realtà e Rappresentazione Delle Zone Libere Partigiane in Emilia Romagna: Dossier* (Bologna: Bradypus, 2016).

⁴⁵⁴ Piero Aimo, *Stato e Poteri Locali in Italia 1848-1995* (Roma: La Nuova Italia Scientifica, 1997), pp. 126-127.

⁴⁵⁵ As productive as the center/periphery approach has been at the beginning, scholars such as Simone Neri Serneri have highlighted the *impasse* that such a perspective, centered on the substantially conflictual bonds between state and local power, and built on the basis of institutional history and history of political parties, has determined until recent times. For some reflections on the topic and a detailed research on the origins and the actual implementation of regional politics in Tuscany, see the collection of essays in the volume Simone Neri Serneri, ed., *Alle Origini Del Governo Regionale: Culture, Istituzioni, Politiche in Toscana* (Roma: Carocci, 2004).

for resistance against the conservative forces of the national government.⁴⁵⁶ This had a political significance, and it is also the reason why for instance – looking at international contacts and GDR-Italian relations – when a delegation of Leipzig first came to Bologna in 1971, they included a meeting with the presidency of the Emilia-Romagna region (in the person of the former mayor of Bologna Guido Fanti and of the regional assessor Dante Stefani) as the last and probably most important moment of their visit.⁴⁵⁷ Overall, *the region and the various levels of municipal power* were a strategic tool for transnational communication, as I have already pointed out in chapter 3.⁴⁵⁸ This tendency was later consolidated by the decisions taken at the national congress of the Italian-East German friendship society, which took place in Livorno in 1976. In that occasion, part of the new explicit strategy to re-launch reciprocal contacts was right to insist on a new organizational system at the *regional levels*.⁴⁵⁹

Towns and municipalities instead, as Dozza's words have shown, were seen as political tools even during the early postwar years. This point was also raised, by a communist constituent MP, Piero Montagnani, vice-mayor of Milan after the Liberation, who recognized and claimed the «'political' character of the town council and of 'municipal phenomena' [...] against the 'reactionary political position' that denied it on ostensibly technocratic grounds»,⁴⁶⁰ expressing at the same time the hope that the fulfillment of the rights of local authorities and of regional regulations would lead to a full implementation of the Constitution.⁴⁶¹ This perspective represented an *extensive* interpretation of the constitutional provisions, with local autonomy being read as one of the most significant principles, and as a political aim. On these grounds the town council, together with the trade union, was identified as the main device for political struggle, to carry out communist principles in antithesis to the central state. Luca Baldissara has convincingly highlighted the strong rupture marked by the leftist and

⁴⁵⁶ Aimo, *Stato e Poteri Locali in Italia.*, p. 130.

⁴⁵⁷ ACSBO, Fondo Ufficio esteri, b. Lipsia 1960-1972, fasc. "Visita di una delegazione di Lipsia a Bologna in occasione della Fiera (4-7 ottobre 1971)", sottofasc. "Delegazione di Lipsia a Bologna 4-7 ottobre 1971", *Resoconto della visita, di Dante Crucchi*.

⁴⁵⁸ See for instance StaWe, WR III/1255 Städtepartnerschaft mit Carpi Band 9, *Abschrift. Provinzialverwaltung von Modena, Sergio Rossi an Martin Kilian, Modena 4.6.1971*. Here, the possibility of friendly relations between the province of Modena and the Kreis Wernigerode and the region Emilia-Romagna and the Bezirk Magdeburg are mentioned.

⁴⁵⁹ StaWe, WR III/1267 Kommission für Volksbildung, Sport und kulturelle Massenarbeit, *Onorio Campedelli, Bürgermeister von Carpi, an Martin Kilian, Carpi den 12. Dezember 1976*.

⁴⁶⁰ Piero Montagnani, "Imprese Municipalizzate e Società Anonime," *L'amministratore Democratico*, 1948., quoted in Forlenza, "The Italian Communist Party, Local Government and the Cold War.", p. 180.

⁴⁶¹ Vezio Crisafulli, "Democrazia, Costituzione e Autonomie Locali," *Rinascita*, 1949., cit. in Forlenza, "The Italian Communist Party, Local Government and the Cold War.", quoted in Forlenza. Vezio Crisafulli, originally from Genua, became university professor in Urbino in the 1930s. He was among the founders of the Unione Proletaria Italiana and member of the Pci since 1944. Luca Baldissara has emphasized the significance of his reflections, because of his ambivalent function of technician and political divulgator. On this, see Luca Baldissara, "Tra Governo e Opposizione. Il Ruolo Del Pci Nella Costruzione Della Democrazia in Italia," in *Il Pci Nell'Italia Repubblicana 1943-1991*, ed. Roberto Gualtieri (Roma: Carocci, 2001), 141–80. On Crisafulli, again, see Chiara Giorgi, *La Sinistra Alla Costituente. Per Una Storia Del Dibattito Istituzionale* (Roma: Carocci, 2001).

communist administrative culture in the long tradition of a conception of administration, and of autonomy, as «authoritarian and formalistic». The town council became an «instrument of democratization of Italian society, of renewal of politics and of state *apparata*, of support and promotion of citizens' participation to public affairs».⁴⁶²

The theoretical discussion on the elaboration of local autonomy as constitutional principle went hand in hand with the acknowledgment of the economic and political relevance that local councils had on the ground. As Rosario Forlenza has highlighted, this resulted as clear immediately after the second turn of the first free elections after Fascism, the administrative ones which took place in autumn 1946 in some Italian cities. On that occasion, the PCI consistently won in Northern and Central Italy, and reached satisfactory results in the South. The results had been particularly good in the medium-big cities of the Center-North, such as Turin, Genua, Livorno and Florence, plus Bologna, in which, however, elections had taken place before, in spring. This allowed the pragmatism of development of town councils governed by communists, often together with socialists.⁴⁶³

Both the awareness about the good results of the first local elections, and the politicization of the battle on autonomy can be seen against the backdrop of a general communist *tactic*, in the context of what Donald Blackmer has described as “strategic inferiority” of the PCI in relation to the Christian democrats at power on the national level.⁴⁶⁴ The expression indicated that while, politically, the Italian communist party permanently stuck to its status of minority party, on the social level it managed to build a pervasive system that aimed right at reaching the strategic purpose of achieving power. Peter Lange has defined this systemic network as “institutionalization”, that is «the development and/or maintenance of non-party organizations and participation in them». The reference here is, primarily, to local administrations and unions, but also to the spaces of militance, that were actively involved. These were associations and organizations with variable political content, local cultural and recreational spaces, or institutional groupings of artisans or tenants.⁴⁶⁵ With regards to this aspect, some similarities were to be seen with prewar socialist municipal experiences, although, as Italian Marxist historian Ernesto Ragionieri had lucidly pointed out already back in 1953, those defined

⁴⁶² Baldissara, “Tra Governo e Opposizione.”, p. 176. On this, and on the specific case of Bologna, see primarily the book by Baldissara: Luca Baldissara. “*Per una Città più Bella e più Grande*”. *Il governo municipale di Bologna (1945-1956)* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1994).

⁴⁶³ See Rosario Forlenza, ““L’Italia Dei Comuni’: Elezioni e Apprendistato Democratico Nel Consolidamento Della Repubblica,” in *Il Comune Democratico. Autogoverno, Territorio e Politica a Pesaro Negli Anni Di Marcello Stefanini (1965-1978)*, by Maurizio Ridolfi (Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2009), 47–64., and Forlenza, “The Italian Communist Party, Local Government and the Cold War.”, p. 179.

⁴⁶⁴ Donald L. Blackmer, “Italian Communism: Strategy for the 1970s,” *Problems of Communism* 21 (June 1972), p. 43.

⁴⁶⁵ Peter Lange, “The PCI at the Local Level: A Study of Strategic Performance,” in *Communism in Italy and France*, by Donald L. Blackmer and Sidney Tarrow (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 259–304., pp. 267-268.

themselves as workers' *counter-societies* against the state, but lacked a general program of transforming institutions.⁴⁶⁶

Proceeding from Ragionieri's thoughts, it is worth focusing on the institutional settlement started by communists and socialists at the local level during the postwar period. The red, democratic municipalities had their own networks and systems, which were to a certain extent in line with the previous ones, but with significant differences. It is the case with the League of Democratic Municipalities (see references in chapter 3), formed in Florence in 1947, which merged leftist communal and provincial administrators and councilmen and also played a significant role in the organization of twinnings. As Oscar Gaspari has highlighted, the League was ideally conceived as deriving from the 1916 League of Socialist Municipalities (*Lega dei comuni socialisti*). Similarly to the 1916 League, the new one was thought of as a political instrument to contrast national politics, and namely the exclusion of the leftist parties from Alcide De Gasperi's Christian-Democratic government after the 1948 elections.⁴⁶⁷ It represented an independent association from both the National Association of Italian Municipalities (*Associazione Nazionale Comuni Italiani*, ANCI), and the Union of Italian Provinces (*Unione delle Province d'Italia*, UPI), which were officially apolitical but de facto close to the Christian Democracy. Nevertheless, the League kept having contacts with these associations. This was part of the postwar strategy settled by Togliatti. The *partito nuovo* pushed by the PCI secretary aimed at a policy of alliances, so to counteract the isolation in which the DC wanted to throw the communists.⁴⁶⁸ The League had an official journal, in the immediate postwar named "The Democratic Administrator" (*L'amministratore democratico*). Later on, it would have been absorbed by "The Democratic Municipality" (*Il Comune democratico*), born in Milan (see chapter 3).⁴⁶⁹ The explicit aim of the League through its journal was the promotion of «municipal activity as a "test bed" for the direction of national government».⁴⁷⁰

This line of thought, in its essence, remained substantially stable over the decades. Local municipalities kept being a fundamental element of the PCI's political *strategy*, although the argumentative lines changed. Taking, again, Giuseppe Dozza and Bologna as an example – as historian Roberto Balzani has highlighted – in the 1960s the references to a «proud diversity of the

⁴⁶⁶ Ernesto Ragionieri, *Storia Di Un Comune Socialista. Sesto Fiorentino* (Roma: Edizioni Rinascita, 1953).

⁴⁶⁷ Gaspari, "Il Modello Emiliano Nella Lega Dei Comuni.", p. 86.

⁴⁶⁸ Oscar Gaspari, "Anci e Lega Nel Secondo Dopoguerra: Il Movimento per Le Autonomie Locali Nell'interpretazione Di Massimo Severo Giannini," in *Autogoverno, Territorio e Politica a Pesaro Negli Anni Di Marcello Stefanini (1965-1978)*, by Maurizio Ridolfi (Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2009), 65–82., p. 70. On the "myth of continuity" Gaspari has also written in: Oscar Gaspari, *La Lega Delle Autonomie 1916-2016. Cento Anni Di Storia Del Riformismo per Il Governo Locale* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2015), pp. 142-146.

⁴⁶⁹ On this, see the new and detailed work by Oscar Gaspari: Gaspari, *La Lega Delle Autonomie.*, pp. 129-137.

⁴⁷⁰ "Rendere Efficiente Il Nostro Lavoro Nei Comuni," *L'Amministratore Democratico*, 1947., in Forlenza, "The Italian Communist Party, Local Government and the Cold War.", p. 180.

local political culture as opposed to the national frame» were abandoned, the «rhetoric of negative integration» was put aside; and a new «conception of the local authority» emerged, which permanently overcame «residual positions of maximalism and municipalism», locating the town council in the frame of the «state public political power, as a primary and irreplaceable element of the democratic articulation of the state».⁴⁷¹ This line had been explicated, most likely, in the 1964 resolution of the PCI Emilian committee.⁴⁷² As a consequence, the form and the organization of red local government changed, hand in hand with modifications in national and international politics, and with an increasing dialogue with the local productive realities.

Still, the baseline conception of the town as a *political* subject persisted, and such a persistence was particularly evident through municipal international relations. This is visible if we consider, for instance, the words spoken in 1966 by Silvano Filippelli, prominent postwar president of the Livorno Province, in the already recalled occasion of the 3rd International Colloquium of local administrators in Dresden. Filippelli stuck to the Marxist principle on the basis of which «it was not possible to talk about local issues if one had not sufficiently analyzed the international and national dynamics before».⁴⁷³ Also his use of the term *democratic* in referring to the GDR and to the republics of the socialist states of Eastern Europe was not casual. This was the reason, as highlighted by Oscar Gaspari, why the League of Democratic Municipalities itself was named as such – to highlight a peculiar connection with the socialist world.⁴⁷⁴ The high attention which was accorded to international issues was also visible in peculiar and dedicated associations, connected to the municipalities, such as the “Unitary Committee for Friendship, Cooperation and Solidarity with Peoples” (*Comitato unitario per l’amicizia, la cooperazione e la solidarietà con i popoli*) in Reggio Emilia.

⁴⁷¹ Roberto Balzani, “Dal ‘Modello Emiliano’ Alla Regione Emilia-Romagna,” in *Alle Origini Del Governo Regionale: Culture, Istituzioni, Politiche in Toscana*, ed. Simone Neri Seneri (Roma: Carocci, 2004), 69–77, in Neri Seneri, *Alle Origini Del Governo Regionale.*, p. 72.

⁴⁷² «Il giorno 9 dicembre 1964 si è riunito il Comitato regionale del P.C.I dell’Emilia-Romagna per l’esame dei risultati elettorali del 22-23 novembre e delle prospettive politiche che ne conseguono. [...] Riteniamo che i punti programmatici e fondamentali attorno ai quali si può e deve articolare la ricerca e la discussione, punti che discendono da una elaborazione e una esperienza che i comunisti hanno compiuto in tanti anni insieme con i socialisti o altre forze politiche democratiche sono i seguenti:

- 1) Autonomia degli Enti locali e ordinamento regionale come punti base della articolazione democratica dello Stato prevista dalla Costituzione; riforma della legge comunale e provinciale e della finanza locale.
- 2) Funzionamento degli Enti locali e delle aziende municipalizzate amministrate in una programmazione democratica che si ponga l’obiettivo di contrastare, per batterle, le concentrazioni monopolistiche, oligopolistiche e del grande capitale finanziario ed assicurare un ordinato sviluppo sociale e civile della Regione [...]», FIGER, APCIBO, b. 1, fasc. 13, sottofasc. 8, *Risoluzione del Comitato Regionale del P.C.I. dell’Emilia-Romagna, a penna ms. «9.12.64 Arbizzani».*

⁴⁷³ Sondra Cerrai, *I Partigiani Della Pace in Italia. Tra Utopia e Sogno Egemonico* (Padova: libreriauniversitaria, 2011), p. 194.

⁴⁷⁴ Gaspari, “Il Modello Emiliano Nella Lega Dei Comuni.”, p. 96.

In Filippelli's 1966 speech, the principle of the municipality's autonomy and of its democratic charge and political meaning remained steady. «It is undeniable – he pointed out in that instance – that the origin of the municipality occurred prior to the one of the State and that the democratic capital that it transmitted through history is an important motive of ideal mobilization».⁴⁷⁵ Besides this, the Livornese administrator emphasized what in his view was, in those times, a substantial failure in the non-fulfillments of the Italian constitutional principles. He referred, in particular, to the introduction of *decentralization*, with the creation of regions as administrative units – an aspect which, as previously mentioned, was included in the constitutional program⁴⁷⁶ but had at that time not yet found a concrete application.⁴⁷⁷ This speech was delivered in front of a variegated audience, which also included East Germans. Filippelli had been asked by the GDR organizers of the conference, through a previous letter,⁴⁷⁸ to shape the issue of local municipalities according to some standards. At the beginning, he wanted to deliver a speech about school and culture, but he was convinced by senator Luigi Polano, member of the Thomas Mann Center and one of the MPs responsible for direct contacts with the GDR on the national level, to change his topic and concentrate on the municipality as “the center of social life”. The GDR organizers were «happy» to «take up the suggestion» to «express their opinion» and sent a document with their ideas about the issue, which they strongly encouraged to follow.

Noi vediamo il problema principale in questo: In che modo i comuni possono corrispondere maggiormente [sic!] alle esigenze della rivoluzione tecnico-scientifica e con ciò anche al ruolo del comune come centro della vita sociale? Il problema nucleare sono qui, secondo noi, le questioni della democrazia, essi toccano direttamente tutti i lati della vita umana. Si tratta dell'autodecisione del popolo sulla sua struttura politica e sociale, sui suoi beni materiali e spirituali, su tutti i problemi decisivi della sua vita. Si tratta qui dello sviluppo libero ed inostacolato delle tante buone idee dei nostri cittadini, della forza creatrice degli uomini.⁴⁷⁹

East Germans touched, propagandistically, upon democracy, framing the concept as the «self-definition of the people on their political and social structure [...], of the free and unhindered development of the many good ideas of our citizens». This perspective on democracy resonates well with what Salvati had noticed, that is the need to combine an idea of decentralization which was

⁴⁷⁵ «È innegabile che l'origine del comune è anteriore a quella dello Stato e che il patrimonio democratico che nella storia esso ha tramandato è un importante motivo di mobilitazione ideale»; in ASPLI, b. Presidenza Filippelli, fasc. “Colloquio città enti locali d'Europa, Dresda 1966”, 3 *Colloquio internazionale delle città e degli enti locali d'Europa, Dresda, 16/19 maggio 1966, “Il Comune, nucleo della vita sociale”, relazione del prof. Silvano Filippelli, presidente della provincia di Livorno.*

⁴⁷⁶ In the 5th article/principle (quoted before) and in article 118 of the Italian Constitution.

⁴⁷⁷ Law of Italian Republic, May 16. 1970, n. 281; “Provvedimenti finanziati per l'attuazione delle Regioni a statuto ordinario”, <http://www.normattiva.it/uri-res/N2Ls?urn:nir:stato:legge:1970-05-16;281!vig=>.

⁴⁷⁸ ASPLI, b. Presidenza Filippelli, fasc. “3 colloquio città enti locali d'Europa, Dresda 1966”, *Presa di posizione della delegazione della RDT alle tesi “Il comune – centro della vita sociale”.*

⁴⁷⁹ *Ibidem.*

coherent with a strong central power and, simultaneously, the concern of making the people at the local level participate, in order to keep the level of consent high. This was the GDR's conception of democracy in that period, and Filippelli seemed to agree with the overall statements, following the given guidelines and making his speech coherent and harmonious with them. To what extent did he agree with the GDR's *ideological* positions? We cannot measure this with certainty, due to the circumstance in which the speech was made. However, a substantial agreement seems to have been present between the sides on topics such as the idea of democracy, decentralization, and the involvement of citizens in the municipal activities. These perspectives, apparently, linked the two worlds together and shaped the *understanding* of postwar "red" local administrations *across* the Iron Curtain.

Also, some *practical* problems were shared, one of them being the financial situation of the municipalities. Filippelli paid considerable attention to facing the issue, highlighting that for some countries (namely, the GDR) «the problem substantially consists in a more articulated public finance», whereas for others (Italy) a global reform would have been necessary, able to eliminate the «antagonism between state finance and local finance, realizing a democratic State». Furthermore, Filippelli advocated for a more independent finance of the municipality from the state, so that the municipality itself could be an active protagonist and not a subaltern subject.⁴⁸⁰ The citizens – he added – «would surely be more positively inclined towards fiscal taxation if that was for the interest of their own city, that is, in short, for their same interest, properly made compatible with the interest of the whole national collectivity». By pointing this out, he praised «our hosting country», the GDR, where it was possible to have recourse, again, to the «democratic collaboration» of the population to «overcome the obstacles which derived from an insufficiency of financial sources». He concluded that this, in Italy, was simply not possible, unless a fiscal reform which provided more entries from indirect than from direct taxation was started.⁴⁸¹ This was, in his opinion, the result of the ambiguous national law of 1961, which to a certain extent reduced the financial autonomy of the local bodies.⁴⁸² Besides (sincere?) attempts of a political *captatio benevolentiae* toward the hosting country of the conference, what mattered to Filippelli was to communicate and reiterate the necessity of financial autonomy for Italian municipalities. In stating such a position, and in his operation of praising the GDR model, Filippelli seemed to forget – or better, “*consciously*” forgot – that «while the popular

⁴⁸⁰ ASPLI, b. Presidenza Filippelli, fasc. 3 “Colloquio città enti locali d’Europa, Dresda 1966”, 3 *Colloquio internazionale delle città e degli enti locali d’Europa, Dresda, 16/19 maggio 1966, “Il Comune, nucleo della vita sociale”, relazione del prof. Silvano Filippelli, presidente della provincia di Livorno.*

⁴⁸¹ Ibidem.

⁴⁸² Adorni, in Bruno Maida, ed., *Alla Ricerca Della Simmetria: Il PCI a Torino, 1945-1991* (Torino: Rosenberg & Sellier, 2004), p. 170.

participation to the public functions in the states of Eastern Europe was mostly formal, in Italy, thanks to the democratic regime, it was instead factual», despite the malfunctions and the ambiguities of that democracy.⁴⁸³ Perhaps, however, it was not a matter of forgetfulness. The problem of the local administrations' budget was truly overheard by Italian mayors, and, despite the awareness about the hierarchical system of the GDR, in that case the application of democratic centralism to this issue was probably truly perceived as an element that helped achieve the final objective.

In my view, these two examples by the communist administrators Giuseppe Dozza and Silvano Filippelli, which photograph two different time frames of the history of Italian local communism, show the strain to make the socialist-communist local government an independent and politicized actor. From the 1960s onwards one of their tools to reach this aim was represented by international relations with municipalities of the Soviet bloc, that is by twinnings. This positioning acquires an even more important meaning if interpreted in the light of the historical juncture of the 1960s and 1970s, which at a national level saw the PCI in an ascendant phase. In particular during the first half of the 1970s, before the political elections of 1976, the PCI moved towards the *hope* of actually being able to overthrow the Christian Democrats and reach the national government. To this regard, red local administrations represented an outpost, a sort of guarantee for the PCI, in front of the whole of Italy, about the actual capacity of effectively governing a territory. They showed on the ground that – along the lines formulated by Togliatti already in the immediate postwar – the PCI was not only a revolutionary and “struggle party” (*partito di lotta*), but also a “governmental party” (*partito di governo*).

At the same time – this should not be forgotten – the realizations and the expansion of the social services provided by the red local governments, besides being realized with a political planning behind, along specific leftist values, and thanks to strong political initiatives, had been made possible by broader developments. In Italy, these implementations had been allowed by the new frame introduced by the Center-Left. The new governments contributed in consistently reducing the central power and control on local authorities and, by encouraging this process, also played a role in opening the way to the institution of regions in 1970.⁴⁸⁴

4.2.1 Italy: red areas, red subcultures

An extensive interpretation of local autonomy and municipalities as political organs: these were the two main elements of the self-conception of socialist-communist local administration in

⁴⁸³ Gaspari, “Il Modello Emiliano Nella Lega Dei Comuni.”, p. 97.

⁴⁸⁴ Franco Piro, “La Critica Socialista Al ‘Modello Emiliano’. Un Ricordo, Trent’anni Dopo,” E-Review, 2013, <https://e-review.it/piro-una-critica-socialista-al-modello-emiliano>.

Italy in the postwar period. Autonomy and participation were expressed in the formula “democratic programming” (*programmazione democratica*), which was aimed at emphasizing the difference from the bureaucratic and centralizing tendencies of the central state.⁴⁸⁵ But what were the characteristics of these red territories? How could they be defined on the basis of these elements? This section aims at answering these questions, by providing a definition of what a red area was.

I will most probably not be able to avoid using the expression *regions* to refer to these territories, even though it would be ideally preferable. The main reason that underlies this choice is that regions as administrative units⁴⁸⁶ were only born in 1970; before that, one could only talk about natural and anthropogeographic regions.⁴⁸⁷ Twinnings’ developments overlapped throughout all the 1960s and the 1970s and proceeded even later. If on the one hand, it could be confusing to use the term *region* in referring to the red areas I will be taking into account, it is also true that the term has become part of the everyday vocabulary and is difficult to avoid. However, a clarification should be made: while it is possible to refer to Emilia-Romagna and Tuscany as *red regions*, that is not the case with Piedmont as a whole, but only for certain parts of it, for reasons that will be explained later.

Some Italian researchers of the Istituto Cattaneo, in the late 1960s, have come about with the expression “red political territorial subculture” (*subcultura politica territoriale rossa*). Broadly, the term “subculture” in itself indicates a group of people or a social segment which distances itself from a larger culture, according to a particular belief or *Weltanschauung*. In the intention of the researchers, it was conceived differently from *counterculture*, bringing something more with it than *just* the oppositional nature. The conception of *subculture*, in a way, was a product of the mutations that occurred during the 1960s: it signaled a detachment from the binary opposition between communists and capitalists, center and periphery, recalling instead the «integrating role» of the values, in terms of building a social collective and a common identity among groups of individuals, but also the «mediation role» that a culture can play in putting contrasting interests together.⁴⁸⁸ “Red” is related instead to the dominating presence of the communist party in this subcultural frame, together with the socialist party.

In the present work, I will make use of this category to refer to Emilia-Romagna and Tuscany, as, in my view, it is still a valid and substantive expression that can well explain the political and the

⁴⁸⁵ Carlo De Maria, ed., “Introduzione. Il ‘Laboratorio’ Emiliano-Romagnolo Dalle Origini Del Movimento Socialista a Oggi,” in *Il “Modello Emiliano” Nella Storia d’Italia: Tra Culture Politiche e Pratiche Di Governo Locale* (Bologna: Bradypus, 2014), 5–22., p. 15.

⁴⁸⁶ As big units which added themselves to the medium ones – provinces – and the small ones – municipalities.

⁴⁸⁷ Cristina Capineri, “Gli Spazi Del Governo Regionale in Toscana. Una Lettura Geografica,” in *Alle Origini Del Governo Regionale: Culture, Istituzioni, Politiche in Toscana*, ed. Simone Neri Seneri (Roma: Carocci, 2004).

⁴⁸⁸ Pietro Fantozzi, *Politica, Istituzioni e Sviluppo. Un Approccio Sociologico* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2001)., p. 37.

administrative dimension and their connections. More in depth, the term first emerged in a volume edited by Giorgio Galli at the end of the 1960s, in which Italy was ideally divided in six areas, where the politically better defined political cultures, the “red” and the “white” ones, stood out.⁴⁸⁹ The researchers had tried to reconstruct the reasons behind the high percentages of votes for the DC or the PCI in certain areas, and had identified them in the strong structures that the two parties had established on the respective territories. This included the party structures themselves, continuously nourished by the activity of simple militants and subscribers, the sections, the collateral organizations, the socialization spaces.

After that, research in social and political sciences redefined this interpretative category. For instance, Carlo Trigilia has elaborated on the term, further highlighting the characteristics of both the “red” and the “white” (Catholic) and using the expression “political territorial subculture” for the first time.⁴⁹⁰ Mario Caciagli, again, has elaborated on the definition of political culture given by Gabriel Almond at the end of the 1970s⁴⁹¹, concluding that political culture (and so the territorial political culture) is the result of attitudes, opinions and behaviors, but is also substantiated by values and beliefs, myths and rituals, symbols and languages, social practices and organizational structures.⁴⁹² More recently Francesco Ramella, proceeding from Trigilia’s work, has redefined the concept of subculture as a «political local system characterized by the dominance of a party, by a robust organization of the civil society and by a high mediation capacity between different interests».⁴⁹³ This meant that the left, and the PCI in particular, «were able to massively mobilize the electorate thanks to their social involvement and their capillary organization».⁴⁹⁴ The extent to which the PCI was able to reach this political and cultural presence in some Italian areas through prewar reformist experiences

⁴⁸⁹ Giorgio Galli, ed., *Il Comportamento Elettorale in Italia* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1968).

⁴⁹⁰ Carlo Trigilia, *Grandi Partiti e Piccole Imprese. Comunisti e Democristiani Nelle Regioni a Economia Diffusa* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1986), preceded by previous reflections published in Carlo Trigilia, “Le Subculture Politiche Territoriali,” in *Sviluppo Economico e Trasformazioni Geopolitiche Dei Sistemi Territoriali a Economia Diffusa*, “Quaderni” Della Fondazione Giangiacomo Feltrinelli 16, 1981.

⁴⁹¹ Gabriel Almond, “La Cultura Politica: Storia Intellettuale Del Concetto,” *Rivista Italiana Di Scienza Politica*, 1977.

⁴⁹² The reference is to Mario Caciagli, “Approssimazione Alle Culture Politiche Locali. Problemi Di Analisi Ed Esperienze Di Ricerca,” *Il Politico*, 1988.; and Mario Caciagli, “Quante Italie? Persistenza e Trasformazione Delle Culture Politiche Subnazionali,” *Polis*, 1988. both quoted in Mario Caciagli, “Subculture Politiche Territoriali o Geografia Territoriale?,” *Societàmutamentopolitica* 2, no. 3 (2011): 95–104., pp. 97-98.

⁴⁹³ Francesco Ramella, “Le Trasformazioni Della Subcultura Politica Rossa Nelle Regioni Del Centro Italia,” in *Culture Politiche e Territorio in Italia 1945-2000*, ed. Adriana Castagnoli (Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2004), p. 26. Always from Ramella, see his contribution in Ramella. An updated bibliography on the recent developments in the use and definition of *subculture politiche territoriali* necessarily includes also the following works: Marco Almagisti, *La Qualità Della Democrazia in Italia. Capitale Sociale e Politica* (Roma: Carocci, 2009).; and the collective volume Carlo Baccetti and Patrizia Messina, eds., *L'eredità. Le Subculture Politiche Della Toscana e Del Veneto* (Padova: Liviana, 2009). Other contributions, which take more current developments and the persistency of subcultures in contemporary Italy, are for instance Ilvo Diamanti, *Mappe Dell'Italia Politica. Bianco, Rosso, Verde, Azzurro... e Tricolore* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2009).; Ilvo Diamanti, “Le Subculture Territoriali Sono Finite. Quindi (Re)Esistono”, in *La Politica e Le Radici*, by Carlo Baccetti et al. (Padova: Liviana, 2010), 45–60.

⁴⁹⁴ Ramella, “Le Trasformazioni Della Subcultura Politica Rossa.”, p. 61.

is difficult to determine, and it is not the primary aim here. Certainly, beyond the meaning of subculture, the use of the term *red* is somehow related to such old experiences, although I would be very careful, in drawing a direct and immediate line between prewar reformism and post-World War II reformist *strategy* in communist government.⁴⁹⁵ However, the areas which can be defined as red subcultures, as Marc Lazar among others has noted, represent an exception in Italy. Usually, the ones referred as such are four contemporary regions of Central/Northern Italy: Emilia-Romagna, Tuscany, Umbria and Marche.

Hereunder, I will focus on the three red areas that were involved in the transnational relations analyzed in this research: Emilia-Romagna, Tuscany and the industrial belt around Turin in Piedmont, highlighting the political, social and cultural characteristics of these territories and the shape they took especially in the 1960s and the 1970s, when communist-socialist local governments had already been established since a relatively long time.

Governing development: Emilia-Romagna and Tuscany

Fausto Anderlini is probably one of the scholars who has most clearly exposed what the – in his words – *evolutive metamorphosis* of the PCI as a governmental local force has meant. As a matter of fact, Anderlini managed to capture its change, in the decisive decade of the 1960s, from a «sub-cultural, oppositional crystallization» to a «party as a complex system», able to concretely connect, through public policies, with the issues that the local economic development and the general rise of capitalism posed. In so doing – so wrote Anderlini – the «Emilian PCI came out [...] from the shell of negative integration to develop a distended reformist policy in direct (although implicit) consonance with the social democratic European experience».⁴⁹⁶ Such positioning emerges also if we look at the international contacts and at the Bologna-Leipzig experience. In a report about a trip to Leipzig in November 1972, the Bolognese noted – not without a perceptible disappointment – that the East Germans had expressed «pretty severe judgments» on the West German social democracy and especially on Willy Brandt, picturing him as «the front man of German capital» and «the responsible actor behind the anti-communist and anti-workers repression in the Federal Republic».⁴⁹⁷

⁴⁹⁵ On the birth of the PCI as a mass party, see Leonardo Paggi, «La Formazione Del Partito Comunista Di Massa Nella Storia Della Società Italiana», *Studi Storici* 12, no. 2 (June 1971): 339–55.

⁴⁹⁶ Fausto Anderlini, *Terra Rossa. Comunismo Ideale Socialdemocrazia Reale: Il Pci in Emilia-Romagna* (Bologna: Istituto Gramsci, 1990), p. 12.

⁴⁹⁷ ACSBO, Fondo Ufficio esteri, b. Lipsia 1960-1972, fasc. «1972», sottofasc. «21-25 novembre 72, viaggio delegazione di Bologna, programma di lavoro», *Relazione sul viaggio a Lipsia di una delegazione del Comune di Bologna, 21-25 novembre 1972*.

This somewhat ambiguous perspective, emphasized by Anderlini, has been shared by other scholars, too, who have taken a stance on local government – not uniquely, but especially in Bologna – in which «soul-breaking fundamental ambiguities» coexisted: the governors had to join the «Soviet myth and cross-class collaboration», a «subversive soul» and a «reformist soul» all together. All these elements resulted in a «big, social democratic compromise» between the territorial actors.⁴⁹⁸ I myself adopt this interpretative line. In this section, I will first highlight the peculiarities of the PCI government in Bologna and Emilia-Romagna over the decades, and then try to show the way in which different ideological orientations and various national and international influences and stimuli intertwined and played a role in the construction of the local administration. I will take into account Bologna, which, as the capital of the region, often acted as the coordination center for either towns and municipalities involved in the twinnings with the GDR, like Modena and Carpi in the province of Modena, and Reggio Emilia. Beyond the obvious differences between the centers, it is worth noting that the characteristics and the developments of all these towns follow a similar path, especially in terms of problems to deal with, which started from postwar reconstruction; of economic aspects (agriculture, recent industrialization, cooperative system, etc.); and of political management of such features and of the municipalities' social life, thanks to the presence of long-term and stable socialist-communist majorities in local councils.

Looking at Emilia-Romagna, it is important to highlight the rise and fall of what has been called as “Emilian model”, an expression that has been used to describe «the socio-economic reality of the region between the end of the 1950s and the end of the 1970s».⁴⁹⁹ The term – which reached an international dimension thanks to the 1982 essay by Sebastiano Brusco⁵⁰⁰ – has been mostly studied in its economic and sociological implications, and only recently has started to become a subject for historiographical studies.⁵⁰¹ In historiography, some scholars have observed that regional communist administrators and politicians were not eager to refer to that formulation, and preferred “red region” or “red Emilia”, to emphasize the political dominance of communists and socialists. They avoided admitting the existence of a model, which would recall specific, autonomous elements and thereby create problems for the ideological compactness of the PCI.⁵⁰² As a matter of fact,

⁴⁹⁸ Paola Bonora and Angela Giardini, *SloT. Quaderno 4. Orfana e Claudicante. L'Emilia "Post-Comunista" e l'eclissi Del Modello Territoriale* (Bologna: Baskerville, 2003), pp. 47 and 49. Quoted in Balzani, “Dal ‘Modello Emiliano’ Alla Regione Emilia-Romagna.”, p. 71.

⁴⁹⁹ Gaspari, “Il Modello Emiliano Nella Lega Dei Comuni.”, p. 75.

⁵⁰⁰ Sebastiano Brusco, “The Emilian Model: Productive Decentralisation and Social Integration,” *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 1982.

⁵⁰¹ Carlo De Maria, ed., *Il “Modello Emiliano” Nella Storia d'Italia: Tra Culture Politiche e Pratiche Di Governo Locale* (Bologna: Bradypus, 2014).

⁵⁰² Piro, “La Critica Socialista Al ‘Modello Emiliano.’”

frictions and misunderstandings between the national and the Emilian PCI have not been rare, ever since the 1940s. No Emilian was called to be a leader in Rome, and «the regional PCI had to atone for the accusation of being reformist».⁵⁰³ This is the argument that Rosario Forlenza put forward in arguing that already from the immediate postwar an Emilian specificity to the “Italian road” to socialism existed, and that it was not well received by the PCI’s central hierarchies. Emilians «gave birth to a local culture that was tacit, autonomous and for a long time supported by a minority».⁵⁰⁴ Whatever degree of autonomy of the regional recipe to communism, however, the “Emilian model” remains an important interpretative element to consider in the study of the history of communist administration. It represents a red thread that covers the whole postwar and runs in parallel with the paths and the mutual interactions of the municipalities and the provinces – the main actors of the autonomist and democratic process of programming; of the regions; and of the communist party structure. The PCI assumed a special «integrating function» in relation to the regional society, especially in areas such as «organization, culture, social bonds and institutional practices».⁵⁰⁵

When approaching the nature of red Emilia, the well-known PCI regional conference in 1959 represents a fundamental and real turning point. On that occasion, the party abandoned the revolutionary line, embracing a reformist, democratic one. This passed through a severe self-criticism about the scarce impact and the difficulties that the party had in driving the working class. The new line was set thanks to the rise of a new generation of younger politicians and administrators such as Guido Fanti and Renato Zangheri,⁵⁰⁶ both future mayors of Bologna (respectively between 1966-1970 and 1970-1983). This process of change within the ruling class allowed the broadening of the party attention towards the Catholic world and the confrontation with the economic and social realities in the town. A similar idea was already at the basis of the Togliatti strategy of *partito nuovo*, which Anderlini has defined as an «original hybridization of elitist and massified forms, of instrumental rationality and ethic-pedagogical functions».⁵⁰⁷ However, differently from the past, the middle class and other social categories were no longer considered as an object of an instrumental alliance, but rather as a central subject of political attention.⁵⁰⁸ Anderlini has written that the conference marked the moment in which the decision of consciously using capitalistic rationalization to organize the party’s impact was taken. Local administrations were central in this strategy of an «organized re-

⁵⁰³ Cyrille Guiat, *The French and Italian Communist Parties: Comrades and Culture* (Portland: Frank Cass, 2003), pp. 125-126; quoted in Forlenza, “The Italian Communist Party, Local Government and the Cold War.”, p. 192.

⁵⁰⁴ Forlenza, “The Italian Communist Party, Local Government and the Cold War.”, p. 192.

⁵⁰⁵ Anderlini, *Terra Rossa.*, pp. 10-11.

⁵⁰⁶ Renato Zangheri, in Oscar Gaspari, Rosario Forlenza, and Sante Cruciani, *Storie Di Sindaci per La Storia d’Italia* (Roma: Donzelli, 2009), pp. 197-202.

⁵⁰⁷ Anderlini, *Terra Rossa.*, p. 11.

⁵⁰⁸ Piro, “La Critica Socialista Al ‘Modello Emiliano.’”

politicization of social relations through a political-administrative path» and of a «rationalization of public apparatus and the activation of a political system centered on the organized participation of the masses to social and public life». In this, the Emilian PCI was favored by the Center-left but at the same time positioned itself in competition with it. It tried to realize – from the periphery and from “below”, the conditions of welfare/social state.⁵⁰⁹ This is an essential point when it comes to interpreting twinings with the East and the points that were at the center of the attention in the international exchanges. That regional conference in many ways represented the starting point for the development of communist reformism in leftist towns of the whole Emilia-Romagna. Bologna, as the regional capital, is the main example for that, but Reggio Emilia and Modena were also key for communist administration.

When it comes to describing the communist reformist implementations, however, Bologna comes first. Since the immediate postwar, decentralization had been a major concern. As we have seen in the case of the GDR, that was quite a transnational topic, although with different views on the conception of state presence. To pursue administrative decentralization in Bologna meant to adopt a new expenditure policy. In that historical juncture, the solution was identified in the budget deficit, which in the second half of the 1960s was on the edge of becoming an established tendency in local administration all over the world, and not just among communists, who considered it a tool for economic development.⁵¹⁰ Both decentralization and financial independence were the main issues that mattered to Giuseppe Dozza in his years as a mayor (1945-1966).

In this context, Dozza became one of the main promoters of the so-called *consigli tributari* (“tax councils”), of which a preliminary draft had already been presented in 1944-45 as a fundamental part of a vast fiscal reform project by the communist Finance minister of the second Bonomi government Antonio Pesenti. They were thought to ensure the «democratic participation of taxpayers».⁵¹¹ The second idea that Dozza pursued was the one of *consulte popolari* (“popular assemblies”), which later on, in the 1970s, evolved in the experience of *consigli di quartiere* (“neighborhood councils”), formed by council members elected directly, and thus organs of direct representation of citizens, with a political, active role in the concrete implementation of the local council’s orientations.⁵¹² For these reasons, Dozza became one of the main leaders of the League of

⁵⁰⁹ Anderlini, *Terra Rossa.*, p. 147.

⁵¹⁰ Piro, “La Critica Socialista Al ‘Modello Emiliano.’”

⁵¹¹ Gaspari, “Il Modello Emiliano Nella Lega Dei Comuni.”, p. 90.

⁵¹² Luisa Lama, *Giuseppe Dozza. Storia Di Un Sindaco Comunista* (Reggio Emilia: Aliberti, 2007)., p. 91. Luisa Lama has maintained that those assemblies have been instrumentalized by the local PCI and has challenged the idea that they constituted the precursors of neighborhood councils. In her opinion, these last ones were closer to the organs as proposed by the Catholic Giuseppe Dossetti in Bologna’s administrative elections in 1956.

Democratic Municipalities together with the assessor to taxes of the Bologna municipality Paolo Fortunati.⁵¹³

Once the immediate necessities of the postwar were met, such as the city's reconstruction, Dozza initiated a program of cultural rebirth (by investing on new university buildings and in research), of support towards agriculture and medium-small enterprises, typical of the Bolognese territory, and of urban reconstruction, through the launch of the "general regulating planning" (*Piano regolatore generale*), which was meant to govern the urbanistic explosion of the 1960s, through a well-thought set of policies based on community values. This rebirth had favorable economic premises. Agriculture in Emilia Romagna was well-developed. However Bologna, beyond presenting a highly developed tertiary sector, was also an industrial center (metallurgical and chemical industries, shoe-making).⁵¹⁴ It could rely on an efficient, medium-sized industrial system, plus an antique tradition of cooperatives, in the fields of agriculture, food and construction,⁵¹⁵ which represented an alternative to capitalistic economic structures.⁵¹⁶ Some important *innovations* were also put into practice in the 1960s. The most relevant among these was probably the constitution, in early 1964, of the *Finanziaria Fiere Bologna* enterprise (Bologna fairs), which represented a «prototype of semi-public» body.⁵¹⁷ Being financed by the municipality itself, with the instrument of deficit spending, the enterprise was strongly tied up with the local government. An integrated system was at the basis of its sustainment. This system included, as main financers, the municipality, the Chamber of Commerce, the provincial administration, together with the autonomous society of *Bologna fiere*.⁵¹⁸ As it often happened in similar cases, the semi-public society was represented by different political actors, and an effort was made to guarantee an internal balance between them, through the appointments of managers. All these innovations and developments, which exploded in the 1960s and represented the basis of the communist hegemony in Bologna, were the consequence of an efficient organization; of a firm control over a vast network of organizations such as fairs and cooperatives, without much real involvement of the electorate; and of a deeply rooted *political*

⁵¹³ Sante Cruciani, "Giuseppe Dozza, Sindaco Di Bologna. La Rivoluzione Del Buongoverno," in *Storie Di Sindaci per La Storia d'Italia*, by Oscar Gaspari, Rosario Forlenza, and Sante Cruciani (Roma: Donzelli, 2009), 145–56., p. 148.

⁵¹⁴ Guiat, *The French and Italian Communist Parties.*, p. 122.

⁵¹⁵ On the cooperative movement in Bologna and Emilia Romagna, see for instance the works by Mario Viviani, Mario Viviani, *Dire Dare Fare Avere: Percorsi e Pratiche Della Responsabilità Sociale* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2006).; Mario Viviani, *Tre Scritti Sulla Cooperazione : 1987, 1990, 1992* (Bologna: Unipolis, 1993).

⁵¹⁶ Max Jäggi, Roger Müller, and Sil Schmid, *Bologna Rossa. I Comunisti Al Governo Di Una Città* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1977)., pp. 8-9.

⁵¹⁷ Anderlini, *Terra Rossa.*, p. 109.

⁵¹⁸ *Ivi*, p. 111.

culture, which was built on the basis of the reformist tradition, the memory of the Resistance, and the positive management of the postwar reconstruction policies.⁵¹⁹

It is in this context that the twinning with Leipzig has to be inserted. Leipzig, just like Bologna, was a university town, a cultural center famous for music, and an international fair center. As we will see in detail in the next chapter, keeping a contact with such a city in the GDR was beneficial on many levels to the Bolognese administrators, and had at least a twofold meaning. On the one hand, a political one: Dozza administrated the most important communist town in Italy and in the West and his party adhered to the Cominform.⁵²⁰ He and the other administrators needed to affirm their communist belonging by keeping bonds with the Soviet bloc. On the other hand, there were pragmatic reasons, in the context of these renewed attention towards the middle class, the enterprises, the commercial relations (see chapter 5, 5.2).

The 1970s, however, marked a decline in the expansive phase of the town. Both the increasing limitations imposed on public expenses by the internationally negative economic juncture, and the tying of the Bologna experience to the rules of state authority, contributed to a slow vanishing of innovative planning.⁵²¹ Administrators in Bologna were heavily tied to the central redistribution of resources by the state, and were not able to keep up with the spending policy.⁵²² The decline of the communist administration's innovative power – and financial resources – also coincided with a decreasing intensity of the municipality's foreign policy in general and also with the contacts with Eastern Europe. This is visible in the rarefied activities with Leipzig.

The province of Modena did not have a comparable centrality in the regional context, although many economic, political and administrative characteristics were similar to Bologna, and so were the solutions proposed by communist administrators in terms of social and cultural services. As most of the cities in the region, after experiencing a high unemployment rate at least until the mid-1950s, the province turned towards an impressive economic growth. The farmers decreased in the long-term period between the 1950s and the 1970s, with the old institution of sharecropping (*mezzadria*) – which foresaw a contract of association and half-half of profits division of between landowners and farmers – slowly making space for an agricultural-industrial development.⁵²³ At the same time, factory workers increased in number, with the arrival of new labor force due to internal migration

⁵¹⁹ Forlenza, “The Italian Communist Party, Local Government and the Cold War.”, p. 185.

⁵²⁰ De Maria, “Introduzione.”, p. 10.

⁵²¹ Anderlini, *Terra Rossa.*, p. 57.

⁵²² Max Jäggi, Roger Müller, and Sil Schmid, *Bologna Rossa. I Comunisti Al Governo Di Una Città* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1977).

⁵²³ Antonio Saltini, *L'agricoltura Modenese Dalla Mezzadria Allo Sviluppo Agroindustriale* (Milano: FrancoAngeli, 1998).; Giuliano Muzzioli, *Modena* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1993)., pp. 330-335.

from Southern Italy and other regions.⁵²⁴ The steel industry soon assumed the proportions of an industrial district and was sustained by administrators. Working-class villages intended to host artisans were created since the early 1950s, and, similarly to Bologna, a *Piano regolatore generale* was presented, with the aim of governing the otherwise uncontrolled growth of the urban center. Another industrial product which was extremely successful, covering 80% of the Italian production, was the one of ceramics, in particular in the area of Sassuolo.⁵²⁵ An impressive growth was also experienced by Carpi, which was the production center in the field of knitwear and whose population, for this reason, almost doubled in thirty years (1951-1971).⁵²⁶ Mirandola was experiencing an expansion in the biomedical sector and Vignola was central for the transformation of agricultural products.⁵²⁷ These processes were all backed and guided by communist administrators of the towns, among which were, for instance, Rubes Triva, mayor of Modena from 1962 to 1972, his successor Germano Bulgarelli (1972-1980), and Bruno Losi and Onorio Campedelli, who guided Carpi respectively between 1940 and 1970 and 1970-1977. The centrality of municipalities and of Provinces was evident also in this case already in 1950; this aspect was well reflected in a propaganda film by Carlo Lizzani, titled *Modena, una città dell'Emilia rossa* ("Modena, a city of red Emilia"). Everything considered innovative – «art, the cattle market, the progress of work in the fields, building work, transport, trade, public services, welfare, sport, the hospital, the holiday camps» was to be attributed to «a new political entity: the town council», which laid «behind the transformation of local realities».⁵²⁸

In this case, the pragmatic reasons behind the twinning between Modena and Potsdam seems to have been based mostly on affinities in the agricultural field.⁵²⁹ However, in the preliminary phase of the twinning, East Germans had proposed another town for the coupling: Schwerin, «historical and Nordic» town «of 92.000 inhabitants, currently characterized by noteworthy development».⁵³⁰ In the end, Schwerin ended up being twinned with Reggio Emilia and the Modenese administrators chose Potsdam, although they had to establish a pact between provincial administrations and labor unions not being able to realize it on the communal level.

⁵²⁴ Muzzioli, *Modena.*, p. 328.

⁵²⁵ Ivi, pp. 343-348.

⁵²⁶ Ivi, pp. 348-355.

⁵²⁷ Claudia Finetti, "Il Sindacato Nello Sviluppo Del 'Modello Emiliano' (1963-1978)," in *Un Secolo Di Sindacato. La Camera Del Lavoro a Modena Nel Novecento*, ed. Lorenzo Bertucelli et al. (Roma: Ediesse, 2001), 329–405., p. 368.

⁵²⁸ Carlo Lizzani, *Modena: Una Città Dell'Emilia Rossa*, 1950., quoted in and translated in English in Forlenza, "The Italian Communist Party, Local Government and the Cold War.", p. 185.

⁵²⁹ ASCMO, Segreteria generale, b. 1961, *Vorschläge für Städtepartnerschaften DDR-Italien, den 8. September 1961.*

⁵³⁰ ASCMO, Segreteria generale, b. 1961, *Lettera di Ruggero Gallico a Rubes Triva, 3 novembre 1961.*

The potential interchangeability of the East German towns between Modena and Reggio Emilia makes it clear that the structural characters, and the size, of these two centers were not different from each other. Reggio Emilia, located more or less 65 kilometers North-West of Bologna, was mostly famous for food, textile and mechanical industries, in the context of an increasing, though not massive industrialization; and for agriculture, too, although sharecropping was not widespread as in Modena. Just like with other cases, the processes of economic growth went hand in hand with the individuation of cultural and social policies that could favor the citizens. Again – and similarly to the French case, as Cyrille Guiat has highlighted – the mayors were the individuals that influenced the process of policy making. In Reggio’s case, Cesare Campioli (1945-1962), Renzo Bonazzi (1962-1976) and, later on, Ugo Benassi (1976-1987) had a special role.⁵³¹ Due to the period considered in this dissertation, the focus here will be mostly on Bonazzi, prominent member of the PCI, lawyer and intellectual. Together with Loris Malaguzzi, he contributed to the creation of the worldwide famous day care and kindergartens system called “Reggio Emilia approach”, and was the initiator of a solid local welfare, as well as of the revitalization of the cultural sphere. All these transformations happened mostly during the 1960s, and with the co-help of the provincial institution of Reggio Emilia. Just like communists and socialists, those administrators were involved in the political-administrative regional discussion, too.⁵³²

The whole Emilia-Romagna region was thus characterized by a successful mixture of agricultural tradition, food industry, and a cast network of medium-small industrial companies and enterprises. This kind of new industrial development, which differentiated itself from the old industrialized areas of the industrial triangle, has been first defined, in the 1970s, as *Terza Italia* (“Third Italy”), signaling the emergence of a new productive model which was different both from the industrial North-West and from the backward South.⁵³³ This kind of economy, as emphasized by Guiat, «together with the very active role played by the local Resistance in the Liberation of Italy in 1945, has led a number of scholars to describe the region as a major political stronghold of Italian communism».⁵³⁴ The ingredients for the Emilian PCI’s success were therefore not only limited to the “Emilian model”, intended as a blend of economic development, social stability and diffused well-being. The political aspects were central: the party had become an absolute protagonist, by showing

⁵³¹ Guiat, *The French and Italian Communist Parties.*, p. 123.

⁵³² Alberto Ferraboschi, “Comunità Locali e Protagonismo Istituzionale. Pratiche Dell’innovazione Sociale a Reggio Emilia (1888-1978),” in *Il “Modello Emiliano” Nella Storia d’Italia: Tra Culture Politiche e Pratiche Di Governo Locale*, ed. Carlo De Maria (Bologna: Bradypus, 2014).

⁵³³ About this, see the groundwork by Arnaldo Bagnasco, *Tre Italie. La Problematica Territoriale Dello Sviluppo Italiano* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1977).

⁵³⁴ Guiat, *The French and Italian Communist Parties.*, p. 122.

the ability to embrace the challenge posed by industrialization and, at the same time, by realizing a conception of municipalism that merged together the fulfillment of the constitutional promises on autonomy and the organization of services for the urban society and economy.⁵³⁵ This recipe for success was on the one hand beneficial to the Roman PCI, so as to show the governmental capacities of the party on the territories; but on the other hand, as anticipated before, it represented a thorn in the flesh for central party hierarchies, as that reformist solution found in Emilia-Romagna was partly challenging the Marxist-Leninist conception of power which the PCI was still following. Therefore, the relation with the local party in Emilia was not at all plain and unproblematic. Quite differently, it led to some frictions, which were never made explicit but were de facto visible in the absence of Emilian politicians in the national secretariat of the PCI.⁵³⁶ Not easy was also the relation between the central State and the newborn region Emilia-Romagna, in 1970, whose first president became Guido Fanti, previous mayor of Bologna. The region represented, in a way, an ambiguous entity: it marked a movement towards a collaboration with the central State, although much resistance came from the center in terms of implementation of shared reforms, renewal of ruling class, and research of new, ideologized and alternative development models. However, it also represented a further step towards the accomplishment of communist local autonomy. In this context, contacts with the East were maintained, and served the purpose, in my opinion, of keeping the Marxist-Leninist side of the communist power alive, beyond the reformist choices and the institutionalization of leftist administration.

With reference to the “red” nature of the region, it is worth to shortly touch upon its historical origins. Already since the end of 19th Century, Emilia-Romagna had seen on its territory numerous experiences of leftist (socialist) administration. Many were experimental experiences in this sense, not only or not uniquely socialist, but enriched, for instance, by a republican-radical component, particularly strong in Romagna, close to the Adriatic Sea. Among these – just to mention some well-known examples – were the first socialist administration in Imola, which started in 1889 in the area of influence of Andrea Costa; the one in Reggio Emilia, inspired and guided by Camillo Prampolini; and the Bolognese one, although it only started in 1914, which saw Francesco Zanardi as the first socialist mayor of the town. Here, too, 1889 marked the first success of the radical-socialist array and the beginning of its strong influence on local institutions with a significant reform project.⁵³⁷

⁵³⁵ Simone Neri Seneri, “Introduzione,” in *Alle Origini Del Governo Regionale: Culture, Istituzioni, Politiche in Toscana*, ed. Simone Neri Seneri (Roma: Carocci, 2004), 11–22., p. 15.

⁵³⁶ Guat, *The French and Italian Communist Parties.*, p. 126.

⁵³⁷ De Maria, *Il “Modello Emiliano” Nella Storia d’Italia*.

What was left from that tradition? What was the heritage of those early socialist administrative experiences in the Second postwar period? Recent analyses, indeed extremely precious for their focus on specific aspects of the administrative experience in the whole Emilia in the 19th-20th Century, have drawn a fundamental continuity between the “before” and the “after”, describing the beginning-of-the-century experiences as a somewhat pioneer phase of the “Emilian model”, and suggesting that the «tradition of gradualist socialism, absorbed and accepted by local communists, intertwined with the instances of social Catholicism and republicanism». ⁵³⁸

On the one hand, there is a point to that. It is undeniable that the memory and the heritage of that experience, in terms of political culture, forms of sociability and collectivization, and reformist attempts, has left a trace on the Emilian territory and society. On the other hand, I believe that stating the explicit will to analyze the Emilian administration in this long-term perspective is subject to risks, when it comes to calculate the weight of the Fascist period on the issue. The limit of such an interpretation comes from the strong focus on the continuities. Between the “before” and the “after” twenty years of Fascism had deeply modified the structure of Italian society and state organization, not least pushing for a strong centralization, also on the local level (for instance, substituting to the elected mayors nominated *podestà*, Podests). Despite some continuities, for instance in the people that worked in the municipal administrations, ⁵³⁹ relegating Fascism to a dark parenthesis does not give account of the complexity of the transformations that took place between the early 1920s and the 1940s, with regard to local territories.

Furthermore, not only is this a matter of the weight of Fascism, but also of the changes within the communist world. The underground movement, the exile, the persecution had deeply influenced the organization and the choices of communists in Italy and in the whole of Europe, together with their strategic attitude in the post-1945 novel settlement. In Italy in particular, this was aimed towards a positioning and an antifascist, active role within the newly built democracy. In this context, and in the attempt to build a strong basis for the power of communists, antifascism, exile, and Resistance were not the only keywords. The local level was also a fundamental part of the strategy, and Togliatti knew that. With this in mind, the long-term secretary of the PCI (1927-34; 1938-64) delivered his famous speech *Ceto medio e Emilia Rossa* (“Middle class and Red Emilia”), at the municipal theatre of Reggio Emilia on September 24, 1946. The occasion was the electoral success that the PCI had experienced in Emilia at the first postwar administrative elections. In that speech, Togliatti expressed evaluations on the origins, the strength and ultimately the defeat of the Emilian reformist socialism

⁵³⁸ As suggested in the introduction and some essays of the otherwise valuable work: De Maria, quote at p. 21.

⁵³⁹ Luca Baldissara, *Tecnica e Politica Nell'amministrazione. Saggio Sulle Culture Amministrative e Di Governo Municipale Tra Anni Trenta e Anni Cinquanta* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1998).

against of Fascism, on the reconstruction of the PCI as a mass party and a middle-class oriented “new party” (*partito nuovo*) after the Liberation struggle, and on the ideal and political conquest of the “Italian and democratic way to socialism”. In so doing, he identified the historical roots of the electoral success in Emilia-Romagna in the strong socialist movement that, between the 19th and the 20th Century, had been able to channel the population in leagues, cooperatives, labor unions, sections related to the Socialist party. That socialist hegemony after World War II became, simply, a communist hegemony, with the strategic aim of rejoining the working class under the organization of the PCI.⁵⁴⁰ He did not mention the historical opposition between communists and reformists, which led to the creation of the PCI itself in 1921, and he gave more relevance to the successes of reformism, rather than to its limits (the choice of compromise over revolution, for instance). Such an interpretation has been channeled and reinforced by the party as a founding element of its identity, becoming very prominent in the context of the postwar PCI tradition. This, I believe, also played a role in the scientific and historiographical interpretation of the “Emilian model”, or of the “red Emilia”, which has long been studied as a prerogative of communist researchers or, since the 1990s, by researchers close to the heirs of the communist party. Therefore, if on the one hand some elements of those prewar experiences can be found in the postwar administrations, there is a myth of a (too) strong continuity, also built upon the reuse of a political interpretation, that, in my view, needs to be mitigated.⁵⁴¹ What happened, to use the words of Luca Baldissara, is that the communist administrators recalled the municipal socialist tradition by reinterpreting it against the backdrop of constitutional provisions. The real heritage of municipal socialism was the «enlargement of the areas of action of the liberal municipality», which opened the way to a strong conception of the «municipalities as institutional organisms»⁵⁴² «with functions that went beyond the traditional ones of the Italian municipality».⁵⁴³

A similar process occurred in Tuscany, although on the basis of different premises and political preconditions.⁵⁴⁴ Starting from the end – the birth of the administrative region was an important benchmark for Tuscany, as it represented the crystallization of previous postwar tendencies: the attention towards citizens’ well-being, with a bottom-up welfare, and the choice of

⁵⁴⁰ Palmiro Togliatti, *Ceto Medio e Emilia Rossa: Discorso Pronunciato a Reggio Emilia* (Roma: Stab. Tip. U.E.S.I.S.A., 1948).

⁵⁴¹ For all these reflections on continuities and discontinuities, I am indebted to many, fruitful discussions with the participants to the research group “Storia contemporanea”, held and organized by the *Fondazione Gramsci Emilia-Romagna* in Bologna.

⁵⁴² Both references come from Baldissara, “Il Comune Nello Sviluppo Della Città.”, p. 13.

⁵⁴³ Speech by Paolo Fortunati, Local Council of Bologna of January 5, 1951, in *Atti del Consiglio comunale di Bologna (ACC)*, 1951, p. 17, quoted in Baldissara., p. 13.

⁵⁴⁴ I thank Pietro Causarano for his help on the Tuscan case and for his ideas, which were of great inspiration for my work.

administrating through local bodies, connected to the idea of the principle of autonomy.⁵⁴⁵ As for Emilia-Romagna, in Tuscany a series of new policies had been realized on the local level, especially during the 1960s, through the use of deficit spending. Those policies were meant to be distributive and collective-oriented, and particularly located in the fields of culture, education and social assistance.⁵⁴⁶ Again, similarly to its neighbor region, the political-administrative identity of Tuscany was rooted in the nexus between antifascism and anti-centralism, which permeated the years between Resistance and reconstruction; and in the 1960s debate, where urban and economic planning, welfare, social assistance, and school and sanitary assistance became considerable issues to be developed against the backdrop of the new possibilities opened by the Center-left cabinets.⁵⁴⁷ Here, too, these aspects of autonomy and social development were connected to a level of appreciation towards the communist party and communist-ruled administrations which remained very high until 1989, with medium values close to 50%, and even peaks of 70% in certain areas.⁵⁴⁸ Achille Conti has highlighted that the communist line in the occasion of the first regional elections can be summed up following two formulas. On the one hand, Tuscany was presented as “antifascist region”, building upon the strength of the antifascist movement but also consciously “forgetting” that it also had been one of the main core areas in Italy in which Fascism had developed. On the other, it was described as an “open region”, an institution that kept its bonds and its openness towards municipalities, labor unions, cooperatives, and towards the community in general.⁵⁴⁹

These were the keywords that defined the local communist power, not only on the regional level, but also in the municipalities and provinces. However, the political power also relied upon a peculiar crystallization, in the immediate postwar, of specific economic conditions. If we are to analyze their premises, then we have to look at *sharecropping*, an institution that was absolutely dominating as a form of farming contract, still at the end of World War II, constituting almost a symbol of the region.⁵⁵⁰ In the long-term, sharecropping can be identified as the origin of the Tuscan industrial development and a continuity element all through the 20th Century.⁵⁵¹ In this case, too there

⁵⁴⁵ Michela Manetti, “Poteri e Strumenti Del Governo Regionale,” in *Alle Origini Del Governo Regionale: Culture, Istituzioni, Politiche in Toscana*, ed. Simone Neri Serneri (Roma: Carocci, 2004), 55–68., p. 55.

⁵⁴⁶ Degl’Innocenti, L’ente regionale e l’identità della Toscana, in Neri Serneri, *Alle Origini Del Governo Regionale.*, p. 34.

⁵⁴⁷ Neri Serneri., p. 14.

⁵⁴⁸ Franco Andreucci and Alessandra Pescarolo, eds., *Gli Spazi Del Potere. Aree, Regioni, Stati: Le Coordinate Territoriali Della Storia Contemporanea* (Firenze: La Casa Usher, 1989)., p. 127.

⁵⁴⁹ Achille Conti, *Dirigenti Comunisti. Reclutamento, Selezione e Formazione in Una Regione Rossa (1945-1991)* (Roma: Carocci, 2017)., p. 147.

⁵⁵⁰ Pier Luigi Ballini, Maurizio Degl’Innocenti, and Mario G. Rossi, eds., *Il Tempo Della Regione. La Toscana* (Firenze: Giunti, 2009)., p. 15.

⁵⁵¹ Leonardo Paggi and Massimo D’Angelillo, *I Comunisti Italiani e Il Riformismo. Un Confronto Con Le Socialdemocrazie Europee* (Torino: Einaudi, 1986)., p. 193.

has been a long-term intercommunication between the political and the economic sphere: the socialist tradition before, and the communist one afterwards have adapted themselves to new conditions, representing the «ideological and organizational cement» for the sharecroppers before, and for the workers of a more industrialized society afterwards. This tendency had remained as it ended up representing not only sharecroppers, but the local society as a whole.⁵⁵² Giacomo Becattini has written about a «complex and contradictory nature» of sharecropping, which would have represented a prerequisite for Tuscan postwar development.⁵⁵³ By stating this, he meant that sharecropping was not totally alien and incompatible with the capitalistic system, it was not only some old-fashioned system connected to traditional agriculture. It was highly productive and at the same time an institution which facilitated socialization among the farmers and thus the creation of a collective conscience –⁵⁵⁴ something which was beneficial to communist administrators, too. As such – as a structure oriented towards production and exchange – it was, in his opinion, already prepared for the shift to a light industrialization.⁵⁵⁵

A second element that Becattini identifies as a prerequisite for development is the existence of some preliminary stages of industrial development in the region, which partially mixed with the presence of a series of newborn medium-small enterprises. These last ones were launched on the international market, although often through commerce intermediaries. This, however, allowed them to place small and diversified products on the big market, thus expanding – in the 1960 especially – the exports towards other regions or countries abroad.⁵⁵⁶ Medium-small factories were mostly located in the provinces of Florence, Pistoia, Lucca, Pisa, Siena and partly Arezzo, while Grosseto remained largely agricultural. Massa and Livorno were instead more oriented towards big factories.⁵⁵⁷ In Livorno, important port town, the economic and industrial development was not immediate, as the harbor, just as the whole town, had been massively destroyed during the Second world war, both by Allied bombings and by German troops in retreat in 1945. The reconstruction works had started early in 1946 but continued for decades before the structure regained complete functionality and commercial capacity. A turning point occurred in 1966, year in which the port company (*Compagnia portuale*) proposed to operate a broadening of the structure. The reconstruction, however, only started

⁵⁵² Arnaldo Bagnasco, “Le Classi e La Formazione Sociale Regionale,” in *La Toscana. Storia d’Italia. Le Regioni Dall’Unità a Oggi*, ed. Giorgio Mori (Torino: Einaudi, 1986), 735–68., p. 756.

⁵⁵³ Giacomo Becattini, “Riflessioni Sullo Sviluppo Socio-Economico Della Toscana in Questo Dopoguerra,” in *La Toscana. Storia d’Italia. Le Regioni Dall’Unità a Oggi*, ed. Giorgio Mori (Torino: Einaudi, 1986), 901–24., p- 901., p. 917.

⁵⁵⁴ Ivi, p. 907.

⁵⁵⁵ Ivi, p. 909.

⁵⁵⁶ Becattini.

⁵⁵⁷ Bagnasco, “Le Classi.”, p. 745.

in the 1970s, with the realization of the *Darsena Toscana*, a big boatshed which quickly led to the establishment of the port as a call for the transportation of containers.⁵⁵⁸ However, the presence itself of the port in Livorno enabled the growth of big enterprises, and consequently a massive boost of factory workers. The significant number of workers, and the typology of work – often largely standardized – they were assigned, determined the structuration of an industrial culture, which – as in many other similar cases – implied the tendency express interests in a collective form.⁵⁵⁹ Beyond factories, there was a high percentage of workers in the service sector, and some tourism, although that did not automatically imply the existence of a substantial middle-class.⁵⁶⁰

If we keep following Becattini's thoughts, then, the new face of postwar Tuscany was defined by the presence of an urbanized countryside, lightly industrialized, and by the coexistence of tourism and big factories in coastal areas.⁵⁶¹ Third and last element he employed, in order to explain the reason why the postwar development was facilitated, is the strong tradition of relations with foreign countries, on the level of culture, tourism and commerce. This is a very important point and it is in this context that the friendly relations and the twinning between Livorno and Rostock are to be located, both being harbor cities with a deep culture of exchange.⁵⁶²

The issue of connections with the prewar reformist experiences, which has been faced with reference to Emilia-Romagna, played a role here, too. In Tuscany, the ruling class of the prewar socialist party strongly defended local autonomies and fostered municipalism. Mario Caciagli has highlighted the double interpretation that can be given to such municipalism. On the one hand, it can be seen as the expression of real necessities, namely the defense of the community (which also included artisans and little enterprises) threatened by the State and by the capitalistic market; on the other hand, it produced an alternative ideology and culture. These elements, which were at the core of the Tuscan red subculture, did not reemerge automatically: it would be better to affirm that they were consciously re-established in the post-fascist period. Those values (“solidarism, egalitarianism, internationalism”) and structures (*case del popolo*, “people's houses”; *camere del lavoro*, “labor unions”; and red municipalities) were recovered and used to build a successful administrative model,⁵⁶³ in the light of these socio-economic aspects and mutations already emphasized by Becattini.

⁵⁵⁸ Vittorio Marchi, *Un Porto Europeo Ed Intercontinentale in Toscana* (Livorno: Nuova Fortezza, 1984)., p. 281.

⁵⁵⁹ Bagnasco, “Le Classi.”, p. 745.

⁵⁶⁰ Ivi, p. 746.

⁵⁶¹ Becattini, “Riflessioni.”, p. 917.

⁵⁶² Ivi, p. 901.

⁵⁶³ Mario Caciagli, “Tra Internazionalismo e Localismo: L'area Rossa,” *Meridiana*, *Questione settentrionale*, 16 (January 1993): 81–98., p. 85.

Communist administrators and politicians managed to successfully lead all these agricultural and industrial processes and to guide the economic changes of the region in the postwar period. Furthermore, similarly to what was happening in Emilia-Romagna, communists also directed and potentiated the implementations related to citizens' services. This necessity also stemmed from the urbanization process. As Caciagli, again, has pointed out, the economic development was successful as the ruling class had been able to maneuver the instruments of local government.⁵⁶⁴ Communal and provincial administrations had limited capacities, both towards the state and towards economic power; however, they managed to impress their own ideas in certain aspects. One of their instruments were, for instance, study offices of provincial administrations, which had the aim of facing the problems of urbanization and economic development on a level which went beyond the single municipalities.⁵⁶⁵ Despite the intensity of their action, which was oftentimes depowered by external limitations, communists were capable of *governing development* and creating diffused well-being. This was at the basis of their electoral success; and by the end of the 1970s, Tuscany was the region with the highest quote of public services on a local basis.⁵⁶⁶

Communist government in a politically inhomogeneous territory: Piedmont and Turin

È uno dei molti paradossi del Pci che il Nord-Ovest industriale, l'area più semplice da analizzare usando i classici criteri marxisti, si sia rivelata la più ambigua nei termini di una adeguata valutazione politica dello stato del partito e del suo rapporto con la società. Tale discrepanza si può in parte attribuire alle peculiarità del "partito nuovo" che, pur essendo apparentemente un modello destinato ad un ambiente capitalistico avanzato, in realtà è giunto vicino alla sua realizzazione solo nelle zone rosse, periferiche dal punto di vista industriale ed eccezionali da quello politico.⁵⁶⁷

The Italian Communist Party was the party of the working class, and nevertheless, right in those North-West industrial areas in which it should have received a higher consent and electoral success, it did not. Stephen Hellman's quote emphasizes the paradox of an industrially advanced area which would have been the ideal cradle for the development and the success of a Marxist party, against the backdrop of Togliatti's conception of *partito nuovo*, but which de facto never managed to reach a consistent realization, differently from Tuscany and Emilia, where the peripheric industrial

⁵⁶⁴ Caciagli, p. 83.

⁵⁶⁵ Lando Bortolotti, "L'evoluzione Del Territorio," in *La Toscana. Storia d'Italia. Le Regioni Dall'Unità a Oggi*, ed. Giorgio Mori (Torino: Einaudi, 1986), 773–820.

⁵⁶⁶ See Mariella Volpe, "I Servizi Pubblici Del Comune," *Politica e Economia* 10 (1983): 38–43., quoted in Giacomo Becattini and Luigi Burroni, "Istituzioni e Sviluppo Locale in Toscana Dalla Guerra All'istituzione Della Regione," in *Il Tempo Della Regione. La Toscana*, ed. Pier Luigi Ballini, Maurizio Degl'Innocenti, and Mario G. Rossi (Firenze: Giunti, 2009). p. 28.

⁵⁶⁷ Stephen Hellman, "Militanti e Politica Nel Triangolo Industriale," in *L'identità Comunista. I Militanti, La Struttura, La Cultura Del Pci*, ed. Aris Accornero, Renato Mannheimer, and Chiara Sebastiani (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1983), 385–432., p. 385.

positioning was permeated with an exceptional political presence which had developed over time. Piedmont as a whole did not have such a background, although, undoubtedly, Turin – industrial town which hosted FIAT and many other factories – had a glorious tradition in terms of revolutionary experiences, so much that more recent scholarship has highlighted the partiality or at least the incompleteness of Hellman’s explanation about the PCI’s shortcomings in the North West, in the case of Turin.⁵⁶⁸ That was the town where Antonio Gramsci had studied and lived for many years, where the first pages of the journal “L’Ordine nuovo” were published, and work councils (*consigli di fabbrica*) in the factories were started, thanks to Gramsci’s guidance but also to the presence of a solid and politicized group of workers. Those experiences dated back to the so-called *biennio rosso* (1919-1921), two “red” years in which the factory workers revolted against their factory owners and started a brief, but significant experience of self-government, ending up, in connection with other, broader processes, with the foundation of the Italian PCI, in 1921.⁵⁶⁹ After World War II, Turin remained – in the collective imagery, but also in Togliatti’s view – a benchmark for the Italian working class. It kept being exemplary «in its workerism, in the tenacity and the stubbornness towards the employers’ suppression, in the cycles of struggles and conflict, increasingly difficult to support and combine with the social transformations».⁵⁷⁰ However, the necessity of the party was to reorganize those meaningful, but disordered experiences in a more organic way, also at a local and grassroots level.⁵⁷¹ This did not seem to happen until the 1960s. The PCI seems to have been characterized, from an organizational point of view, by «weakness», «discontinuity» and «vagueness», despite the significant expansion of FIAT and other factories starting from the 1950s, together with the massive amount of workers experiencing an internal migration and coming from all over the Italian regions, especially from the South.⁵⁷² What was missing for the completeness of the power of the local PCI, as recently underlined by Bruno Maida in the introduction to the collective volume *Alla ricerca della simmetria*, was the bond between those identity experiences and the administrative project of the communists in the postwar period, in the context of the *partito nuovo*, which gave origin to a complex and partly contradictory scenario. The element which, in Maida’s opinion, is to be grasped in all the essays, contributions and topics of the volume is one that «seems

⁵⁶⁸ Maida, *Alla Ricerca Della Simmetria*., p. XXXVII.

⁵⁶⁹ A first contribution on the political history of Turinese communism from 1919 until the 1970s is contained in the collection of essays and speeches collected in 1973 and then published in A.A.V.V., *I Comunisti a Torino, 1919-1972: Lezioni e Testimonianze* (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1974).

⁵⁷⁰ Maida, *Alla Ricerca Della Simmetria*., p. XIX.

⁵⁷¹ Fiammetta Balestracci, “Militanti e Vita Di Base Del Pci: Il Partito Delle Sezioni. 1945-1989,” in *Alla Ricerca Della Simmetria: Il PCI a Torino, 1945-1991*, ed. Bruno Maida (Torino: Rosenberg & Sellier, 2004), 3–61., p. 4.

⁵⁷² Michelangela Di Giacomo, “Pci e Migrazioni Interne Nella Torino Del ‘Miracolo,’” *Diacronie [Online]* 9, no. 1 (2012): documento 3, <https://doi.org/10.4000/diacronie.2938>.

to cross the relation between the Communist party and the city, and namely the attempt to find a balance between the tension of utopia and the practice of militance». This would happen because of an underestimation of self-criticism, in the conviction that the balance could have been possible just with organizational modifications or more commitment after defeats.⁵⁷³

In this immediate postwar period, the general weakness of the PCI was detectable in Turin, paradoxically, but also in many areas of the countryside. There, people were mostly employed as farmers, as particularly visible when looking at the *sezioni* (local party cells).⁵⁷⁴ They had little to share with the factory workers and their social and political background and necessities. In those areas, in the immediate postwar, they probably felt that their interests could be better defended and advocated for by the Christian Democracy than by the PCI. However, the territorial and social differences alone are not sufficient to explain the shortcomings of the party in promoting a dialogue between social parts and in governing socio-economic processes at that time. One explanatory element is perhaps the not always successful organizational choices of the party and the labor unions, as suggested by Stephen Hellman.⁵⁷⁵ More recently, Vincenzo Santangelo has argued that, until the 1960s, the PCI had a substantial disinterest towards the provincial areas.⁵⁷⁶ To this, Daniela Adorni has added that Piedmonts' communists probably did not have a strong interest in the municipality as an institution.⁵⁷⁷

Things began to change between the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s. At the national level, this process was reinforced by the wave of institutional affirmation of the local spheres, both municipalities and Provinces, inserted in the process for the implementation of regions. At the local level, the 9th provincial congress of the PCI in Turin in 1956 marked a turning point in the conception of administration in the area. On that occasion, administrators and politicians stated the political will to reduce the party's gap in facing economic development, by according more and more attention to the modifications produced by internal migration on the town and by producing proposals and solutions for the integration of the new population in Turin's productive and social fabric.⁵⁷⁸ Starting from there, communists also began to feel the need to activate an intermunicipal regulating plan on industrial localization and urban planning, for instance, and to foster public transport also in

⁵⁷³ See Maida, *Alla Ricerca Della Simmetria*.

⁵⁷⁴ Balestracci, "Militanti e Vita Di Base Del Pci: Il Partito Delle Sezioni. 1945-1989.", p. 5.

⁵⁷⁵ Hellman, "Militanti e Politica Nel Triangolo Industriale.", p. 387.

⁵⁷⁶ Vincenzo Santangelo, "Amministratori, Funzionari Di Partito e Quadri Dirigenti: Il Pci a Torino e in Provincia. 1946-1970," in *Alla Ricerca Della Simmetria. Il Pci a Torino 1945/1991*, ed. Bruno Maida (Torino: Rosenberg & Sellier, 2004), 63–166.

⁵⁷⁷ Daniela Adorni, "Due Passi Avanti e Uno Indietro: La Formazione Di Una Cultura Amministrativa Nel Pci Torinese (1945-1965)," in *Alla Ricerca Della Simmetria: Il Pci a Torino, 1945-1991*, ed. Bruno Maida (Torino: Rosenberg & Sellier, 2004), p. 168.

⁵⁷⁸ Di Giacomo, "Pci e Migrazioni Interne."

connection with the municipality of Turin's industrial belt (such as Collegno and Grugliasco).⁵⁷⁹ Therefore, it is not that an awareness about the centrality of the local government's regulating power did not *at all* come into practice in Piedmont and Turin, but that happened later in relation to Tuscany and Emilia, where the governing program and the centrality of autonomy and of the municipalities had been clearly decided and put into practice, despite limitations from the central state, ever since the end of the war.⁵⁸⁰

The 1960s and 1970s, in this sense, were decades of improvement and new realizations. In Turin, for instance, many were the interventions and reforms on the communal and provincial level, which included schooling and education, battles for health and environment, assistance, housing, transportation, etc. As Aldo Agosti has highlighted, «the reforms made in Italy, extremely concrete even though they were conceived in a perspective of ideological alternance “to the system”, were these ones»: and they passed thanks to the commitment of the communist party and its basic cells, of the labor union and of the «galaxy of a left which was spread within society».⁵⁸¹

This attempt of adaptation to local specificities did not only take place in Turin, but also in the whole region. The PCI tried to orientate its action according to each single case. The configuration of the party from the postwar period until the mid-1970s in the other six federations of the region (Alessandria, Asti, Biella, Cuneo, Novara, and Verbania), beyond Turin, was complex and quite heterogeneous. A helpful tool for a discourse on the other federations has been made available by Cecilia Bergaglio, who has provided a sociographic panorama of the votes, numbers and social composition of the militants in all the provinces and federations of Piedmont.⁵⁸² Bergaglio's studies, through the use of the previously introduced categories of “red” and “white” territorial subcultures, facilitates keys to a reading about the relation between the party in terms of mere electoral force and its level of pervasiveness in the social sphere. The party, for instance, was well-rooted in the provinces of Alessandria and Verbania, and substantially absent in Cuneo.⁵⁸³ This is reflected in the composition and color of local administrations: quite leftist (socialist-communist) was Verbania; Alessandria long had only *socialist* mayors, whereas Cuneo was mostly Christian Democratic. Bergaglio has shown that in the province of Alessandria, and in the cities of Biella, Novara, Vercelli and Verbania, the balance between the number of votes and the number of party members until 1976 was comparable

⁵⁷⁹ Adorni, “Due Passi Avanti e Uno Indietro.”, pp. 170-171.

⁵⁸⁰ Ivi, pp. 171-172.

⁵⁸¹ Aldo Agosti, “Prefazione,” in *Alla Ricerca Della Simmetria: Il PCI a Torino, 1945-1991*, ed. Bruno Maida (Torino: Rosenberg & Sellier, 2004), IX–XIV., p. XI, XII.

⁵⁸² Cecilia Bergaglio, *Dai Campi e Dalle Officine: Il Partito Comunista in Piemonte Dalla Liberazione Al “Sorpasso”* (Torino: Edizioni SEB27, 2013).

⁵⁸³ Bergaglio., p. 184.

to the percentages of the “red areas”, whereas a wider gap between the two elements was visible in the provinces of Novara and Verbania, Torino and Vercelli. A considerable fluctuation was experienced by the municipality of Turin, which moved quite quickly from a communist political domination and high consent in the immediate postwar period to a consequent governance of DC and liberals starting from the beginning of the 1950s. The cities which were most assimilable to white areas, however, were Asti and Cuneo.

Against the backdrop of this political heterogeneity, an exception was represented, for instance, by some extremely leftist-oriented small municipalities in the Turin industrial belt, which had also been centers of the Resistance, such as – just to name two of them – Collegno and Grugliasco. Not casually Collegno was twinned with a town with the GDR, Neubrandenburg. In this case, it was not only about marking a political difference with the central state, but with the neighbor towns themselves. Here, the construction of the communist identity of such a small-sized town through the means of international contacts acquired even more meaning.

Overall, the reasons for this political non-cohesion can be related to three main elements. First, to the substantial lack of significant pre-WWI reformist administrative experiences, of a deeply rooted subculture, which – to use Hellman’s arguments – made «the possibilities of an early socialization» diminish.⁵⁸⁴ Second, to the peculiar nature of the PCI in Piedmont and Turin, more deeply related to the factory experience than to the world of farmers and peasants, as it was in Emilia-Romagna and Tuscany. The politicization had happened inside the factories and through the labor unions’ struggles. Differently from the red regions, which presented stronger party-society bonds, the *militance in labor unions* represented the political tradition of the industrial areas of Piedmont, as it was evident, too – although in very different circumstances – in the other, new big season of workers’ struggles in Turin at the end of the 1960s.⁵⁸⁵ Third and last, as it has been well highlighted for the case of Turin, a further motive can be identified in the gap the PCI had between utopia and militance. For all these reasons – and despite, for instance, the electoral success of communists in the regional elections later in 1975 – Piedmont as a whole cannot be defined as a homogeneous red region or subculture. The case study of Collegno was a little island in a complex region.

Collegno, Carpi, Modena, Reggio Emilia, Bologna, Livorno: the administrations of all these municipalities and Provinces were controlled in a large majority by communists. The decision to twin with Eastern Europe, and with the GDR, lied in their local governments being closed in the polarization between ordinary administration and their «symbolic-imaginary projection». This fueled

⁵⁸⁴ Hellman, “Militanti e Politica Nel Triangolo Industriale.”, pp. 402-403.

⁵⁸⁵ Ibidem.

an «intensely ideologized subculture» (derived by the Soviet myth), which was characterized by an isolation from the center of the state, in different intensities (visible in the reaffirming of the autonomy from the central state) and «crossed by universalistic tensions» (welfare).⁵⁸⁶

⁵⁸⁶ See the introduction in Mario Renosio, *Tra Mito Sovietico e Riformismo. Identità, Storia e Organizzazione Dei Comunisti Astigiani (1921-1975)* (Torino: Edizioni Gruppo Abele, 1999).

PART 3

Twinnings, knowledge exchange, transnational encounters

5. Sister cities across the Iron Curtain

By looking at the twinning official organization, and at the structures of communist local administrations in the two countries, we have seen that the mechanisms of the exchanges were controlled and governed so that they responded to the necessities of a broad and complex network. This network included the international, the national and the local levels, in a synergic, continuous communication. On the *international* level, the use of towns responded to the logic of conveying a certain idea of peace, so as to push détente from below in Europe and to be able to unblock commercial possibilities for both countries. On the *national* level, the towns acquired the meaning of counterparts of the central state (in Italy), or of their direct instruments, thought to guarantee control and consent (in the GDR). The *local* level, however, brings in my view an Italian specificity, and this is connected to the agency and decisional power that Italian red towns had, compared to their *pendants* in the GDR, which seem to be almost completely connected to the state and party strategy. In Italy, the twinings served in order to reinforce a specific, communist conception of local administration via international relations. That dimension represents the most central interpretative element, but in this chapter I am going to argue that it was not only a matter of *self-representation*. The twinings with the East, for Italian communist towns, acquired a broader symbolic meaning, that can be connected with the way pragmatical implementations took shape in the local contexts. This chapter will analyze (5.2) the *convergences* that took place both within local economies (5.2.1) and the fields connected to local welfare (5.2.2). Before entering these two core blocks, however, the actors and protagonists of the twinings will be introduced in 5.1: the ones who organized and guided the exchanges (the *administrators*), those who were involved, in many ways and intensities (the *activists and militants*), and those who made the contacts possible (the *connecting personalities*). In this section, the focus will be on the single personalities, their lives, and the meaning that personal bonds and stories had in the construction of these little bridges across the Iron Curtain in Europe, against the backdrop of different generations.

Section 5.2 is dedicated to *transnational convergences*, and thus to the fields in which the local administrations of the two countries found connections, connected both to contingencies and their common communist belonging. This part is conceived as strictly empirical: here I will discuss the materials that I have found in the communal archives and the opinions and memories that I have obtained from the oral interviews, to show how a dialogue was taking place between the two sides. With the exception of economy, which has been separated from the other fields, the strongest interest, looking at the sources, is detectable from the Italian side towards the GDR, rather than the opposite.

I will try to analyze such an interest, by deconstructing the language of the sources and the declarations of the interviews. 5.2.1 ad 5.2.2 are conceived as theoretical and interpretative paragraphs. After the discussion of the empirical materials, I will summarize the main interpretative points which emerged from the empirical analysis in 5.2.2.1. In this section, I will first touch upon the concept of *internationalism* and its particular meaning in Italy, in the historic juncture of the 1960s and 1970s and in particular against the backdrop of the 1968 watershed. Second, I will explore the idea of the *transversality* of the social question as a European issue, as a common field between East and West which seems – despite the different political-ideological and cultural conceptions of it – to represent a *trait d'union* across a divided Europe.

5.1 Transnational actors

Administrators

Leipzig, 1957. The card stored among the personal documents of Giuseppe Dozza, in the archives of the Gramsci Foundation in Bologna, shows the picture and the signature of Alfred Kurella. Together with the picture, some playful and friendly words are addressed to whom appears to be a close friend: to the «*signore sindaco*» Giuseppe Dozza – «personally» – so says the dedication on the card – from «the author, professor, director of the Institute for Literatur in Leipzig and president of the Permanent Commission for Cultural Affairs in the GDR (my God, how many titles!)»⁵⁸⁷ These few lines are accompanied by a greeting in Cyrillic: «Один комсомолец другому» (“From one member of the *Komsomol* to another”)⁵⁸⁸ Dozza and Kurella, apparently, had known each other for a long time, and they most probably first met when they both were based in Moscow, in the 1930s.

⁵⁸⁷ «Signore sindaco Giuseppe Dozza – personalmente –
Professore A. Kurella. Lipsia. Dohnaweg 5
Fotografia

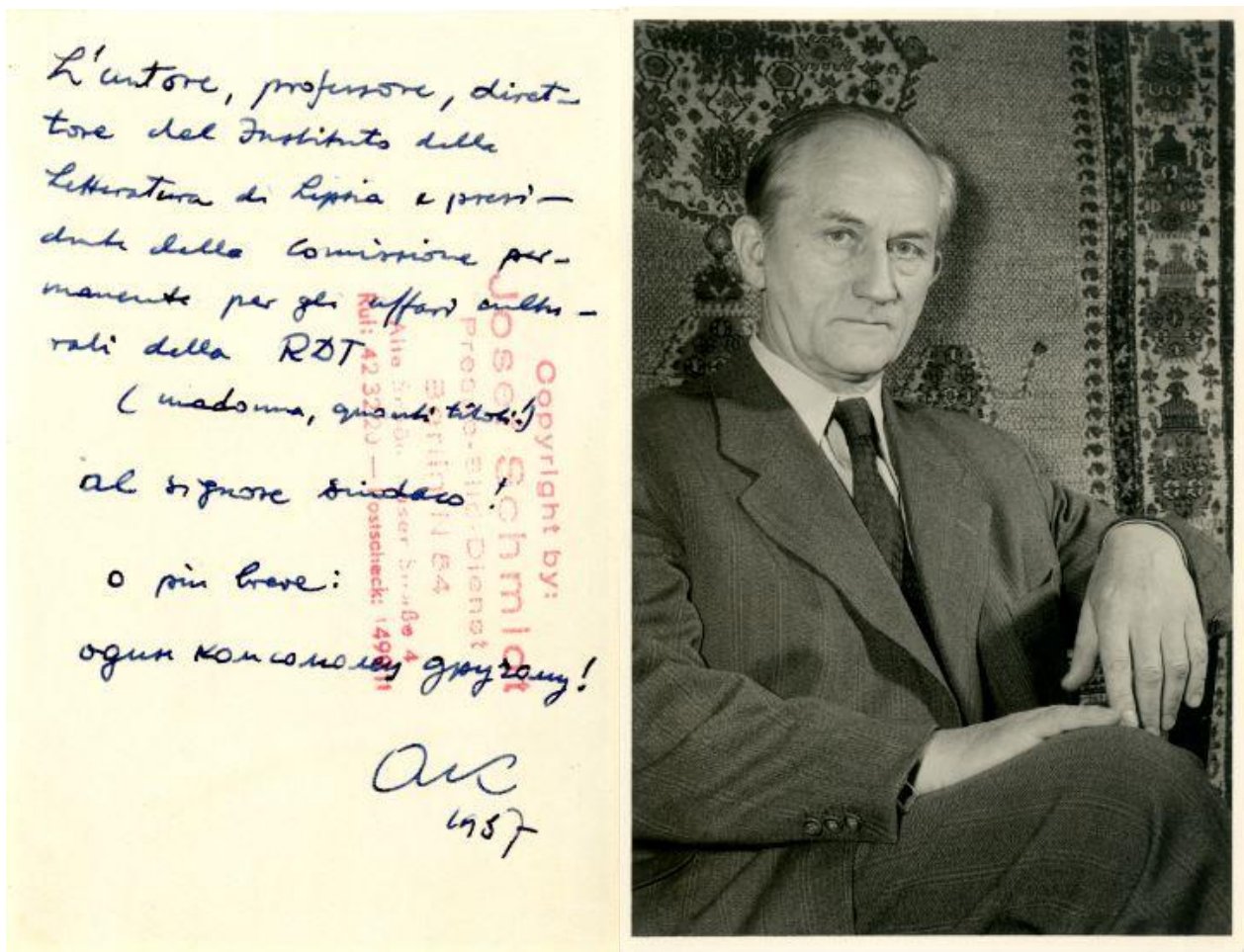
‘L’autore, professore, direttore del Istituto della letteratura di Lipsia e presidente della Commissione permanente per gli affari culturali della RDT (madonna, quanti titoli!)’

Al signore sindaco!

O più breve: Один комсомолец другом

AK 1957». See FIGEM, Fondo Dozza, *Cartolina di Alfred Kurella a Giuseppe Dozza*, 1957., b. 22, fasc. 159, doc. 1433.

⁵⁸⁸ Komsomol is the abbreviation for “All-Union Leninist Young Communist League”. I thank Kristina Barekryan for the translations from Russian.



FIGEM, Fondo Dozza, Cartolina di Alfred Kurella a Giuseppe Dozza, 1957., b. 22, fasc. 159, doc. 1433.

Dozza joined the PCI early in 1921, when it came into life after Livorno's congress, Kurella had done the same with the KPD in 1918. Both of them had then participated to the clandestine communist movement in France and in Italy (where Kurella had travelled to in the 1930s) and, in the postwar period, engaged in the political and social struggles of their countries, standing firmly, by the antifascist side, although in different contexts. Dozza had come back to Bologna during the Resistance and was then elected as mayor in 1945; Kurella had remained for a while in the Soviet Union, before entering the cultural hierarchies of East Germany when he returned to Leipzig, in 1954.⁵⁸⁹ What appears from their exchange is a strong personal bond, kept together by their common memories of exile and *Bildung* as communists.

This is a clear example of the way ties rooted in antifascism, exile and communist Resistance worked with reference to Italy and Germany, the countries which had experienced the dictatorships

⁵⁸⁹ For a biography of Dozza, see Luisa Lama, *Giuseppe Dozza. Storia Di Un Sindaco Comunista* (Reggio Emilia: Aliberti, 2007).; about the life of Kurella, see Peter Erler, "Kurella, Alfred," *Wer War Wer in Der DDR?* (Berlin: Links, 2010).; Hermann Weber and Andreas Herbst, "Deutsche Kommunisten. Biographisches Handbuch 1918 Bis 1945" (Berlin: Dietz, 2004).

of Nazism and Fascism, but that had also been crossed by strong, clandestine minorities, committed to the struggle against the two regimes. Probably after a first contact set by the mayor of Bologna,⁵⁹⁰ Kurella wrote in a personal letter, likewise sent in 1957, in an impressive Italian: «How could I ever forget the “Capanna Mora”?! Many times I have told [that story] to our sons, as well as to our young people, who do not know anymore what the illegal struggle against an almost almighty enemy means!».⁵⁹¹ The reference to these common struggles and to the Soviet Union as a place of political education and common belonging⁵⁹² were truly heartfelt and of major importance for those who had lived those experiences. Also, Kurella addressed Dozza as «my dearest friend Pippo», highlighting that *he, too* did not forget «the old surnames [!] of those times», namely the names used as partisans.⁵⁹³

During the postwar period, the two old friends became widely known in the antifascist environment of their home countries, committing to concretely putting what they had learnt, into practice – not without difficulties. So Kurella wrote, again, to Dozza: «[...] in the meantime, many things have happened. The struggle against the attempt of infiltration of the enemy through the ideological sector – struggle that we have been conducting since the XX Congress until today – has brought me down again [...]. In these conditions, I do not know if our plan of a new trip to Italy (so much loved!) could be realized soon. Anyway, it is good that we have re-established [our] contact». Kurella concluded by saying that he regularly read “L’Unità”, defining it «one of the best newspapers in our field, if not the best!» and “Il Contemporaneo”. He concluded by writing that however, in the GDR, he could not find «the books» written by «the friend» Gramsci, stating that he would have loved to know them, as he had «always had much admiration» for him.⁵⁹⁴ Kurella shows (in private,

⁵⁹⁰ However, I have not been able to find the first letter neither in Dozza’s documents, nor at the SAPMO archives in Berlin-Lichterfelde.

⁵⁹¹ «Come non ricordarmi della ‘Capanna Mora’?! Io ne ho raccontato tante volte ai propri figli come ai nostri giovani che non sanno più che cosa significa la lotta illegale contro un nemico quasi onnipotente!». FIGEM, Fondo Dozza, *Lettera di Alfred Kurella a Giuseppe Dozza, Lipsia, 26 ottobre 1957*, b.36, fasc. 246, doc. 2424.

⁵⁹² Dozza arrived in Moscow first in 1927. He arrived there by first entering the Italian socialist party in 1918, in the countryside of Bologna. Being a backer of Amadeo Bordiga and his revolutionary perspective, in 1921 he took part to the foundation of the PCI in Livorno. He became secretary of the Federation of the PCI in Bologna and in 1923 of its juvenile Federation. In 1926, at the congress of Lyon, he supported the faction of Antonio Gramsci. Many times was Dozza arrested from the Fascist police, and 1926 condemned to one year of prison. In 1927, as a “professional revolutionary”, he was sent to Moscow to represent the juvenile PCI Federation in the Communist international. After many movements between France, Spain, Moscow, and Paris, he came back to Italy and in Bologna between 1943 and 1944. See Sante Cruciani, “Giuseppe Dozza, Sindaco Di Bologna. La Rivoluzione Del Buongoverno,” in *Storie Di Sindaci per La Storia d’Italia*, by Oscar Gaspari, Rosario Forlenza, and Sante Cruciani (Roma: Donzelli, 2009), 145–56.

⁵⁹³ FIGEM, Fondo Dozza, *Lettera di Alfred Kurella a Giuseppe Dozza, Lipsia, 26 ottobre 1957*, b.36, fasc. 246, doc. 2424.

⁵⁹⁴ All the sentences quoted in these two paragraphs are my translations. For the original letter, see FIGEM, Fondo Dozza, *Lettera di Alfred Kurella a Giuseppe Dozza, Lipsia, 26 ottobre 1957*, b.36, fasc. 246, doc. 2424.

«Lipsia 26 X 57

Carissimo amico Pippo – (tu vedi che anch’io non ho dimenticato i vecchi cognomi di allora!)

La tua lettera mi ha fatto molto piacere. Come non ricordarmi della “Capanna Mora”? Io ne ho raccontato tante volte ai propri figli come ai nostri giovani chi non sanno più che cosa significa la lotta illegale contro un nemico quasi onnipotente!

to his friend) a peculiar interest towards the Italian cultural production and also towards Gramsci's work.⁵⁹⁵ It is difficult to understand whether that was only a statement of proximity because of Gramsci's centrality as a victim of Fascism, or if that sentence signaled a sincere interest in the somewhat creative Marxism of the Italian intellectual. However, the labeling of Gramsci as a «friend» could perhaps suggest that Kurella's personal interest – as a likewise communist intellectual – went beyond the superficial treatment to which he had been relegated by the East German scholars (see chapter 3, 3.3.1).

We do not know if the correspondence between the two proceeded, as I have not been able to find trace of further communication. However, these warm exchanges can help reflect on two aspects. Firstly, they are representative of the importance that this common struggle played for the

Nel frattempo si sono passate molte cose. La lotta contro le tentative d'una infiltrazione del nemico attraverso il settore ideologico – lotta che abbiamo condotto dal XX congresso fin da oggi – mi ha portato di nuovo in giù. La direzione del partito, cioè il 33 Plenum del CC. Mi ha nominato presidente d'una commissione per le affari culturali, costituita in dipendenza diretta del Politbureau, così che tutta l'opera del controllo e della direzione degli atti [enti?] ecc. ecc. cadde sulle mie spalle!

Puoi immaginarti la quantità, la difficoltà, la responsabilità di questo lavoro!

In queste condizioni non so se il nostro piano d'un nuovo viaggio nell'Italia (così amata!) potrà realizzarsi nei prossimi tempi!

In ogni caso è bene che abbiamo ristabilito il contatto. In una nuova lettera ti scriverò che specie di materiali mi occorrebbero; fin'oggi leggo regolarmente “L'Unità” (uno dei migliori giornali del nostro campo, se non il migliore!) ed il “Contemporaneo”. Ma noi non abbiamo nessuna possibilità di comprare qui dei libri italiani! E ce ne sono, che vorrei conoscere (non ho, per esempio nessuno dei libri del amico Gramsci, per cui ho sempre avuto tanta ammirazione!). [...] Auguri e saluti a tutti i compagni, propriamente a te!

Il tuo

Alfred Kurella [...]». See FIGEM, Fondo Dozza, *Lettera di Alfred Kurella a Giuseppe Dozza, Lipsia, 26 ottobre 1957*, b.36, fasc. 246, doc. 2424.

⁵⁹⁵ The thought and the publications of Gramsci, in general and also for the political education of militants, had not been spread in Italy until the early 1950s. In the reconstruction of the PCI structure in the postwar, Gramsci, creative Marxist thinker, did not respond to the necessities of a Soviet-modelled compact and strict political education. However, after those years – as highlighted by Anna Tonelli – a radical turn happened, motivated, in her view, by the PCI's need to represent both national and internationalist positions, or, differently said, to embody a national way to socialism with its peculiarities, and nevertheless keep a collocation in the frame of international communism. In this sense, Gramsci appeared to be strategically rediscovered by the party. Tonelli has recalled the so-called *operazione Gramsci* started in the 1950s – as Giovanni Gozzini and Renzo Martinelli have called it. Such operation included the publication of the *Prison Notebooks* and the divulgation of the other works. About the “Gramsci operation”, see Giovanni Gozzini and Renzo Martinelli, *Storia Del Partito Comunista Italiano*, vol. VII, Dall'attentato a Togliatti all'VIII congresso (Torino: Einaudi, 1998). For a reconstruction of the publication of Gramsci's works, see Albertina Vittoria, *Togliatti e Gli Intellettuali. La Politica Culturale Dei Comunisti Italiani (1944-1964)* (Roma: Carocci, 2014). Both books are quoted in Anna Tonelli, *A Scuola Di Politica. Il Modello Comunista Di Frattocchie (1944-1993)* (Bari-Roma: Laterza, 2017). On the PCI and the education of militants, also see Sandro Bellassai, “The Party as Schools and the Schools as Party. The Partito Comunista Italiano 1947-1956,” *Paedagogica Historica* 35, no. 1 (1999): 87–107. By 1957, the following works had been published: Antonio Gramsci, *Lettere Dal Carcere* (Torino: Einaudi, 1947) (but 119 new unpublished letters would have been added in the new edition, only in 1965). The first transcription of the *Prison Notebooks*, made by Felice Platone, was organized thematically in six volumes: Antonio Gramsci, *Il Materialismo Storico e La Filosofia Di Benedetto Croce* (Torino: Einaudi, 1948).; Antonio Gramsci, *Gli Intellettuali e l'organizzazione Della Cultura* (Torino: Einaudi, 1948).; Antonio Gramsci, *Il Risorgimento* (Torino: Einaudi, 1949).; Antonio Gramsci, *Note Sul Machiavelli Sulla Politica e Sullo Stato Moderno* (Torino: Einaudi, 1949).; Antonio Gramsci, *Letteratura e Vita Nazionale* (Torino: Einaudi, 1950).; Antonio Gramsci, *Passato e Presente* (Torino: Einaudi, 1951). The critical edition of the *Notebooks*, curated by Valentino Gerratana, would have appeared only in 1975, in the chronological order in which they had been written.

international élite of leftist, postwar administrators, politicians and party executives. Secondly, in addition, they probably represented one of the reasons why the municipal contacts between Bologna and Leipzig first started, as a surrogate of normal diplomatic conditions and as a facilitated way to create a bridge across the Iron Curtain.

This last idea is reinforced by a letter likewise found among the personal Dozza documents, sent by Manfred Martin, member of the Leipzig's municipal council (*Rat der Stadt*) and which mentions a trip that Dozza would have made – probably through Kurella, together with his wife and the «Crocioni family» – to the East German city in a time span between 1957 and 1958.⁵⁹⁶ The language appears different here. The communication had become more formal. Martin explained the transformations experienced by the town administrations in the GDR in the previous months, which also touched Leipzig: the centralization and consequent reinforcement of the planning commissions; the plan of building thousands of new houses; and the will to increase the social-communal industry production of 10%. He then thanked Dozza «for the transmission of the publications related to life in the Bologna municipality», stating that many points were «of interest for [them], too». At the bottom of the letter, there was space for a note of disappointment: the football match between the two town teams had pitifully not been performed – maybe a new occasion for a game, suggested Martin, could have been a meeting at the Leipzig Fair in September 1958.⁵⁹⁷ Football appears to have been a way of justifying the proposal of a political meeting.

Since the early 1960s, as shown in the previous chapters, the correspondence became more stable and official and the principal interlocutor for Dozza was the mayor of Leipzig, Walter Kresse.⁵⁹⁸ Kresse was in many ways a relevant figure for municipal international contacts and for Bologna. First, he too came from a communist family and had experienced a troubled story: he was arrested in 1933 and sentenced to three years of prison, before entering the *Wehrmacht* and ending up being prisoner of war in North Africa. In 1946, he came back to his hometown Leipzig and entered the SED and the labor union. Second, he had studied economics and probably for this reason he had been proposed as mayor of Leipzig, one of the most important commercial points not only for East Germany, but for the whole of Europe. Third and last, Kresse was not only the mayor of Leipzig (from 1959 until 1970, year in which he resigned) but also the president of the *Deutsche Städte- und*

⁵⁹⁶ FIGEM, Fondo Dozza, *Lettera di Manfred Martin, Rat der Stadt Leipzig, Plankommission, a Giuseppe Dozza, 27 maggio 1958* [translated in Italian from German], b. 18, fasc. 128, doc. 1042.

⁵⁹⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁹⁸ FIGEM, Fondo Dozza, *Lettera di Walter Kresse, Oberbürgermeister von Leipzig, an Giuseppe Dozza, 7 aprile 1961*, b. 9, fasc. 70, doc. 535.

Gemeindetag (1963-1974) (see 3.1.1.) The latter was a strategic position in the context of transnational municipal relations.⁵⁹⁹

Sometimes personal relations, as in this case, preceded the actual settlement of the town twinning of many years; single bonds were often fundamental vehicles for bigger initiatives. The example of Bologna and Leipzig, and thus of Dozza, Kurella and Walter Kresse, however, is not the only one: similar stories can be narrated about the other case studies, where the single trajectories and interaction between the administrators represented the engines behind long-term relations.

The story of Horst Jonas, mayor of Neubrandenburg between 1963 and 1967, is exemplary in this sense. In contacting the mayor of Collegno Ruggero Bertotti for the first time via letter, Jonas pushed on the fact that Collegno was «one of the cities which bring the honorific title of “martyr city”» and drew Bertotti’s attention on the fact the he, too had spent ten years in Buchenwald, experiencing captivity and participating to the armed struggle within the camp and to its liberation, together with Italian Resistance fighters.⁶⁰⁰ That of Jonas became a little cult for the citizens of Collegno involved in the twinning, also due to this bond with the Italian resistance in the camp. Even if the occasions to meet in person had not been many, in the four years of Jonas’ mayorship, the admiration of the Piedmontese citizens towards him turned out to be very high, as shown by the celebrative note found in the communal archive of Collegno, where, on the occasion of Jonas’s death in 1967, he was mentioned as a decisive figure in the reconstruction of the town, and «his deep humanity for the serene and democratic development of the socialist development» was celebrated.⁶⁰¹ There is certainly a strong political reason behind this celebratory attitude. The emphasis on some elements of his biography, in a prosopography operation which was directed towards the legitimization of the success story of the international communist movement and, consequently, also of its Italian and East German branches. His life had been depicted by Italians as if every action was already destined to a certain conclusion – namely, the contribution to the socialist construction, and his central role as communist administrator of the “peasants’ and workers’ state”. Jonas started working very young in a textile factory, adhered to the socialist group, and then, in 1932, joined the communists in Leipzig. When Nazism came to power, he participated to the clandestine Resistance and was arrested in 1935, when he was only 21. He was put in jail, in the camp of Sachsenhausen; after that he arrived in Auschwitz, where he met his future wife, and was ultimately moved to Buchenwald, where he happened to know «our Giancarlo Pajetta», Italian, well-known national

⁵⁹⁹ See “Kresse, Walter,” *Wer War Wer in Der DDR?* (Berlin: Links, 2010).

⁶⁰⁰ ASCO, Gemellaggi, b. anni 60, fasc. “Nbg 2”, *Lettera di Horst Jonas a Ruggero Bertotti, 20 agosto 1965*.

⁶⁰¹ ASCO, Gemellaggi, b. anni 60, fasc. “Neubrandenburg delegazione agosto 1966”, *Nota in morte di Horst Jonas, s. d.*

communist leader.⁶⁰² Even before 1967, Jonas was in bad health conditions, due to the camp conditions, which had marked him permanently.⁶⁰³ Because of this, he had been intermittently substituted by Otto Kunze, already in 1965, and then, for a short time after his death, by Ilse Hoewe, later on Schweinberger.⁶⁰⁴ After that, since 1969 (and for a long time, until 1990), Heinz Hahn became *Oberbürgermeister* of the town.

The administrators of both sides had the political purposes of the twinings very clear, but those were not to be revealed publicly, so as to not unveil the real reasons behind those contacts and make them appear as if they were confined to a purely administrative dimension. Therefore, in writing to Otto Kunze, the mayor of Collegno Ruggero Bertotti mentioned the fact that he had to go to Milan and meet with the representative of the commercial export in the GDR, to organize their participation to the Leipzig fair (see 5.2.1). «For this [reason], too – he wrote – I find it appropriate to keep our contacts reserved, for the moment», adding that the «unanimous ratification of the town twinning act between our two cities [had already] been a big political success».⁶⁰⁵ Bertotti was born in 1917, from an Italian family emigrated in Switzerland. After spending some time in France, in 1938 he had come back to Italy, entering the Army and fighting in North Africa during 1943. He was kept in captivity in Algeria. After escaping, he reached France, where he got in contact with antifascist networks; he then moved to Switzerland and again to Italy in 1945. As a communist, he was mayor of Collegno for many years, from 1961 until 1975, holding responsibility for many reforms and political actions.⁶⁰⁶ According to Maurizio Drappella – a young son of a communist from Collegno in the 1960s, and later on a communist himself – Bertotti had a real soft spot for international town twinning – especially for the GDR, and was well received and respected by the East Germans.⁶⁰⁷ Everything that he made seemed to be conceived and presented as a political act: the massive construction of schools in the 1960s, despite constantly being on the edge of being denounced for «illegal building»; the absence, in the town, of the working double shift; the requisition of the Leumann cotton factory operated by Bertotti in 1972 after its closure, to avoid its transformation for speculative purposes. All these actions were presented by Drappella as strong political acts, which reinforced the communist nature of the municipality.⁶⁰⁸ International relations with Neubrandenburg were an important element

⁶⁰² Ibidem.

⁶⁰³ On Jonas's life, see Andreas Herbst, "Jonas, Horst," *Wer War Wer in Der DDR?* (Berlin: Links, 2010).

⁶⁰⁴ ASCO, Gemellaggi, b. anni 60, fasc. "Neubrandenburg delegazione 1968", *Ilse Schweinberger (Ilse Hoewe) a Ruggero Bertotti, 27 febbraio 1968*.

⁶⁰⁵ ASCO, Gemellaggi, b. anni 60, fasc. "Nbg 2", *Lettera del sindaco di Collegno Ruggero Bertotti al sindaco ad interim di Neubrandenburg Otto Kunze, 17 novembre 1965*.

⁶⁰⁶ *Profilo biografico: Ruggero Bertotti*, in Archos, Sistema integrato dei cataloghi d'archivio, Archivi della Resistenza e del '900: http://www.metarchivi.it/biografie/p_bio_vis.asp?id=677. Last visited on September 15, 2018.

⁶⁰⁷ Interview to Maurizio Drappella and Renato Spagnotto, Collegno, September 15, 2017.

⁶⁰⁸ Interview to Drappella and Spagnotto.

of this puzzle. Heinz Hahn himself, which I had the opportunity to interview in 2017, has described Ruggero Bertotti as a «pretty lively», «fast», «active» mayor, who «always wanted to know everything in detail».⁶⁰⁹

The case of another mayor, Bruno Losi from Carpi, can help us further elucidate the strong relevance of the personal and political sensibilities of the single administrators both in the local administrations' tasks, and in the organization and maintenance of international relations through municipalities.⁶¹⁰ Furthermore, Losi's case, and the memory of his activity, can provide some hints on the idealization and the judgment of the Eastern bloc countries in the 1960s and 1970s; plus, it highlights the centrality of personal (transnational) life stories and episodes in the construction of political identities and, indirectly, also of political consent. All these elements emerge from a speech delivered for the occasion of a commemoration of Losi in the local council of Carpi, ten years after his death, in 1988.⁶¹¹

On that occasion, the at that time likewise communist mayor of Carpi Claudio Bergianti emphasized the «*topic*⁶¹² of the personal contribution of Losi, characterized by a pragmatic style, oriented towards the concrete and timely solution of problems», noting that the local productive system that had been erected primarily thanks to Losi's initiative and that of his social-communist council, in the 1950s and 1960s, had to a large extent shaped the city and its economic structure.⁶¹³ Even if these judgments came from a communist, it is still noteworthy to realize that Bergianti described the personal contribution of Losi as a *topic* in itself, suggesting that his attitude and initiative mattered significantly for the town's development. His positive judgment, however, was replicated by political opponents in the local council. The socialist council member Nino Santachiara, for instance, praised the good relation and mediation capacity that Losi showed towards other political forces – but, most of all, he acclaimed what he called the «international Bruno Losi»:

Il Bruno Losi “Internazionale” era veramente imbattibile ed inimitabile. Con alcuni altri Sindaci italiani, fondò l'Associazione delle “Città gemellate”. In piena guerra fredda, quando si era dei cittadini clandestini e si correva il rischio di vedersi ritirare il passaporto, riuscì a gemellare Carpi con Wernigerode, inviando centinaia di migliaia di carpigiani, in quella graziosa ma un po' cupa città della Repubblica Democratica Tedesca in cui, alle otto di sera bisognava, almeno ai tempi di Bruno Losi, essere a letto. Del resto è nota a Carpi la storiella (non tanto lontana dalla realtà): “Sono di più i carpigiani

⁶⁰⁹ Interview to Heinz Hahn, Neubrandenburg, May 16, 2017.

⁶¹⁰ On Losi's life, see Archivio storico comunale di Carpi (from now on ASCC), fondo Bruno Losi, Note biografiche: http://www.palazzodeipio.it/carpi/allegati/archivio%20losi_cenni%20storici.pdf. Also see Luciana Bedogni, “Il Fondo Bruno Losi Presso l'Archivio Comunale Di Carpi,” in *Atti Della Seduta Straordinaria Del Consiglio Comunale Nel Decimo Anniversario Della Scomparsa Di Bruno Losi (Carpi, 27 Febbraio 1988)* (Carpi, 1991).

⁶¹¹ ASCC, Consiglio comunale 14 gennaio-17 marzo 1988, *Verbale n. 283 del 27.02.1988. Oggetto: Commemorazione di Bruno Losi – Sindaco di Carpi dal 1945 al 1970 Anniversario della scomparsa.*

⁶¹² Italics mine.

⁶¹³ ASCC, Consiglio comunale 14 gennaio-17 marzo 1988, *Verbale n. 283 del 27.02.1988. Oggetto: Commemorazione di Bruno Losi – Sindaco di Carpi dal 1945 al 1970 Anniversario della scomparsa.*

che sono andati a Wernigerode di quelli che sono rimasti a casa”. Il suo frenetico attivismo in questa direzione lo ha portato inoltre a stringere gemellaggi con una città della Francia, con una dell’Algeria, presto dimenticata, senza riuscire però a realizzare il suo autentico sogno che era quello di gemellare Carpi con una città di quella che Bruno Losi ha sempre chiamato semplicemente Russia.⁶¹⁴

As previously highlighted for Bertotti, Losi was among the founders of the twin town movement in Italy and strongly believed in these bonds, showing an attitude that Santachiara described as «hectic activism» in that direction and especially towards the East, although he had never been able to realize his dream of establishing a twinning with a town of the Soviet Union. The way of saying «The Carpi citizens who went to Wernigerode are more than the ones who stayed at home» was familiar in the Emilian center, and it designated a situation which was really not so far from the truth, as dozens of delegations had visited East Germany during the 1960s and 1970s. Municipal internationalism, for Carpi, was thus a constitutive element of the administrative program, strongly sustained by the mayor himself.

Santachiara also recalled personal memories which can help identify the issue of communist faith and utopia and their persistence even during the late Cold War and in a period – after 1956 – of disillusion towards the Soviet power within the communist movement. The at the time young socialist council member had travelled to Czechoslovakia with Losi in 1959. The two of them had joined a group of Italian partisans. «I slept with him, and I remember the long discussions on socialism, his unwavering faith on an imaginary welfare society based on communism». In Santachiara’s memory, even in those years, after Krusciov’s condemnation of Stalin’s crimes, and in front of the increasing circulation of news about the executions of communist leaders in the popular democracies (as for Rudolf Slanky’s process in 1953),⁶¹⁵ Losi simply did not question anything. Santachiara remembered that, to his surprise, in front of all that Bruno Losi, who was not «the new guy, but the mayor of an important Italian city, a senior leader of the PCI, was not even remotely touched by doubt: if those things had happened, there had to be a reason, as the Party was above suspicion». The young socialist concluded his memory by saying that he «never really understood if this was really what he thought, or if that was a way, [...] well disguised, of not leaking out anything of what he actually thought deep inside and in his conscience», but that he admired Losi too much to believe that he was not at least able to grasp what was happening in the East.⁶¹⁶ The Christian-Democratic MP Vittorino Carra likewise applauded Losi’s capacity to distinguish between his role in the PCI and his administrative

⁶¹⁴ Ibidem.

⁶¹⁵ A show trial through which Slansky and other thirteen leaders of the Czech Communist party were imprisoned for life, accused to be Titoists and Trozkyists. On the process, see Vojtech Mastny, *The Cold War and Soviet Insecurity. The Stalin Years* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

⁶¹⁶ ASCC, Consiglio comunale 14 gennaio-17 marzo 1988, *Verbale n. 283 del 27.02.1988. Oggetto: Commemorazione di Bruno Losi – Sindaco di Carpi dal 1945 al 1970 Anniversario della scomparsa.*

tasks as a mayor, although – he pointed out – he utilized «every possible occasion to confirm and enlarge the consent towards the party of which he was an expression of». Carra's memories, as in Santachiara's case, offer a precious instrument to obtain a glance from outside towards the level of political commitment of the administrator Losi and his conception not only of politics, but also of the *role of politics in local administration*. For Losi, from Carra's perspective, the only occasion in which Losi changed his mind was when the Central Committee modified its position, as he was convinced that «the Party was an instrument above everything, irreplaceable to pursue the aims he believed in». In addition to Santachiara's point, he specified that in his opinion Bruno Losi, in *in his last years as administrator*, thought that

posizioni assunte o realtà magre conseguite nei Paesi dell'Est non potevano essere pensate come esempio per noi [...] [e che] la critica nei confronti di quelle realtà avrebbe potuto indebolire lo strumento solo attraverso il quale Lui riteneva la società italiana, quindi anche la comunità carpigiana, avrebbe potuto raggiungere un diverso livello. [...] nella parte del superamento del consolidarsi della democrazia italiana, anche nelle attività economiche, nella valutazione complessiva che il muoversi della realtà avrebbe creato occasioni positive e favorevoli per tutti, non credo abbia potuto conservare la convinzione che era meglio il sistema di Wernigerode o il sistema della Polonia, della Romania, dell'Unione Sovietica rispetto al sistema economico installatosi nel nostro paese. Credo che sia mancata la critica in Lui ed in altri di determinate posizioni perché quella poteva indebolire quella forza che Lui riteneva insostituibile perché la Società cambiasse in meglio.⁶¹⁷

This perspective is on the one hand historiographically relevant, as it is external to the communist discourse and vocabulary, and therefore valuable for the enrichment of the range of political interpretations about the meaning of the Eastern bloc for communist administrators. On the other hand, however, it also represents a politically partial point of view – something which could imply the tendency to flatten, for instance, the analysis between different countries of the socialist bloc (the GDR model or state organization was not comparable to the one of Poland or Romania, for many reasons. On the peculiarity of East Germany in this sense, see 5.2.2.1).

In the occasion of the 1988 celebrations, the former PCI mayor of Modena (1972-1980) Germano Bulgarelli also intervened, with a beautiful eulogy, yet clearly forged in Marxist terms, of Losi's personality. He pictured him as one of the many examples of enlightened, communist administrators in the Emilia-Romagna region, and a representative of those men who had been in the underground movement between the 1920s and 1940s, being later on employed by the party to be put at the disposition of their respective local societies. In his speech, Bulgarelli mentioned Corassori for Modena, Campioli in Reggio Emilia and Dozza in Bologna. Their transition from underground activities to governmental responsibility at the local level was identified as a part of, one of the

⁶¹⁷ Ibidem.

manifestations of the historical process which led the working classes from being subaltern subjects to becoming the ruling class. Moreover, this point of view perfectly coincided with the story that the official communist historiography had established over the years. The value of Losi and all these postwar administrators was identified, in this perspective, in the capacity of guiding an institution in a democratic way and shape it «so that it was able to respond to the necessities of development and services that the citizens asked for, and to make of it a reference point for the citizens themselves».⁶¹⁸ The role of the municipality, mayors, other administrators and members of local councils – as it has already been highlighted in chapter 4 – was central especially in that phase, when more than ever ideology needed to be at the service of daily necessities, pragmatism, and a physical and metaphorical reconstruction. In this sense, and in this political context, historically and up to the present days, the idea of decentralization and the municipal institutions have generally been a tool and a symbol of left parties.

Furthermore, Germano Bulgarelli recalled an episode that appeared to have left a strong mark in his memory and to a certain extent had contributed to his political education. He remembered that he was once at the graveyard with Bruno Losi, and that the mayor told to him: «Remember that the feelings of the people are an important thing and that the cult of the dead is an important thing, as it links the past to the future».⁶¹⁹ Losi did not underestimate the value and the memory of deaths and commemorations of tragic events and tragedies, especially when connected to the Second World War, and especially in the context of relations between Italy and Germany. On the one hand, this could be explained through personal sensibility; on the other, however, the mayor was extremely aware about the centrality of issues where the personal sphere was involved in the building of political consensus on the administrative level. He knew that the personal was key to the political. In this sense, the twinning with Wernigerode provided an important platform. For instance, Losi made a considerable effort in making sure that Ernestina Cavazzoli, travelled to the GDR with a delegation of women and that she was able, as part of the experience, to visit the tomb of her dead husband.⁶²⁰ Cavazzoli, who was – as Losi wrote to the mayor of Wernigerode Martin Kilian⁶²¹ – «*Witwe eines eueren*

⁶¹⁸ Ibidem.

⁶¹⁹ Ibidem.

⁶²⁰ ASCC, Carteggio gemellaggio Carpi-Wernigerode, b. “Gemellaggio Carpi-Wernigerode (RDT) ’62-’79 I°”, fasc. “anni 62-79”, *Kilian a Losi, Wernigerode 13.9.1967*.

⁶²¹ Kilian was an important personality and absolute long-term reference point both for the citizens of Wernigerode and for the ones of Carpi, as he remained in charge as a mayor from 1921, when he was called to substitute the previous *Bürgermeister* Gustav Strahl, until 1990, for more than 28 years. On Kilian’s life, see Volker Kluge, “Kilian, Martin,” *Wer War Wer in Der DDR?* (Berlin: Links, 2010).

Landesmannes»,⁶²² had long had the desire of undertaking that journey. She was so touched about that possibility, that she personally wrote to Kilian, in German, to thank him.⁶²³

This long *excursus* about Losi served to highlight the centrality of *people*, of the single actors, in this case administrators, in both reinforcing communist identities, and building bonds which went beyond the Iron Curtain, by putting a strong accent on life stories and shared experiences. However, ceremonials and ceremoniality were also a fundamental element in the constructions of translocal connections. The mayors and their collaborators *consciously worked on that*, with positive consequences on the mutual relations, as shown by the warm words that Kilian sent to Losi:

Heute bedanke ich mich noch einmal recht herzlich für das Paket und besonders für den Likör. Wir haben ihn fast ausgetrunken, weil er so gut schmeckt. Wenn ich mal nach Carpi komme, werde ich besonders auf Deine Gesundheit von diesem Likör trinken.⁶²⁴

The simple shipment of a liquor represented a sign of friendship and also acquired a strong symbolic meaning, due to the almost total impossibility – from the German side – to reach certain products through the official channels. The favor had been returned with a handful of less tasty, but certainly highly symbolic gifts, with which the Wernigerode administrations hoped to please «[their] friends from Carpi», providing «a memory of the holidays spent in the GDR». The list included: «postal cards; a disc with the national hymn of the GDR; the lyrics and the notes of the national hymn; a disc with a youth song; a flag of the GDR; foulards with patterns of our capital Berlin».⁶²⁵ Ceremoniality was an important aspect for both sides.

In this context, for instance, the East German administrators showed a sign of solidarity in the occasion of the huge flood which pounded many areas of Italy in 1966. In that occasion, the local council of Wernigerode sent the offer to host 10 kids from the flooded areas in the GDR.⁶²⁶ A similar initiative after that same flood – therefore probably signaling that this was a GDR general strategy, so as to appear as benefactors in the eyes of the Italian population – was taken by Weimar towards the town of Parma. In that case, too the initiative raised «emotion» in the Parmesan local council; and that was one of the main reasons why they voted in favor of the visit of the mayor Enzo Baldassi to Weimar.⁶²⁷ In the end, the town twinning was not carried out, probably because of the changes in the

⁶²² StaWe, WR III/1249, *Bruno Losi an Martin Kilian, Carpi 6.9.1967*.

⁶²³ StaWe, WR III/1249, *Ernestina Cavazzoli an Martin Kilian, Carpi 1.1.1967*.

⁶²⁴ ASCC, Carteggio gemellaggio Carpi-Wernigerode, b. Gemellaggio Carpi-Wernigerode (RDT) '62-'79 I°, fasc. "anni 62-79", *Martin Kilian an Bruno Losi, Wernigerode, 11. Juni 1965*.

⁶²⁵ ASCC, Carteggio gemellaggio Carpi-Wernigerode, b. Gemellaggio Carpi-Wernigerode (RDT) '62-'79 I°, fasc. "anni 62-79", *Kraushaar, Deutsche-Italienische Gesellschaft in Berlin, a Bruno Losi, Berlino, il 17 ottobre 1965*.

⁶²⁶ ASCC, Carteggio gemellaggio Carpi-Wernigerode, b. Gemellaggio Carpi-Wernigerode (RDT) '62-'79 I°, fasc. "anni 62-79", *Bruno Losi a Martin Kilian, Carpi, 20.12.66*.

⁶²⁷ Archivio storico comunale di Parma (from now on ASCPR), Protocollo delle deliberazioni del Consiglio comunale 1967, *Seduta del 30 giugno 1967, deliberazione n. 521*.

political composition of the council after the 1970 administrative elections. However, Baldassi and the communist MP from Parma Giacomo Ferrari travelled twice to the GDR and had close contacts with the country.⁶²⁸

These examples, which do not cover all the case studies I have taken into consideration, have so far served to illustrate the background and the strategies of the local leaders. The scope is to show the *awareness* they had about the meaning of the twinnings and the repercussions of those relations on local and international politics. In the Italian case, these leaders were fundamental characters in making sure that the knowledge of another country was beneficial to the needs of their own local societies, and, especially, to the communist militants who were considered their core. Mayors and presidents of provinces made international relations an element that nourished the *agency* of the municipalities. In the GDR case, twinnings (and the action of administrators) was instead subject to general politics and mostly to the benefit of the central state.

However, starting from these examples from the Italian-East German mutual communication, it is possible to proceed with a more general discourse on the characteristics of local leaders in the two countries; and, ultimately, on the impact that the belonging to different *political* generations had had on the *translocal* communication between the two countries. As far as Italy is concerned, it is helpful to look into an important collection of essays published in the early 1980s by a group of leftist sociologists.⁶²⁹ Despite the political proximity of the scholars to the PCI, and therefore, to a certain extent, the inevitable repercussion of their ideas on their scientific production, that publication is still highly valuable – almost considered a bible by those who want to analyze the PCI and the *communist identity* in Italy. The book provides quantitative analyses, and with that an in-depth photography, of the militants, the organization and the structure of the party in the 1980s, highlighting discontinuities and continuities with the past, and permanent and changing elements.⁶³⁰

⁶²⁸ «3.9.1970

Gentile collega,

la informo con rammarico di essere nella impossibilità di partecipare al V. Colloquio dei sindaci e dei politici comunali che si terrà a Dresda dal 7 al 10 di settembre.

Come Ella forse saprà, si sono tenute recentemente nel nostro Paese le elezioni per il rinnovo dei consigli autonomi degli enti locali (Comuni, Province e Regioni): la situazione che ne è scaturita e le trattative che sono in corso fra i vari partiti per dare vita agli organi esecutivi richiedono la mia continua presenza in sede.

L'importanza del tema del Colloquio e il desiderio, sempre vivo in noi, di consolidare ed estendere i rapporti di amicizia e collaborazione che ci legano alla Repubblica Democratica Tedesca e in particolare alla città di Weimar rendono anche più spiacevole questa necessaria rinuncia.

Spero che non mancherà, nel prossimo futuro, l'occasione di riprendere i contatti e di incontrarci anche personalmente: nell'attesa voglia gradire i saluti più cordiali e gli auguri più fervidi per lo svolgimento della Sua attività. Enzo Baldassi».

See Stadtarchiv Weimar (from now on StadtAW), 13/1282.

⁶²⁹ Aris Accornero, Renato Mannheimer, and Chiara Sebastiani, eds., *L'identità Comunista. I Militanti, La Struttura, La Cultura Del Pci* (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1983).

⁶³⁰ Ibidem.

In her essay about party officials, and with reference to local administrators, Chiara Sebastiani has emphasized that within the internal distribution of positions, the generations mattered significantly. The oldest political generation – the one of those who had become members of the PCI up to 1949 – was the one that «represented the true class of administrators». That generation was followed with no big differences by the one of the 1950s, except for an almost total absence of these individuals in high-ranking political positions, due to their numeric superiority in the composition of local bodies. Among the oldest ones were «more mayors and assessors (communal, provincial and regional ones), more members of elective assemblies (provincial and regional councils), more MPs, more full-time administrators, more members of leading bodies and of control of institutions and companies».⁶³¹ The generation of the 1960s was instead more inclined to be political leaders, rather than local administrators; sometimes, the two positions were combined. At last, the young (at the time of the publication) officials, who had entered the party between 1970 and 1974, were mostly political leaders, and were active in the local administrations only as members of the local councils, but usually not in high positions.⁶³²

As underlined by Nino Magna, especially since the 1970s, the force of the group of local administrators had repercussions within the party.⁶³³ Administrators became fully-fledged figures for the resolution of specific problems of local communities, sometimes in opposition to the PCI, thus also representing an external stimulus to it. In this sense, they started handling increasingly huge powers and resources, so much that in 1991 Mario Caciagli asked himself whether they were not assuming the role of a separate political body.⁶³⁴ However, their role in the party composition was essential, and this was well-known by the party hierarchies, who – among the primary characteristics of the local élites – specifically looked for «popular extraction and strong party identity».⁶³⁵ These distinctive characters helped significantly cementing the faith towards the PCI in local councils and local populations, and therefore contributed to the general strategy of institutionalization settled by the communists. It was the natural prosecution, in the 1970s, of the strategy which had already been started since the postwar period – namely, the attempt to use the success of the PCI at the local level as a legitimization for its *potential* capacities in government.

⁶³¹ Chiara Sebastiani, “I Funzionari,” in *L'identità Comunista. I Militanti, La Struttura, La Cultura Del Pci*, ed. Aris Accornero, Renato Mannheimer, and Chiara Sebastiani (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1983), 79–178., p. 127.

⁶³² Sebastiani., p. 128.

⁶³³ Nino Magna, “Eletti e Amministratori,” in *L'identità Comunista. I Militanti, La Struttura, La Cultura Del Pci*, ed. Aris Accornero, Renato Mannheimer, and Chiara Sebastiani (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1983), 223–56, p. 225.

⁶³⁴ Mario Caciagli, “Vita e Opere Di Un Ceto Politico,” *Polis*, 1991.

⁶³⁵ Nino Magna, p. 225.

The real turning point in relation to both deep structural modifications of the party and the composition of communist local administrators is undoubtedly 1968. That year saw the affirmation of a new generation of party officials at the intermediary level and marked many changes. Differently from the two previous generations, those coming from the underground movement and from the Resistance, who had until then guided the PCI, the new communist local politicians presented differences in their sociologic composition (they were in increasingly larger part professionals and intellectuals); in the political cultures (which partly incorporated the social issues brought about by the '68 movement); and in the ambitions.⁶³⁶ This new direction, however, had already been anticipated since the beginning of the second half of the 1960s. An increased presence of the middle-class went hand in hand with a general decrease, also among militants, of the social representation of the working class. These changes, which were accompanied by a social and economic mutation of the local societies, were translated into an acquisition of new tasks and competences for administrators. As Fausto Anderlini has noted for the Emilian case, there was a difference between the «Emilian communist leader of the 1950s», who was «substantially a competent organizer held by a strong sense of belonging», and the one of the 1960s, who «had added to the original characters a noteworthy predisposition for the pragmatic composition of divergences».⁶³⁷ Important remarks, on other interpretative levels, come from the recent work published by Achille Conti for the Tuscan case, in which a new ruling class connected with the 1960s has been identified. Its political features included, first of all, the «persistence of the Resistance tradition» in the experiences of local politicians. Conti has brought as examples the PCI federations of Siena and Livorno, where the secretaries active during the 1960s and 1970s had been in the communist (“Garibaldi”) Resistance divisions when they were very young.⁶³⁸ For Conti, however, the real change in the Tuscan ruling class occurred between the end of the 1960s and the 1970s, being impacted by the economic boom; by the explosion of the students’ and workers’ riots; but also by the «decisive role played by Berlinguer who, with his politics of historical compromise, to which the idea of Eurocommunism was strongly connected, started a deep transformation of the party, renewing mostly the ruling class».⁶³⁹ Overall, in the 1960s, the old political models connected to the experiences of exile and early antifascism, and with them strong ideologies, were starting to melt. Simultaneously, however, the

⁶³⁶ Aldo Agosti, “Prefazione,” in *Alla Ricerca Della Simmetria: Il PCI a Torino, 1945-1991*, ed. Bruno Maida (Torino: Rosenberg & Sellier, 2004), IX–XIV., pp. XI–XII.

⁶³⁷ Fausto Anderlini, *Terra Rossa. Comunismo Ideale Socialdemocrazia Reale: Il Pci in Emilia-Romagna* (Bologna: Istituto Gramsci, 1990), p. 73.

⁶³⁸ Achille Conti, *Dirigenti Comunisti. Reclutamento, Selezione e Formazione in Una Regione Rossa (1945-1991)* (Roma: Carocci, 2017), p. 102.

⁶³⁹ Conti., p. 215.

iron bond with the USSR still had a weight (for instance, on the occasion of the support for the construction of the Berlin Wall).⁶⁴⁰

Looking specifically at the seven case studies of this dissertation, from the Italian side, it is possible to use the division based both on the period and modes of participation to antifascism and Resistance and on the profession to broadly identify two categories of administrators who initiated the exchanges with the GDR and make them continue. These criteria, in my view, are more explanatory than age, which can be misleading.

Among a broad generation of “exile and underground”, we can find Giuseppe Dozza (born in 1901), who had been in Moscow and France; Bruno Losi (1911), who had experienced jail and confinement in the 1930s; and Ruggero Bertotti (1917), who likewise got in contact with the French antifascist network, although later, at a different age and coming from a different societal-family story. These three mayors, because of their background, but also thanks to the political conditions in their towns, and the favorable compositions of local councils, were the most active ones in international municipal relations. This was visible in the quantity and quality of the twinning activities. For his strong belief in an «osmotic relation between the international and the local dimension»,⁶⁴¹ another communist, although slightly younger, should be mentioned here – Dante Cruicchi (1921), relevant personality of the Bolognese area who had covered various roles during the postwar period. Among these, he had been counsellor for the personal office of the Bologna mayor, active actor in the twin town international movement and, he himself, mayor of Marzabotto. His life story was also rooted in antifascism and exile, that he spent in France since he was very young, at 16 years old. After that, he had been arrested by Nazi Germans and brought to Auschwitz.⁶⁴²

Among the members of the second group, were instead the younger ones, who had entered politics in a later phase, through the Resistance, and who often had received an intellectual education before. This is the case, for instance, of Renzo Bonazzi (1925), mayor of Reggio between 1962 and 1976 and initiator of Reggio’s friendly contacts with Schwerin. Bonazzi was a lawyer, journalist and cinema critic and it was with that cultural background, as an intellectual, that he approached politics. As far as the provincial administration of Livorno is concerned, all the three main promoters of the twinning with Rostock fully corresponded with the characteristics of this group. Silvano Filippelli

⁶⁴⁰ Aldo Agosti, *Storia Del Partito Comunista Italiano 1921-1991* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1999), pp. 90-92., p. 90.

⁶⁴¹ Tito Menzani, “Al Servizio Dei Cittadini. L’impegno Di Dante Cruicchi Nelle Amministrazioni Locali,” in *L’artigiano Della Pace. Dante Cruicchi Nel Novecento*, ed. Carlo De Maria (Bologna: Clueb, 2013), 117–42.

⁶⁴² Dante Cruicchi had various roles in the Bologna area. From ’46 until ’51 he was a local council member in Benedetto Val Di Sambro. From 1969 to 1975 he was council member in the Province of Bologna, and assessor between 1972 and 1975. He then became mayor of Marzabotto (1975-1985) See Carlo De Maria, ed., *L’artigiano Della Pace. Dante Cruicchi Nel Novecento* (Bologna: Clueb, 2013).

(1919), president of the Province between 1965 and 1970, was likewise an intellectual – teacher, cinema and art critic, director and scenographer. He entered the PCI when Fascism had fallen, after 1943. His successor Valdo Del Lucchese (born in 1923, president of the Province 1970-1972) had a different story: he was a socialist and belonged to the leftist side of the party. In the postwar period, he had been leader of the CGIL and active in the world of associations. He entered the PCI only later, after participating to the short experience of PSIUP.⁶⁴³ Ali Nannipieri (1925, president of the Province between 1972 and 1975) was instead approachable to Filippelli: he too had entered the PCI in 1944 during Resistance and had then become party official in Livorno's PCI). We could add to this group Rubes Triva (born in 1921, mayor of Modena between 1962 and 1972). He can also be considered among the ones who initiated relations with the GDR, as he had tried to establish a town twinning with Potsdam through the municipality early in 1962 but had not succeeded due to political limitations. Triva had entered the PCI in 1944 and participated to the Italian Resistance. As far as Bologna is concerned, Guido Fanti and Renato Zangheri were both significantly younger than Dozza, being born in the same year, 1925. After abandoning the army and joining the partisan Resistance after 1943, in 1945 Fanti entered the PCI as member of the communist university students of the Federation of Bologna.⁶⁴⁴ Zangheri was also an intellectual – he has always been called the *sindaco professore* (“professor-mayor”), he had studied economics and taught at the University of Bologna.⁶⁴⁵

All these personalities which I have included in the two groups – their life trajectories and experiences, background, early political directions, were inextricably linked to their choices, success and respectability as mayors and presidents of Provinces. However, they were also facilitated by the fact that they governed “red” areas, in which the leftist political culture was deeply rooted.

As far as the GDR is concerned, in the end the discourse about red areas and their administrators can find some parallels with Italy. The regions of Thuringia and Saxony, for instance, located in the East German territory, had experienced a strong leftist tradition, both during the Wilhelminian *Reich* and the Weimar Republic. In those two regions, the *Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands* (SPD) had reached extremely high percentages in the votes, and could count many

⁶⁴³ For some information on Valdo Del Lucchese and his public path as a socialist, see Massimo Bianchi, *C'eravamo Anche Noi. Appunti Sulla Storia Dei Socialisti Livornesi 1944-1994 e Qualche Curiosità* (Roma: Bonanno Editore, 2015). I thank Massimo Bianchi, who was among my interviewees, for giving me this book. It has been a valid support for the understanding of the history of Livornese socialists.

⁶⁴⁴ On Fanti's life as postwar communist administrator, see Fanti, Guido, in *Iperbole la rete civica di Bologna. Storia amministrativa*: <http://informa.comune.bologna.it/storiaamministrativa/people/detail/36327>. Last seen on September 30, 2018.

⁶⁴⁵ Zangheri, Renato, in *Biblioteca Salaborsa*: <https://www.bibliotecasalaborsa.it/documenti/20367>. Last seen on September 30, 2018.

members in the party, labor unions, organizations, associations and cooperatives.⁶⁴⁶ In the GDR, that tradition had been consciously incorporated and used as an instrument of political legitimization. This operation is particularly visible on the level of the single personalities which later entered the group of the GDR's ruling élites. The oldest among them came mostly from the social democratic prewar tradition and later on, between the end of the 1910s and the 1920s-30s, had joined the *Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands* (KPD). Both elements were important to the Soviets when they occupied the Eastern part of Germany, for matters of continuity. This continuity, which meant a stronger attachment to the German tradition in its social democratic version, was guaranteed, on the one hand, by the "social democratic soil", so by the territorial belonging to Thuringia or Saxony. For instance, as noted by Caciagli, «a significant part of the ruling class of the GDR [...], the members who had come back from the Moscow exile, as much as those who had remained in Nazi Germany, were Saxon».⁶⁴⁷ However, on the other hand, the continuity was also political. The early belonging to the KPD was of great importance in the optic of the Sovietization of the country in the 1940s and 1950s, when no political ambiguity was allowed. The ruling class had to be *communist*, so as to emphasize the nature of the new Socialist Unity Party, the SED.

The new structure had been created in 1946 in the Soviet Occupation Zone, officially to integrate the social democratic and the revolutionary individuals of the left in one single political body, but, de facto, as a means for the forced incorporation of the SPD into the KPD.⁶⁴⁸ Roughly until the late 1940s, which marked the end of the so-called democratic-parliamentary phase of antifascist unity of the SED, the principle of *formal* equality between the SPD and the KPD remained valid. Nevertheless, in the daily management of political life, the KPD members, and in particular the militants who had previously experienced the Moscow exile, were in a clear position of superiority, and in constant contact with the political élites of the Soviet Union. The final mutation of the SED from a formally democratic party, at least in principle, to a one that explicitly recalled the Stalinist model was first evident only in the years between 1948 and 1952.⁶⁴⁹

⁶⁴⁶ See Franz Walter, Tobias Duerr, and Klaus Schmidtke, *Die SPD in Sachsen Und Thüringen Zwischen Hochburg Und Diaspora* (Bonn: Dietz, 1993), quoted in Mario Caciagli, *Addio Alla Provincia Rossa. Origini, Apogeo e Declino Di Una Cultura Politica* (Roma: Carocci, 2017), p. 362.

⁶⁴⁷ Caciagli, *Addio Alla Provincia Rossa*, p. 365.

⁶⁴⁸ On this, see Gareth Pritchard, *The Making of the GDR 1945-53. From Antifascism to Stalinism* (Manchester: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000); and Andreas Malycha, *Die SED: Geschichte Ihrer Stalinisierung 1946-1953* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2000).

⁶⁴⁹ Andreas Malycha and Peter Jochen Winters, *Die SED. Geschichte Einer Deutschen Partei* (München: Beck Verlag, 2009), pp. 45-54. Also quoted from my Master thesis, Teresa Malice, "Berlino Est, 17 Giugno 1953. Lo Sguardo Della Sinistra Italiana Sulla Rivolta Operaia Nella DDR" (Università di Bologna, 2013).

The pioneer work by Peter Ludz, published in the 1970s,⁶⁵⁰ and the more recent research conducted by Arnd Bauerkämper and Jürgen Danyel, have helped delving into the composition of SED élites. As Bauerkämper and Danyel have pointed out, the élites, especially at the local level («functionaries in the lower apparatus», and «regional leaders») derived their legitimization from the idea of belonging to the working class. While this, as the two scholars have highlighted, was genuine in a way, as most of the local representatives *actually* came from the working class, that idea was also rooted in a self-imagery fueled by an antique anti-élite feeling and «the political wish to remove old bourgeois privileges».⁶⁵¹ However, those leaders *were* de facto an élite, if we are to accept its general definition as «minority group of people who have, within a society, an eminent place due to certain socially valorized qualities»:⁶⁵² they belonged to that small percentage of the population which had opposed Hitler and the Nazi regime. From there they derived their moral superiority, and therefore their powerful role.⁶⁵³ This egalitarian, though actually contradictory self-image of the leaders, was correspondent at one time to the political will to conduct a homogenization of society, and to the need, by the East German population itself, to have social distinctions flattened.

The 1960s brought about a change of the élites, partly for matters of age, but most of all because of political decisions taken from above. The substitutions were mostly linked to the attempts to make the strictly centralized East German economy more and more flexible – a process that had already been started by Walter Ulbricht in the first half of the 1960s. This «increased the need for expert advice», which was found in new, more technical-oriented leaders. This aspect is to be found in Ludz's early publication, too.

Looking closely, this generational change was not so dissimilar to the one that was happening in the Italian red regions, more or less in the same period. The changes in the dynamics of the Cold War, the necessity of confronting new, pragmatic problems; the developments of economy and the increased industrialization – all these elements conducted towards the necessity for new leaders. The political ruling groups were adapted to the new times: they were increasingly rooted in the world of professions, whereas before they found their legitimacy in class warfare or communist resistance. As

⁶⁵⁰ Peter Ludz, *The Changing Party Elite in East Germany* (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1972). In the book Ludz, which analyses the period between 1954 and 1969, identifies a tension between the Central Committee – the political élite – and an “institutionalized counter elite”, represented by technicians. With the push of modernization, Ludz has argued that the bureaucratic government had been replaced by experts, technicians, and economists.

⁶⁵¹ Arnd Bauerkämper and Jürgen Danyel, “The Pivotal Cadres: Leadership Styles and Self-Images of GDR-Elites,” in *Dictatorship as Experience. Towards a Socio-Cultural History of the GDR*, ed. Konrad Jarausch (New York-Oxford: Berghahn, 1999), 265–84., pp. 267-268.

⁶⁵² *Elite*, in Larousse, <https://www.larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais/%C3%A9lite/28428>, last seen on September 20, 2018.

⁶⁵³ Arnd Bauerkämper and Jürgen Danyel, “The Pivotal Cadres: Leadership Styles and Self-Images of GDR-Elites,” in *Dictatorship as Experience. Towards a Socio-Cultural History of the GDR*, ed. Konrad Jarausch (New York-Oxford: Berghahn, 1999), 265–84., pp. 267-268.

Bauerkämper and Danyel have emphasized, these new political élites «shared many of the convictions of the GDR's founding fathers but were focused more on the concrete realities of East German society, which they attempted to address in the face of a loss of visionary faith».⁶⁵⁴ This will be a very relevant point when I will approach the town twinnings and the kind of exchange that was channeled through them during the 1960s and 1970s (see 5.2 and 5.3). The substantial difference between the two contexts laid in the fact that, while in Italy the economic processes were *governed* by the communist administrations, in the GDR they were *forced* from above and the substitution of political leaders was a strategic decision taken at a central level.

The sample of the mayors and administrators who activated the town twinnings with Italy and made them proceed in the 1960s, from the East German side, reflects such change. For instance, mayors such as Horst Jonas (1914) in Neubrandenburg, Günther Braun in Schwerin (born in 1916; mayor between 1961-69), and the president of the Rostock Province Karl Deuscher (born in 1917)⁶⁵⁵ can be inserted in the group of early “political” administrators, whereas almost all the others, who in their most part belonged to a younger generation, can be inserted in a second group, related to the changes of the 1960s. Their access to politics was different. Oftentimes, they had practiced different professions before becoming mayors. It is the case with Heinz Hahn (born in 1929),⁶⁵⁶ who had, as a background, education and experience in the world of commerce. Hahn had worked as a salesman and in the world of consumer cooperatives in the 1940s and 1950s, before entering the SED in 1956 and starting his political-administrative path.⁶⁵⁷ A similar case is the one of Martin Kilian. Kilian was bobsledder and professional sportsman. In the 1950s, he was active as a teacher and became director of the *Wilhelm-Raabe-Oberschule* in Wernigerode; only in 1962 he became mayor.⁶⁵⁸ Franz Schönbeck and Horst Pietsch, mayors of Schwerin respectively between 1969 and 1971 and between 1971 and 1977, were born in 1931 and 1934. Schönbeck was a trained lawyer, with a specialization in territorial economics. He entered the local party structures with these competences, and most likely because of those he was appointed in many roles, focusing specifically on territorial planning.⁶⁵⁹

⁶⁵⁴ Bauerkämper and Danyel., pp. 276-277.

⁶⁵⁵ In the young age, he worked mostly as constructor of furniture, afterwards, in the 1930s, as farmworker and later on as shunter. He entered the Wehrmacht and experienced reclusion by Anglo-Americans. In the postwar, he continued his job as trackman for the *Deutschen Reichsbahn*. He entered the SED immediately after its foundation in 1946, he attended the party school, and then had many roles in the party structure in Rostock, included the one of president of the *Bezirk* Rostock. On his biography, see Andreas Herbst, “Deuscher, Karl,” *Wer War Wer in Der DDR?* (Berlin: Links, 2010).

⁶⁵⁶ Interviewed for this research.

⁶⁵⁷ Peter, “Hahn, Heinz,” *Wer War Wer in Der DDR?* (Berlin: Links, 2010).

⁶⁵⁸ Kluge, “Kilian.”

⁶⁵⁹ Andreas Herbst, “Schönbeck, Franz,” *Wer War Wer in Der DDR?* (Berlin: Links, 2010).

Pietsch, his successor, studied finance and took his specialization in economy, entering the SED in 1953 and likewise working for the *Bezirk* Schwerin, in various positions.⁶⁶⁰

A special position, with reference to the mentioned groups, was held by Walter Kresse (1910), who was mayor of the big and important commercial center of Leipzig. As it has been pointed out, he had been part of that generation who had a communist background and had experienced arrest and reclusion during World War II.⁶⁶¹ Therefore, in generational terms, he belonged to that first group. However, in his case, probably the economic studies and competences had mattered from the very beginning, due to their absolute centrality in the management of a town like Leipzig. His successor Karl-Heinz Müller instead, *Oberbürgermeister* of Leipzig between 1970 and 1986 can be fully considered as part of the second group. He had served in the *Wehrmacht* during World War II. Before becoming mayor, he had studied law and then worked, in the 1960s and 1970s, as responsible of the economic council in the *Bezirk* Leipzig.⁶⁶²

Activists and militants

Carissimo compagno Lenz

Spero ci scuserai se non ti abbiamo scritto subito, ma siamo stati molto impegnato per il Festival che si è svolto a Torino. Io e mia moglie tutte le sere si lavorava fino a tardi, impegnati a fare spaghetti agnolotti, polli, cinghiali e altre specialità. Hanno visitato il Festival delegazioni. Russe. Francesi. Spagnole. Vietnamite. Compagni sono arrivati da tutte le parti d'Italia e domenica giornata di chiusura, si calcola che oltre duecentomila persone abbiano preso parte all'imponente manifestazione.

Ti ringrazio insieme alla mia famiglia della simpatia che ci ai dimostrato durante il nostro soggiorno, e anche il viaggio è andato bene.

Il salame e formaggio che ci avete dato è stato gustato molto dai clienti, visitatori del Festival.

Ti mando un ritaglio di giornale riguardante tale manifestazione.

Un caro saluto alla tua moglie e bimbi un caro abbraccio da Angelo Bruna e Sergio Patriarca⁶⁶³

This is the first letter that Angelo Patriarca, worker from Collegno, sent to Werner Lenz, collaborator of the municipality of Neubrandenburg, in 1971. The document describes the life of a grassroots communist activist at that time: it is the description of a family occupied with the organization of the *Festa de L'Unità*, the traditional party of the PCI which took place regularly in all the biggest federations on Italian soil in many forms, and, each year, on the national level in a different location.⁶⁶⁴ In 1971, the place selected for the national celebration was Turin. The space in which it was located hosted concerts, shows, public debates open for the whole population, plus

⁶⁶⁰ Andreas Herbst, "Pietsch, Horst," *Wer War Wer in Der DDR?* (Berlin: Links, 2010).

⁶⁶¹ "Kresse."

⁶⁶² Müller, Karl-Heinz, in Günther Buch, *Namen Und Daten Wichtiger Personen Der DDR*, 3. überarbeitete und erweiterte Auflage (Berlin (West): Dietz, 1982)., p. 220.

⁶⁶³ NeuSta, 2.00 AE, Nr. 2773, *Lettera di Angelo Patriarca a Werner Lenz, Collegno 19.9.1971.*

⁶⁶⁴ On the *feste de L'Unità*, see Anna Tonelli, *Falce e Tortello: Storia Politica e Sociale Delle Feste Dell'Unità (1945-2011)* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2012).

various restauration points, directed by volunteers and grassroots militants. That was exactly the task of Angelo and his wife Bruna: they helped in the kitchen until late, taking care of Italian culinary specialties. From that position, they saw delegations from all over the world, French and Spanish, Russian and Vietnamese, visiting the party, and they observed the event with an eye on the basic aspects of the organization. Being just returned from a trip to the GDR, Patriarca was eager to communicate to his new friend Lenz that the salami and the cheese that they had received in East Germany had been tasted and enjoyed by many clients of the party. The *festa* was an occasion to build cohesion among militants, to strengthen their sense of belonging to a common political project, but also to spread political contents to subjects who were not necessarily part of the communist world, as the event was open to all the citizens. In this sense, the salami and the cheese from the GDR were not only food to be consumed, but they acquired a specific political sense.

What was the meaning, however, of Patriarca's desire to write these updates to East Germans? The year before, he had travelled with a delegation to Neubrandenburg, in the context of the twinning with Collegno, and he was fascinated by the system there – or, at least, by the way it had been presented. He would have continued to send letters throughout the following years. Even after the GDR's diplomatic recognition, he seemed to keep feeling very close to that country. In 1972, Patriarca excused himself for the scarce quantity of his missives, highlighting, however, that the GDR was always on his mind:

sappi che vi penso sempre a tutti voi compagni e più vi penso più capisco il grande sacrificio che fate per edificare il socialismo nel vostro paese, voi compagni che avete questo compito sappiate che avete gli occhi dei capitalisti e dei nostri avversari che come commettete un piccolo errore lo fanno vedere subito per televisione, ma tutto quello che edificate non dicono nulla, io parlo sempre con i miei compagni di voi e della D.D.R. e sono tutti entusiasti e vogliono venire a visitarla. Io per conto mio il prossimo anno farò di tutto per passare le mie vacanze lì da voi perché per me sono giorni che non dimenticherò mai più nella mia vita.⁶⁶⁵

Patriarca emphasized his admiration for what appeared to his eyes as a huge «task», almost a mission: the edification of socialism in a country where the daily competition with the “first Germany” made it extremely difficult, in a context where the whole Western part of Europe was ready to discredit, or omit, the new conquests. Writing in such a way, the Italian militant strongly identified himself with what he perceived as fellow «comrades», opposing «the capitalists», «*our* [common] adversaries».⁶⁶⁶ Such a level of identification and fascination towards the Soviet bloc, in the early 1970s, was no longer so common. The sentiment towards the Soviet Union, its satellite countries and

⁶⁶⁵ NeuSta, 2.00 AE, Nr. 2773, *Lettera di Angelo Patriarca a Werner Lenz, Collegno 1.8.1972.*

⁶⁶⁶ *Ibidem.*

the popular democracies was, oftentimes, related to diffidence, or, at least, to an awareness of the ideological distance between the two worlds.

Patriarca's case, however, is exemplary of what could happen in the frame of twinnings. While he may have been an exception in the general conception of the Italian communist view towards the Eastern world in the 1970s, at the same time he represents the visible outcome of the way personal bonds and circumscribed, protected translocal experiences could act for and on activists and militants. Whether that politicization was spontaneous, induced, or a mixture – a variably unconscious fascination generated by the short-term permanence in a highly politicized context – when it was successful, it had a strong repercussion on the individual militant. It created a sense of cohesion and brotherhood with a foreign communist society and reality and therefore, ultimately, was beneficial to the augmentation of consent and faith towards the communist administration in Italy. The effect on the East German side was also not to be underestimated. As Patriarca himself wrote to Lenz, «I always talk with my comrades about you and the GDR, and all are enthusiastic and want to come and visit it».⁶⁶⁷ While this may at first glance appear as a minor effect, as it did not come from a well-known personality, it was exactly the opposite: this kind of word-of-mouth and the establishment of personal bonds were essential to the municipalities, in terms of their (respective) internal aims.

This is why activists and militants were so central in the twinning activities. Administrators represented the *aware* ones. However, there were also activists who were simply involved in the trips and encounters. Those were an essential element in the construction of the “friendship among peoples” (see 5.3) but were also consciously used to reach a higher consensus. Patriarca's letter written in 1972 followed this direction. In it, he described the decadent political situation in Italy in the internationally bad economic juncture of the early 1970s. He also referred to Collegno, where many factories were closing. One of these was the Leumann, which had closed,⁶⁶⁸ «firing all the workers, so the mayor Bertotti and the city council have requisitioned it, but the aspects of this crisis invest the whole Italian economy which nobody knows which outlets it will have».⁶⁶⁹ Patriarca closed the letter by sending greetings to Lenz from the seaside, where he was resting with his family, reading «a nice book and the history of revolutions» and preparing and waiting for «the struggles that are

⁶⁶⁷ Ibidem.

⁶⁶⁸ In 1975 the Collegno municipality decided to institute a social center where the Leumann used to be, in order to favor the aggregation among old people. See Alessandro Zerbi, ed., *Cento Anni Di Vita Al Villaggio Leumann. Raccontati per Immagini, Didascalie, Aneddoti* (Torino: Il Punto - Piemonte in Bancarella, 2012), p. 62. I thank the municipality of Collegno for this book.

⁶⁶⁹ «[...] nel nostro comune una delle fabbriche più grosse la Leuman a chiuso licenziando tutti gli operai allora il sindaco Bertotti e il consiglio comunale l'anno requisita ma gli aspetti di questa crisi investe tutta l'economia italiana che non si sa quali sbocchi avra», NeuSta, 2.00 AE, Nr. 2773, *Lettera di Angelo Patriarca a Werner Lenz, Collegno 1.8.1972.*

waiting for us in September»; «you, too – he wrote to Lenz – will hear about these big strikes». A declaration of pure affection closed the letter:

Caro Lenz quando vedi in qualche riunione i compagni Otto Kunze, la Lilo, Müller, salutali per me e digli che mi ricordo sempre di loro e porto sempre nella mia giacca il distintivo della D.D.R. e in qualsiasi posto specie quando trovo avversari che cercano di gettare fango sulla vostra e in parte anche mia repubblica vi difendo come un leone.⁶⁷⁰

Petrarca claimed that he always «carried in [his] jacket the badge of the GDR and in every place especially when [he found] adversaries that [tried] to disparage [their] *partly also [his]* Republic, [he] defend[ed] [them] as a lion». This is, I believe, a good example of the success of this process of almost blind identification through the building of socialist bonds.⁶⁷¹ Despite the fact that Angelo Patriarca had never mentioned the GDR's recognition directly and explicitly, in his answer, Werner Lenz was very attentive, besides thanking the activist for his commitment towards that cause, in emphasizing that topic in many points.⁶⁷² Overall, the language of Lenz's letter was significantly more formal and less affectionate, evidently signaling the strategic decision to answer to everyone, but without losing sight of the big objective. This kind of letters from activists to administrators, in the context of the town twinnings, were rarely left unanswered, both in Italy and in the GDR. Interesting is – from the other side – the example of the 16-year-old secretary of the *Freie Deutsche Jugend* (FDJ) in a school of Potsdam, Ruediger Poblath, who by chance fell into the address of the older labor union official of Modena Adelmo Bastoni and decided to start a sort of friendship through letters. This exchange – besides being slightly fun, because of the initial misunderstanding about the

⁶⁷⁰ Ibidem.

⁶⁷¹ Another example of Patriarca's affection comes, again, from a letter stored in the communal archive of Neubrandenburg:

«Caro Lenz,

ti scrivo queste poche righe per dirti che non dimentico ne [sic!] te e nemmeno tutti i compagni che o [sic!] conosciuto. Vi faccio le mie congratulazioni per il riconoscimento della DDR da parte dell'Italia ma leggo sul giornale che tutti i giorni vi è una Nazione che vi riconosce, era ora che questi paesi capitalisti vedessero una realtà. Io qui ho sempre più lavoro, sia come partito che come sindacato, e ora stiamo affrontando come fare una cooperativa fra noi piccoli commercianti e domani prossima io e Bolzoni andremo a Bologna per vedere come i compagni Bolognesi anno risolto questo problema.

Da noi qui siamo in uno scontro molto duro non passa giorno che non vi sia uno sciopero gli scontri con la polizia non si contano più anche nell'istituto dove va a scuola Sergio e intervenuta la polizia e scacciato tutti gli studenti con la forza, invece a Milano uno studente è stato ucciso da un poliziotto, gli operai arrestati o feriti non si contano più e questo succede anche qui nella nostra zona. Avrei da raccontarti tante cose ma credo che anche i vostri giornali scrivono delle nostre notizie, ad ogni modo quest'anno spero di venire nella DDR e spero che passeremo qualche giorno assieme e allora ti racconterò tutto e Lenz se per caso dovessi venire in Italia ricordati che la mia casa è come fosse la tua e che la porta è sempre aperta per te e la tua famiglia

Ora Lenz ti lascio mangiare un boccone e poi corro nella sede del partito a lavorare, mi raccomando quando trovi qualche minuto scrivimi anche solo poche righe perché mi fanno sempre piacere

Un arrivederci presto un saluto a tutti i compagni che o [sic!] conosciuto.

Saluti Patriarca Angelo». See NeuSta, 2.00 AE, Nr. 2773, *Lettera di Angelo Patriarca a Werner Lenz, Collegno 7.2.1973*.

⁶⁷² NeuSta, 2.00 AE, Nr. 2773, *Werner Lenz an Angelo Patriarca, Neubrandenburg 9.10.1972*.

age – is also illustrative of a strong need, especially for the young ones, to overcome the country's isolation, communicating and getting to know details about the somewhat mysterious Western world. So wrote the young Ruediger Pobloth in 1970:

Ich möchte sehr gern mit Ihnen in den Briefwechsel treten. Bitte entschuldige Sie, dass ich Sie gleich persönlich anrede, aber ich kenne sie nicht darum würde ich mich freuen, wenn Sie mir schreiben würden wie alt sie sind. Ich heiße Ruediger Pobloth und wurde am 10.06.1953 in Luckenwalde geboren – bin also 16 Jahre alt. Ich gehe in die 10. Klasse. Ich spreche Deutsch und Russisch. Welche Sprachen sprechen Sie? Waren Sie schon einmal in der DDR? Ich erhielt zufällig Ihre Adresse. Sie sind Sekretär der CCdW [?]? Ich bin an unserer Schule FDJ-Sekretär. Nach meinem Abschluss der 10. Klasse werde ich Matrose nach einem Schiff der Deutschen See-reederei. In meiner Freizeit lese ich sehr gern, fotografiere und spiele mit meinem Hund. Im Sommer fahre ich oft mit meinem Moped⁶⁷³ umher. Für was interessieren sie sich. Nun möchte ich schließen. Es grüßt Sie herzlich. Ruediger. PS: Sprechen Sie Deutsch?⁶⁷⁴

Bastoni answered that he was 40 years old, an official of the labor union, and that he had already been three times in the GDR, visiting a textile factory. We can assume that the correspondence did not go on, but that was an occasion, for Bastoni, to send his greetings to the high spheres of the FDGB in Potsdam and to keep reciprocal contacts active.⁶⁷⁵ Going back to the Italian side, significant is also the correspondence between “Franco”, from Carpi to the mayor of Wernigerode Martin Kilian. Again, with enthusiastic tones, Franco explained to Kilian the details about the visit of Mrs. Losito – a woman of Italian origins, likely from Carpi, who seemed, from what it has been possible to understand, to live in the GDR at that time and to work as an interpreter. «I cannot explain to you how magnificent that evening has been, as Losito will already have written you. When she will be back in the GDR, she will explain everything». For everyone – he continued, referring to some celebration in honor of the mayor Bruno Losi – «it has been beautiful to see the great recognition that the comrade Bruno has had, great recognition to a communist, to a brother of ours, and a father at the same time». He concluded by saying that «Losito will tell you her impressions, and she will tell you how many friends Wernigerode has in Carpi».⁶⁷⁶ This missive was sent in October 1973, nine months after the Italian recognition of the GDR. However, the affection of “Franco” towards the GDR remained almost unchanged three years later. His words, directed to the «dear comrade» Kilian, return, again, a clear-cut image of the life working class communist militant and his daily difficulties, both in the work and in the political life.

⁶⁷³ Scooter with bicycle pedals.

⁶⁷⁴ ISTOREMo, ASCGILMo, Politica internazionale, Rapporti coi sindacati esteri, 1963-1978, b. 181, *Ruediger Pobloth an Adelmo Bastoni, Lückenwalde, den 25.01.1970.*

⁶⁷⁵ ISTOREMo, ASCGILMo, Politica internazionale, Rapporti coi sindacati esteri, 1963-1978, b. 181, *Adelmo Bastoni an Ruediger Pobloth, Modena, 28 febbraio 1970.*

⁶⁷⁶ StaWe, WR III/1255, *Lettera manoscritta di “Franco” a Martin Kilian, Carpi 22.10.73.*

Sono qui ancora al lavoro in officina e qui a Carpi c'è caldo come in Africa. Perciò quando si è alla sera si è così stanchi che è anche difficile scrivere una lettera. Vorrei scriverti tante cose, specialmente di problemi politici, ma ci vorrebbero 50 lettere. Ti vorrei spiegare la situazione politica attuale dell'Italia la lotta della classe operaia, e del Partito comunista. Una cosa è certa sempre ogni giorno avanziamo verso il socialismo. E ti posso garantire che il Cile a noi comunisti italiani ha insegnato diverse cose, che terremo conto. Ad un anno di distanza dalla mia visita a Wernigerode, il ricordo è come se fosse oggi. In questo anno ti posso garantire che ogni giorno ho avuto il ricordo della DDR, e di ciò che ho visto nella DDR. Posso dirti che il ricordo è pari alla tristezza di non potere essere anche quest'anno in DDR.⁶⁷⁷

“Franco” described the sense of exhaustion after a long, hot day inside his factory in Carpi, and then moved to a description of the Italian political situation. «One thing is for sure – he affirmed – always, every day, we advance towards socialism. And I can guarantee you that Chile, to us Italian communists, has taught many things, that we will take into account». Inside here, there was a reflection of Enrico Berlinguer’s sensitivity about the short rise and tragic fall of Salvador Allende’s socialist experiment in the Latin American country, but also a sense of direction that, even in 1976, was not fading away. Was “Franco”, as well as we have seen with Angelo Patriarca, aware about the ideological distance that – beyond the common stance on socialism – was crossing the stories of the PCI and of the SED? The personal bond he had created with Martin Kilian, in this case, seems to leave all these issues and complexities in the background.

Not only the contacts among single personalities, however, were considered valuable for strategic purposes, but also every typology of relation among collective subjects which could serve to the broadening of the twinning at the *societal* level. Very wide, in this sense, was for instance the “twinning council” of Collegno, to which administrators, technicians, militants and labor unionists adhered, as single personalities. Part of it, however, were also associations, cinema, music and sport clubs, parties, and self-organized groups of workers inside the factories. Right from a group of factory workers in Reggio Emilia came a letter addressed to their GDR comrades, in 1971:

Es sind noch viele Probleme im Betrieb zu lösen, aber die Arbeiter der „Conchiglia“ sind in Kampf geeint und zu Opfern bereit, um das Endziel zu erreichen, d. h. immer mehr in der Fabrik und in der Gesellschaft zu zählen. Wir können feststellen, dass in unserem Betrieb eine starke politische Bewegung besteht, von 220 Beschäftigten sind 100 Arbeiter Mitglied der IKP. Aus diesem Grund haben wir die Betriebsparteigruppe „La Conchiglia“. [...] In eine Zukunft, die wir als Kampf für die sozialistische Umgestaltung der Gesellschaft verstehen. Über den Kampf hinaus möchten die Arbeiter der „Conchiglia“ ihre Beziehungen zu Arbeitern anderer Länder ausdehnen, und aus diesem Grund möchten wir gerne einen Briefwechsel mit Arbeitern der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik beginnen. Darüber hinaus haben wir uns vorgenommen, um die Kenntnis der Probleme der deutschen Arbeiter zu vertiefen, Abonnements für die DDR-Revue zu gewinnen, die wir sehr interessant zur Verbesserung unseres gegenseitigen Kennenlernens gefunden haben.⁶⁷⁸

⁶⁷⁷ Ibidem.

⁶⁷⁸ StaS, R1/896, *Abschrift, Reggio Emilia, d. 28. Juni 1971.*

The workers were interested in learning how other countries (from the East) were conducting their strikes and battles. It is not easy to understand to which extent their initiative was independent and spontaneous, or if they had been addressed by the party or the labor union. However, this action too was beneficial for both the necessities of the GDR and of the PCI, which could make use of contacts with a socialist country to reinforce the communist belonging in the factory. Another example of a collective interest from the civil society, this time more clearly and directly channeled by the municipality, is to be found, again, in the case of the twinning between Carpi and Wernigerode. In the occasion of the first convention of the towns twinned with the GDR (Florence, 1969) the administrators of Carpi repeated that, in their opinion, the most important channel of contact remained «the sending of delegations of young workers and students, administrators, labor unionists and women». The quantity of people sent to East Germany was remarkable: between 1964 and 1969, the citizens of Carpi who had been hosted by Wernigerode were 111, «of which 71 were students and workers between 16 and 21 years old». The emphasis on this element is not casual, especially if we think that students and workers were the main political target of the PCI after '68. The (good) reception they received there was not always, but very often, the main element that the delegation members considered in evaluating the trip, rather than political issues. These people were offered to «refresh their energies, in the green of the majestic woods in which Wernigerode is set», the young ones especially had «the possibility to visit factories, schools, agricultural collective cooperatives, nursery schools, childcare centers». ⁶⁷⁹ Everything was organized in the best way, in order to raise interest, sympathy and identification as much as it was possible. As highlighted in the methodological chapter, the *Inszenierung*, the *embellishment* of the GDR reality with the aim of impacting the visitors is an element that always needs to be taken into account, as difficult as it may seem to distinguish, at least in the documents, between an average formality in the welcoming attitude and the possibility of such a “staging”. In this sense, where possible, the effort – acknowledging recent research on the GDR, and being aware of control, repression and blockage in that system – is to read between the lines.

The words used by Carpi in describing the reception in the GDR, however, could also be interpreted as double-sided. Reading the document, the delegation members in Wernigerode had the possibility of seeing the East Germans’ «way and tenor of life, their customs and traditions, and experiment their affability, kindness and hospitality». ⁶⁸⁰ Everything – «the reception of the

⁶⁷⁹ ASCC, Carteggio gemellaggio Carpi-Wernigerode, b. Corrispondenza gemellaggio CP-Wernigerode 62-79 I, fasc. “anni 62-79”, *I convegno dei comuni gemellati con comuni della Repubblica democratica tedesca (Firenze, 19/20 aprile 1969)*.

⁶⁸⁰ *Ibidem*.

delegation, in official form, in the council chamber in front of counsellors and officials of the various local organs; the efforts so that they could feel at ease; the constant attention with which they were followed», all these elements, which had contributed to their well-being, could also be read differently, with *effort* and *attention* being synonyms, respectively, for the (East German) concern about the risk of representing the GDR as a grey country; and a *controlling* approach. What can be affirmed for sure, is that taking good care of the hosts was a clever way to guarantee their collaboration, once they got back to Italy. This was clearly stated at the convention in Florence: for normal militants and activists, the positive judgment was an almost natural consequence of a good reception, and task of the administrators was also to make sure that the communication after the trip followed the right paths. «The best gratitude for the hospitality received and for the experience can only be propagating that reality». This is – so ended the remark – «what our young people and all the others of the various delegations have done and keep doing, diffusing the materials that the GDR friends periodically send us, organizing meetings with other young people and fellow citizens, weaving talks with friends and acquaintances». ⁶⁸¹ Many of the activists tried to stay in contact with their friends across the Iron Curtain by maintaining the subscription to the GDR journal. ⁶⁸²

Sometimes, the visits could take the form of simple *holidays*. The romanticizing experience of vacation in the most well-known places of the GDR, oftentimes surrounded by beautiful landscapes opposed to the ferment of capitalism and consumerism, concurred to the general strategy, too. In this sense, special state-connected agencies existed in the GDR, which collaborated with the towns involved in the twinnings. One of them, for instance, was the *Jugendtourist. Abteilung für Jugend-Auslandstouristik*, which represented a sort of travel agency for and to the *Deutschen Demokratischen Republik* and kept its focus on young people. «Our visitors – they wrote – always confirm that the hours spent in the company of German or foreign touristic groups are part of their best memories. Meetings of such a kind give more than any other thing a quick and vast impression of the life of our youth». ⁶⁸³ However, holidays were organized in many forms and for many age groups and needs. Family delegations were often hosted, as in the case of Angelo Patriarca, Giovanni Favaretto, Carlo Mastri and Adriano Donegatti from Collegno, who were hosted in 1974 with their wives and children. ⁶⁸⁴ Children were also addressed from time to time, through groups of young pioneers.

⁶⁸¹ Ibidem.

⁶⁸² In the case of Collegno, for instance, long subscription lists are available. Among the more or less 40 ones who regularly asked for news at the end of 1973, were for instance Maurizio Drappella – one of my interviewees – and the previously quoted Angiolino Patriarca. See ASCO, Gemellaggi, b. Neubrandenburg 1974-75, fasc. “Neubrandenburg”, *Elenco interessati a Rivista-RDT su richiesta di Verlag Zeit im Bild*.

⁶⁸³ NeuSta, 2.00 AE, *Reisebüro der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik Jugendtourist. Abteilung für Jugend-Auslandstouristik Offerta di viaggi per l'anno 1965*.

⁶⁸⁴ NeuSta, 2.00 AE, *Brief von Carlo Bolzoni an Heinz Hahn, 14.3.1974*.

Oftentimes, they were hosted in summer colonies connected to the factories – in 1966, in the case of Collegno, they stayed at the *VEB Wohnungsbaukombinat* – and they had the opportunity to spend time with the children of East German workers.⁶⁸⁵

Too numerous groups, or the simultaneous invitation of more delegations, were usually avoided, as that could be confusing with regard to the aim of the visit. With too much people, it was difficult to convey precise and detailed information. This was true for children but also for adults: in 1972, the municipality of Neubrandenburg noted down that, in the future, it would have been better not to invite Italian and French militants at the same time, as «the group would have then become too big and there would be difficulties with the translation, with the personal exchange of thoughts, and *with the planned political influence*».⁶⁸⁶

Significantly, however, this level of pervasiveness in the Italian and East German societies was considered a successful tool mostly in the case of small twinned towns, where the sphere of sociability was given more value. Also, having international contacts was considered an element of pride for smaller, provincial centers. This last element was probably not present in the two cases of Bologna and Livorno, where economic exchanges were more central. This lack of involvement of society was perceived by militants and activists, but also by middle-level officials that were involved in the twinning organization.

Connecting personalities

There is a third category of actors, other than administrators and activists, that needs to be explored, albeit briefly. It is the one of those which I have decided to call *connecting personalities*. I am referring here to Italian and German translators and interpreters, and to all those who knew the other's language and actually made the communication possible. Translators were much more than just depositaries of the language and professionals hired and payed by the administrations of two different communist systems to convey the desired information, and report speeches and meetings according to the decided standards. They were central characters in transnational communication, as they made an otherwise impossible communication *conceivable*. In this sense, I chose to use the term *connecting personality*, so as to more strongly highlight the role of translators and interpreters as cultural linkers.

⁶⁸⁵ ASCO, Gemellaggi, b. anni 60, fasc. "Nbg 1966", *Lettera di Otto Kunze a Ruggero Bertotti, tradotta in italiano, del 4-5-1966*.

⁶⁸⁶ Italics mine. See NeuSta, 2.00 AE, *Bericht über die italienischen Lehrerdelegation zum Lehrersymposium vom 31.3.1972-4.4.1972*.

The statute itself of twinned towns dealt with language, which was perceived as a potential problem but also as the most important challenge which could be faced and resolved positively through a wise use of communication. The diversity of language could represent an obstacle in establishing personal contacts «even at their most modest degree»; however, one of the essential aims of the twinings was identified in the following principle: «the right of all the men to their mother language is accompanied to the obligation for all the men to acquire the use of a living language of a worldwide communication».⁶⁸⁷ The ultimate scope of the twin town movement was the «edification of a bilingual world».⁶⁸⁸ In this sense, translators were the starting point and an essential element of the relations. Paradoxically, as it has long been shown in literature, their centrality went hand in hand with their anonymity.⁶⁸⁹ This also emerges from the archival documents and the interviews I have conducted: their life stories and personalities are hidden behind the lines and difficult to grasp in their totality, with rare exceptions.

A *Fremdsprachendienst der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik*, called „Intertext“ existed, its task was to recruit interpreters and translators. Every field had its specific translating figure, specialized in certain topics, as shown by the case of Schwerin. The *Fremdsprachendienst* assigned to the GDR town, for the translations with Reggio Emilia, the professional Reinhard Kielis, with a particular expertise in the *Kommunalpolitik*. Not always, however, were the interpreters sent from above: in some cases, as it happened in Neubrandenburg, the communication with Italy was handled in a more familiar way, taking advantage of the service of trusted people, who oftentimes had double origins or a mixed family. When possible, that could significantly contribute to the creation of acquaintance, but also, from the GDR side especially, to the reliability of the translation, when it came to approach important political speeches.⁶⁹⁰ Some of these “known personalities” were professionals, some were not. However, the existence of a previous connection was always preferred, as it usually helped creating stronger bonds. A touching case is the story of “Angela”, an Italian woman, living in Dresden and supposedly a former citizen of Carpi who moved to East Germany before or during the Second World War. Since she was working as a professional translator, she was asked by Augusto De Pietri, faithful collaborator of the mayor of Carpi, to translate a diary of a group

⁶⁸⁷ ASCO, Gemellaggi, b. Neubrandenburg 1970, fasc. FMVJ, *Consiglio cittadino di gemellaggio*.

⁶⁸⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁸⁹ This is a long-researched topic: among the most recent and well-known works about this see Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* (London/New York: Routledge, 1995). For an updated edition: Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility* (Abingdon/New York: Routledge, 2008). About this point, I thank for the interesting suggestions and discussions Luise Fast in particular, together with the whole group of Martina Kessel's research class at the University of Bielefeld.

⁶⁹⁰ StaS, R1/896, *Fremdsprachendienst der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik an dem Rat der Stadt Schwerin, internationalen Verbindungen, Rostock, 6.12.1973*.

of students who travelled to Wernigerode in 1965. Her letter to De Pietri – whom she seems to know well – is an interesting reflection of the life of an Italian living abroad in such a peculiar country as the GDR.

Scusa se ti scrivo male ed in fretta, purtroppo di tempo libero ne ho sempre tanto poco. Dopodomani arrivano alcuni italiani qui a Dresda, ed io sarò con loro, e poi andrò per due settimane alla Fiera di Lipsia. Se non facessi l'interprete di lavoro, che mi consente di essere sempre tra connazionali, io credo morirei dalla nostalgia. Finora non ho ottenuto nulla, tu sai di cosa parlo, giorni fa è arrivato il sesto rifiuto. Per oggi termino, salutami caramente Bruno ed i ragazzi, ricordo spesso voi tutti con affetto e nostalgia. Un caro saluto e tanti auguri di bene a te e famiglia. Angela.⁶⁹¹

The letter is an interesting document on at least two levels. Firstly, it is an example of how difficult it could be to communicate via post because of the East German censorship. Even if she wrote in Italian, she did not dare to name what she was probably referring to – that is, we can assume, the official request to return to Italy: «So far I have not obtained anything, *you know what I mean*, days ago the sixth refusal has arrived».⁶⁹² Secondly, it is interesting to see the melancholy that permeates the letter, and that communicates us a lot about the condition of a woman who not only migrated, but supposedly found herself stuck in a geographical situation she had not been able to escape anymore. To overcome this feeling and condition of isolation, she found comfort in correspondence and in the company of fellow Italians, whom she met at the Fairs or through delegations: «If I was not an interpreter, which allows me to always be among compatriots, I think I would die from nostalgia».⁶⁹³

Probably the best example, however, of the employment of a translator which had a personal connection with Italy is the one of Antonietta Wotin, much beloved and valued interpreter in the twinning between Collegno and Neubrandenburg, who seems to have played a fundamental role in reinforcing the translocal personal and also political bonds.⁶⁹⁴ Of Italian origins, she met her future (German) husband during the war time. When the war was over, she decided to marry him, take his surname and settle down in Neubrandenburg. Her life story became a living thread that contributed in keeping the two towns together; however, the local administration also considered her politically reliable, so much that she was used as immediate interlocutor. This is shown, for instance, by a letter that the head of the PCI in Collegno Carlo Bolzoni decided to send directly to her in 1973, after a

⁶⁹¹ ASCC, Carteggio gemellaggio Carpi-Wernigerode, b. Corrisp gemellaggio CP–Wernigerode anni 70 II, fasc. “Delegazioni in Rdt (Wernigerode) 68-75”, Angela [?] ad Augusto [De Pietri], Dresda, 14.2.65.

⁶⁹² Italics mine. Ibidem.

⁶⁹³ Ibidem.

⁶⁹⁴ The personality of Antonietta Wotin has been touched upon in the interview with Heinz Hahn, too: see Interview to Heinz Hahn. About her, also see Karl-Heinz Engel, *In Collegno „la nostra Mamma”*, in „Neubrandenburger Zeitung“, 20. Januar 2001. However, she has also been mentioned many times by Jürgen und Marion Lippold, nowadays promoters and active members of the Europa-Union of Neubrandenburg, and by Dolores Brunzendorf, who has for some years been *Stadtpräsidentin* of Neubrandenburg. I thank them all for the precious talks and help and for their warm hospitality in Neubrandenburg.

period spent in Moscow, where he attended the party school. In the letter, he kindly asked Wotin to translate his note and forward it as soon as possible to the comrades Müller, Stiegelmeier and Lenz.⁶⁹⁵ Because of her work and commitment, she was considered by the administrators of Collegno on the same level of party functionaries or collaborators of the municipality who were directly involved in the twinning. Being taken in such consideration, she was regularly thanked with gifts from Italy. Lilo Stiegelmeier, for instance, received ceramics, glassware, lace, perfumes and artisan products from Sardinia; Antonietta Wotin got pens, various kinds of jewelry, *gianduiotti* (little chocolates typical of the Turin area), and then books, Italian dolls and clothing (*Sup-Hose* – thigh-highs – strips of cloth and foulards), both for her and her two young nephews.⁶⁹⁶ *Frau* Wotin remained interpreter until the late 1980s, and was never substituted.⁶⁹⁷

However, for both sides of greater importance was that the political communication was conducted properly, especially when commercial or economic issues were at stake. So, for instance, at least since 1968 the municipality of Bologna had used official translators who signed and sealed every translated document or letter, therefore taking responsibility for it, in case something went wrong. Even if it may not appear as particularly relevant, the presence of an institutional, trustworthy translator was a guarantee, especially at the end of the 1960s, in such a delicate bond such as the one between the PCI and the SED and in international relations, between the two states. Appointed for official translations was Leonida Garagnani.⁶⁹⁸ His presence was even more important if we consider that the correspondence of the mayors of Bologna was not only exchanged with their colleagues in the GDR, albeit of an important town like Leipzig, but also, sometimes, with national politicians such as Irene Gysi, *Abteilungsleiterin* (“Department head”) of the East German Ministry of Culture. In this sense, a translation mistake could be crucial for mutual political communication and diplomatic contacts.⁶⁹⁹

In general, interpreters (*Dolmetscher*) and co-workers of the Italian institutions in the GDR, especially if they were Italian, were subject to a strict control. Johannes Lill has shown such a vigilance, from the side of East German authorities, in the attitude towards some collaborators of the Italian Chamber of Commerce, and in particular of a charwoman, a driver and an interpreter, in 1965.

⁶⁹⁵ NeuSta, 2.00 AE, *Brief von Carlo Bolzoni an Antonietta Wotin, Collegno, 4.9.1973.*; for the answer, likewise translated by Frau Wotin, see NeuSta, 2.00 AE, *Brief von Werner Lenz an Carlo Bolzoni, Neubrandenburg, 13.7.1973.*

⁶⁹⁶ ASCO, Gemellaggi, b. Neubrandenburg 1974-75, fasc. “Neubrandenburg”, *Elenco regali per amici di Neubrandenburg, s. d.*

⁶⁹⁷ ASCO, Gemellaggi, b. Neubrandenburg 85-86-87, fasc. “Neubrandenburg 1985-86”, *Delegazione di insegnanti ospite a Neubrandenburg nel mese di novembre 1985.*

⁶⁹⁸ ASCBO, Fondo Ufficio esteri, b. Lipsia 1960-1972, fasc. “Lipsia 1968”, *Traduzione italiana della lettera di Walter Kresse a Guido Fanti, Lipsia, 25 ottobre 1968.*

⁶⁹⁹ *Ibidem.*

Although they had been guaranteed for as trustworthy and reliable by the PCI, the GDR authorities were suspicious, and asked for more precise evaluations of the “Italian comrades”. In their conception, they needed to be treated as «intellectuals» especially – they pointed out – the interpreter Jacchia, who had a decidedly attitude towards mental opposition.⁷⁰⁰

Such a diffidence, however, seems to have been present also on the Italian side. Many were the cases, as emerges from the documents, in which the Italians did not fully trust what they heard from interpreters. One of my interviewees, the (*socialist*) member of the municipality of Livorno Massimo Bianchi, has suggested – with a somehow ironical tone, but fully expressing his thought on the topic – that the interpreters could be «spies». «You could not approach anyone because everything was always controlled, and everything was *of a chronometric precision*. If you had to be in the hotel hall at nine, at nine you saw the guide – *that was the spy* – and it appeared that it was nine o’clock».⁷⁰¹ A non-sympathetic view of the guides-interpreters also came from a delegation of labor unionists from Modena, which travelled to Potsdam in the early 1970s. Among many quarrels about organizational aspects, the group pointed out that the interpreters were a «negative aspect». *Ci vuole da qui* (“we need one from here”) – they pointed out. In connection with what they lamented as a scarce contact with the people and the workers, and too little time for discussions and confrontations, they probably perceived the interpreter as part of a bureaucratic and overly organized system, as element which had been sent from outside and was thus perceived as external.⁷⁰²

Diffidence and dissatisfaction were fought through a careful selection. When the choice of the “connecting personality” was good, that had good repercussions for both sides. Again, in the case of Bologna, from the archival documents we learn that in 1970 the Italian Federico Mattei, resident in Leipzig, had been appointed as responsible for the official translation to the delegation guided by the assessor of the Bologna municipality Giovanni Favilli. We do not know any details about Mattei, but Favilli wrote to him personally, thanking him about his work and guidance.⁷⁰³ A preventive choice

⁷⁰⁰ BArch, SAPMO, DY 30 IV A2/20/514, *Rechenschaftsbericht des Parteisekretärs Perschon auf der Parteisammlung am 29.3.1965*, quoted in Johannes Lill, *Völkerfreundschaft Im Kalten Krieg? Die Politischen, Kulturellen Und Wirtschaftlichen Beziehungen Der Ddr Zu Italien 1949-1989* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2001), p. 396.

⁷⁰¹ Italics mine. Interview to Massimo Bianchi, Livorno, September 19, 2017.

⁷⁰² ISTOREMo, ASCGILMo, *Politica sindacale e contrattuale, Politica internazionale, Rapporti coi sindacati esteri, 1963-1978*, b. 181, *Riunione delegazione RDT (Giovani)*.

⁷⁰³ «Bologna, 16 marzo 1970

Herrn Federico Mattei

701 Leipzig – Christianstrasse 10

Repubblica Democratica Tedesca

Caro Mattei,

fra i molti positivi ricordi dei giorni trascorsi a Lipsia ricorre sempre il Suo: perché Lei con molta competenza e con intelligenza è stata la validissima guida ed il validissimo interprete della delegazione.

Le esprimo di cuore tutta la mia gratitudine anche a nome di mia moglie e degli altri compagni di viaggio e La prego di scusarci per la fatica che Le abbiamo imposto.

was made, instead, by a delegation from Leipzig, which, travelling to Italy for the first time in 1971, roughly two years before the GDR's recognition, decided to bring an interpreter directly from the GDR – Giannina Thurm – probably in order to avoid misunderstandings, and therefore possible diplomatic accidents.⁷⁰⁴

However, a good communication was key also in the case of smaller towns and objectives, as shown by the case of Carpi and Wernigerode. In 1974, the mayor's collaborator Augusto De Pietri, he himself a very good connoisseur and user of the German language, contacted Wernigerode's mayor Kilian, talking about translators' issues. «You understand – wrote De Pietri – that it is not about Mrs. Losito or others, that always tried to do their best». The problem was that the requested task was to «translate political concepts about quite complicated, specific issues». Although he knew «that it [was] not always easy to have those good interpreters at disposal», nevertheless he kindly asked Kilian whether it was possible to reach a common solution on that point.⁷⁰⁵ The well-known topos of *traduttore-traditore* (“translator-traitor”) could be very well applied here to the political dimension. The ones who did not translate well, or properly, or whose political faith was doubted of (especially from the side of the GDR) did not accomplish his/her task as militants, and were, to a certain extent, traitors: linguistically and, consequently, also politically.

The linguistic issue, however, was also taken care of by the local communities, in the Italian case. As was highlighted in a meeting of the town twinning committee of Collegno in 1966, after a first phase of getting-to-know-each-other, the twinning with Neubrandenburg had apparently reached a level of «direct relation between the organizations of the two cities». «For this reason – emphasized the group – a major knowledge of the respective languages is necessary, and it will be the main task of the various organizations to find, for that purpose, the most appropriate forms».⁷⁰⁶ In this sense, the municipality of Collegno was ready to implement a concrete commitment, starting from middle school, where German had to be studied. Not only: the group encouraged the «gathering of newspapers, documents, movies, photos, exhibitions, and everything that involved the life of [the] two towns in a dedicated venue at the twinning committee». There, those who wanted would «receive

Considero assai positivi i risultati della visita della delegazione del comune di Bologna: l'importante ora è di continuare nel lavoro intrapreso affinché questi primi contatti continuino e divengano veramente proficui.

Con cordialissimi saluti ed auguri mi creda Suo

Giovanni Favilli». See ACSBO, Fondo Ufficio esteri, b. Lipsia 1960-1972, fasc. “Lipsia 5-10 marzo 1970 (Favilli-Colombari-Rubbi)”, Giovanni Favilli a Federico Mattei, Bologna 16 marzo 1970.

⁷⁰⁴ ACSBO, Fondo Ufficio esteri, b. Lipsia 1960-1972, fasc. “Visita di una delegazione di Lipsia a Bologna in occasione della Fiera (4-7 ottobre 1971)”, sottofasc. “Delegazione di Lipsia a Bologna 4-7 ottobre 1971”, *foglio sciolto*.

⁷⁰⁵ StaWe, WR III/1267, *Augusto De Pietri an Martin Kilian, Carpi, 14 September 1974*.

⁷⁰⁶ ASCO, Gemellaggi, b. anni 60, fasc. “Nbg. 1966”, *Comunicato sulla visita della delegazione di Collegno dal 6 al 20 agosto 1966 a Neubrandenburg*.

pieces of information, consult the documentation and maintaining the good relations born during the meetings and the travels».⁷⁰⁷

5.2 Translocal fields of convergence

Thanks to linguistic transfer, important pieces of information could be conveyed. In this section, I will show empirical evidence about some *convergences* that took place between the Italian red local administrations and the ones in the GDR. Italians who went to East Germany through delegations observed, studied, intensely discussed, sometimes criticized what they saw there. I could have employed another word to refer to these connections and their practical outcomes: for instance, *entanglement*, an expression that is going through fortunate times in historiography, and that signals a transnational connection among subjects that are not necessarily restricted to the state actors. The basic assumption behind this concept, which has its roots in trans-cultural history, is that nations are not exclusive categories in historiographical research but are a product of interaction and transnational (or global) circulation, which brings societies closer. I think it is worth asking to what extent this dissertation has an *entanglement* as object. How interconnected were the Italian and East German local societies? Which degree did their exchange reach? As much as I do not question the transnational character of this research – I see *transnational* as a more flexible term, that highlights connections without specifying their degree – I don't think it is possible to speak about an entanglement in this case.⁷⁰⁸ The knowledge exchange; the study of reciprocal experiences; and the enthusiasm and the attention displayed, moreover almost uni-directionally by Italians,⁷⁰⁹ did not conduct to a full penetration of those ideas grasped through the international contacts into the local implementations. Interconnectedness sounds to me as an interpenetration; and in this case this did not happen to this extent.

I will bring one example about the limits of the *entanglement* category. As it is the case with most of the global connections, the either one-sided or reciprocal attention often has an implicit boundary: that the intellectual, ideological and also practical connections were often instrumental to internal politics. Wolfram Kaiser and Klaus Dittich, in a recent essay on political communication

⁷⁰⁷ Ibidem.

⁷⁰⁸ I very much thank Klaus Schroeder for the initial suggestion and all the participants to Thomas Welskopp's research class at the University of Bielefeld for the possibility of sharing thoughts about *entanglement*.

⁷⁰⁹ In this sense, we can talk about an "*asymmetrisch verflochtene*" *Parallelgeschichte*, as Bernd Faulenbach and the many contributors of his edited volume have done in analyzing the history of the two German states during the Cold War. See Bernd Faulenbach, ed., "*Asymmetrisch Verflochtene Parallelgeschichte?*" *Die Geschichte Der Bundesrepublik Und Der DDR in Ausstellungen, Museen Und Gedenkstätten Essen* (Essen: Klartext, 2005). New reflections on this point are contained in Detlev Brunner, Udo Grashoff, and Andreas Kötzing, eds., *Asymmetrisch Verflochten?. Neue Forschungen Zur Gesamtdeutschen Nachkriegsgeschichte* (Berlin: Christoph Links Verlag, 2013).

exchange and policy transfer through world exhibitions, have made, in my view, some brilliant considerations, that I would like to consider here.⁷¹⁰ The two authors have written that world exhibitions have contributed to «denationalizing transnational communication about policy ideas and institutional arrangements and their possible transfer across borders».⁷¹¹ However, they have pointed out that at the exhibitions, it also became clear that the institutions participating were culturally inseparable from their connected nation states and patriotic pride. Despite the communication between some topics, the rootedness of the policies at stake «in national traditions and values and the difficulties of transferring them wholesale or in a more selective way from one policy to another» were unavoidable aspects.⁷¹² It is interesting to note that the commonly discussed topics were those which could interest many of the participants from all over the world – such as the role of women, childcare, education for workers, hygiene, and so on.

Interestingly, similar topics were addressed in the 1960s and 1970s through twinnings, and most of them were connected to welfare policies. Without drawing easy parallels between two very different contexts, it is nevertheless possible to extrapolate the theme of the international platforms of meeting at one time as points of discussion, and as places of re-affirmation of a specific socio-cultural identity. In the case of world exhibitions at the beginning of the century, the mutual communication appeared to only have taken place on the superficial level, or at least not to have led to shared results or to the predominance of a model over another.

In the case of town twinnings, I found that some spaces of opening can enlarge this scheme, although never making these exchanges truly entangled either. The first aspect concerns a strong technical interest displayed by some personalities – members of local councils, assessors, experts – which suggests that the interest was not merely symbolic. The second aspect is connected to welfare in specific: there may have not been an actual importation of ideas and techniques from one side to the other, but certainly the topics connected to the care of men and women, which acquired even more power, visibility and relevance on a small scale, at the local level, were central both in the East and in the West, and had a European dimension, which overstepped geographical barriers and divisions thanks to the common belonging to international communism. This is not to say that there was a shared program: in the end, every country followed its own path.

Despite these difficulties about the definition of the exact extent to which the study of technical-administrative issues through twinnings had practical repercussions on Italian cities, the

⁷¹⁰ Wolfram Kaiser and Klaus Dittrich, “Political Communication at World Exhibitions,” in *Transnational Political Spaces: Agents - Structures - Encounters*, ed. Mathias Albert et al. (Frankfurt a. Main/New York: Campus Verlag, 2009), 162–84.

⁷¹¹ Kaiser and Dittrich., p. 180.

⁷¹² Ivi, p. 181.

necessity and the utility of going abroad to learn “how things were done elsewhere” was *reclaimed* as a fundamental aspect of communist administration. An example of this conception comes from a discussion in the provincial council in Livorno at the end of 1973: the overall aim was to renew the twinning pact started in 1967 with Rostock. Even if the twinning would have been approved in the end, with unanimous votes, a small internal discussion on the reasons of that bond had started. At the center of the stage were the attacks of non-defined right-wing opponents who argued that the trips to East Germany of the PCI’s provincial administrations had to be treated as though they were holidays. The communist and socialist administrators firmly responded to these critiques. In particular, the intervention of Ferdinando Barbieri (provincial council member and president of the Italy-GDR association in Livorno), allows us to highlight the peculiarities which were implicit in the way of administrating a communist local council:

Voglio soffermarmi anche sull’argomento introdotto dal collega Gherarducci a proposito di un nuovo gemellaggio per realizzare contatti degli amministratori locali con realtà significative di altri paesi. Noi sappiamo che c’è un certo qualunquismo (in genere di destra) che è pronto a sostenere che questi viaggi sono viaggi di vacanza, poiché si ignora che quando ci si reca in un altro paese, specialmente nella RDT, si lavora intensamente. Non si vuole che l'amministratore locale italiano allarghi le sue conoscenze prendendo in considerazione anche il modo come altri Paesi, senza pregiudizi di natura ideologica, hanno risolto alcuni problemi che la collettività italiana deve affrontare. Per esempio come la RDT ha risolto il problema di collegamento fra scuola, sport, tempo libero facendo della sua gioventù una gioventù che non solo primeggia in rapporto al rendimento lavorativo, ma primeggia anche nel settore delle attività sportive. Per esempio, se noi domani andassimo a vedere il modo come Tokio riesce a sanare il problema della viabilità interna per una comunità di 14 milioni di abitanti, probabilmente ci verrebbe rimproverato di aver approfittato dell’occasione per andare a vedere Tokio, pur essendo riconosciuto che l’incontro con altri popoli, la visita ad altri Paesi, per chi è militante della politica rappresenta un interesse notevole anche al fine di aprire la sua sfera di conoscenze. Non si vuole, invece, che gli amministratori diventino capaci di risolvere i problemi. I manovratori dei qualunquisti di destra ritengono che soltanto a loro debba spettare di fare tutte le esperienze possibili ed immaginabili, mentre l'uomo politico a livello parlamentare, governativo, locale deve restare all'oscuro, possibilmente senza leggere libri, con un solo giornale che dovrebbe essere quello che difende gli interessi di questi manovratori del qualunquismo. [...] Bisogna affermare invece che il gemellaggio non ha solo un grande valore morale in difesa della pace e della distensione, ma anche un valore di studio per rendere gli amministratori capaci di dare le migliori soluzioni ai problemi della comunità locali. Sottolineiamo ancora una volta il primato della politica su tutti gli altri interessi, da quelli privati a quelli di natura di prestigio di casta od altro, che sono quelli che, poi, stanno dietro all’eterna battaglia della democrazia e dell’antidemocrazia.⁷¹³

On the one hand, this intervention represented a general affirmation of the centrality of politics in the role of the administrators. At the same time, however, it seems to me that it is possible to discern a strong statement about the value of the twinning as valid instrument of *study*, as expansion of the knowledge of the Italian local administrator, «by taking into consideration also the way other

⁷¹³ APRLI, b. Presidenza Filippelli e Nannipieri, fasc. “Consiglio provinciale 26/09/1973”, *Discussione sopra l’accordo di Cooperazione tra il Parlamento del Distretto di Rostock (Repubblica democratica tedesca) ed il Consiglio provinciale di Livorno (Repubblica italiana) per gli anni 1974/75, Intervento di Ferdinando Barbiero.*

countries, without prejudices of ideological nature, have solved certain problems that the Italians have to face».⁷¹⁴ Moreover, the German Democratic Republic was pictured as a place where work, in that sense, was particularly intense.

Going back to *entanglement* – I think this category can be of use and is absolutely *necessary* as a *political statement*: to affirm, strongly, that nation-states are not the only subjects of history. However, its applicability depends on the contexts. What I try to do here is to undress this concept of its purely theoretical clothes and apply it to the sources that have guided me in this research. Stemming from this methodological decision, I have chosen to use the word *convergence*, instead of *entanglement*, to describe these mechanisms of connection between Italy and the GDR and their outcomes. As explained in the introduction, this expression does not imply the actual arrival to a same point, but is meant to define one or more paths that, to some extent, strive towards a same objective – the socialist horizon. In this sense, despite the different state systems in which they were located, and the different ways of conceiving communism, local administrations in Italy and the GDR were *convergent* in many fields.

5.2.1 Economy and trade

In 1970, the Tuscan Christian Democrat Felice Cecchi wrote on the journal “Politica” the reasons why, in his opinion, commercial contacts with the GDR had to be improved. He argued that it was of «vital importance for our economy, held up mainly by the international interchange, to increase its possibilities of penetration in new markets» such as the ones of Eastern Europe. He mentioned the FIAT-URSS agreement as a proof that Italian authorities were oriented towards that direction. «As far as relations with the GDR are concerned, however, things are going very slowly, and [...] we are risking missing the bus. And it is not a secondary bus route». Cecchi proceeded as follows:

Fanno capo alla Repubblica democratica tedesca una serie di canali di esportazione per numerosi paesi del terzo mondo altrimenti chiusi ad ogni possibilità di rapporto commerciale con l'Occidente, vuoi per difficoltà di carattere puramente economico e monetario, vuoi per ostacoli di natura politica. La RDT, della cui solidità di stato industriale (è infatti tra le prime nazioni del mondo in questo settore) non è lecito dubitare, potrebbe essere quindi un ottimo intermediario.⁷¹⁵

In 1970, as we know, there was no proper agreement with the GDR, commercial exchange was kept at the level of only some goods every year. Cecchi identified the reason of that with the fear,

⁷¹⁴ Ibidem.

⁷¹⁵ Fondazione Turati (from now on FT), Carte Direzione nazionale PSI (1944-1994), Sezione internazionale (1956-1978), Sottoserie 4 “Paesi esteri”, UA137, fasc. 155 “Repubblica democratica tedesca (RDT)”, Felice Cecchi, “Germania Est. Riconoscenza senza Riconoscimento” in “Politica” 28/6/70.

from the Italian side, of offending the German ally (the Federal Republic of Germany), even if the GDR was a stable state reality, and despite Willy Brandt's new policies. I have found Cecchi's article stored in the archives of the Italian Socialist Party, together with another document, of unidentified origin, which appears to be a short analysis about the improvements of Italian-GDR commerce. In this document, the GDR was defined, again, as a stable commercial and industrial partner, due to its growth in production and exports. The long-term agreement for the exchanges between the two countries – valid for the period between January 1, 1970 and December 1, 1974 – was applauded because, in the absence of a diplomatic recognition, it guaranteed at least a greater stability and it allowed the export from the GDR of traditional products of the «basic industry» and «light industry», plus «various machines, among which were tool machines, polygraph and textile machines, precision scientific instruments, electrical and electronic products, etc.». ⁷¹⁶

To reach these objectives, town twinnings were a primary instrument. Economy and commerce can be identified as fields of convergence both between the two countries, at the governmental level; but also between their communist local realities, at the local level. In this section, I will focus mostly on the cases of Livorno and Bologna and their twin towns. In the first case, the intensification of port relations was at stake. Commerce through sea was strengthened through the contacts between Livorno and Rostock, as both harbor cities were important outposts for East-West exchanges. In the second case, central were the fair system and the connections between medium-small enterprises which characterized the Emilian economy. Leipzig was still at that time one of the oldest and biggest fair centers in Europe, where Eastern and Western actors and factories met twice a year, on the occasion of the spring and autumn events. Bologna, over the 1960s, was enhancing its fair pole. ⁷¹⁷ In my view, the strategic points behind these twinnings – the ports, and the fairs – were, on the one hand, of national economic interest. On the other, however, they were extremely relevant for the local economies of these medium-big towns with a high economic and political agency. I will try to emphasize this double outcome of the twinnings over the text.

The port

A Livorno come a Rostoch [sic!] il porto è determinante per le nostre città ed anche per i nostri distretti. A Rostock come a Livorno vi sono imprese industriali. Tuttavia vi è certamente una differenza e non bisogna dimenticarla, quando parlo di tutto questo. In modo particolare il Distretto e la città di Rostock

⁷¹⁶ FT, Carte Direzione nazionale PSI (1944-1994), Sezione internazionale (1956-1978), Sottoserie 4 “Paesi esteri”, UA137, “*La Repubblica democratica tedesca. Un interessante partner nelle relazioni economiche internazionali*”, Palermo 30 maggio 1970, s. d., s. a.

⁷¹⁷ ASCBO, Fondo Ufficio esteri, b. Lipsia 1960-1972, fasc. “Visite alle Fiere di Lipsia e Brno, settembre 1969”, *Delibera di Giunta*, 20.12.1969.

hanno compiuto un grande progresso economico nel corso degli ultimi anni, di cui purtroppo non si può parlare a proposito della nostra provincia.⁷¹⁸

So spoke Silvano Filippelli to the newspaper “Ostsee Zeitung”, interviewed after his visit to Rostock in 1967. He drew similarities between the two cities, centered around the port and the industrial factories connected to it. However, in Filippelli’s view, there was a fundamental difference: in the last years, Rostock and its district had experienced «a huge economic progress [...] of which, unfortunately, it [was] not possible to talk about» in the case of Livorno.⁷¹⁹ Whether that was a sort of *captatio benevolentiae* towards East Germans, or the sincere and straight expression of a point of view, it is difficult to determine with precision; most probably, a mixture of the two. However, for sure, the GDR’s industrial development – as shown by the documents stored in the PSI archives – was looked at with admiration and interest because of its rapid growth, and the port of Rostock was central in that context. Two years later, at the end of July 1969, Filippelli wrote to the Italian Ministry that «big cargo ships of the German Democratic Republic, coming right from Rostock, [had] call[ed] into [their] port for remarkable loads». The twinning was strategically aimed at this objective, through the sending of many Livornese citizens «of the most various social classes», for a «fruitful exchange of experiences in the various sectors, of activities, from the port ones, to the sanitary ones».⁷²⁰ A considerable number of administrators and technicians was involved. The delegation invited in 1967 was composed by Filippelli, by the vice president of the Livorno Province Valdo Del Lucchese, the provincial assessors Elvio Collu, Ali Nannipieri and Franco Ugolini, the members of the Provincial councils Manetti (PCI), Meucci (Liberal party), Pasquali (DC), Franco Torriggiani and Setti (*Partito Socialista Unificato*, PSU).⁷²¹ Moreover, the mayors of Livorno (Dino Raugi) and Cecina (Osvaldo Giovannelli) were present, together with the consul of the Port Company of Livorno (*console della Compagnia portuali di Livorno*) Italo Piccini⁷²² and Giorgio Gabriel,⁷²³ maritime entrepreneur.⁷²⁴ The composition of the delegation reflects the various interests connected to Rostock.

⁷¹⁸ APRLI, b. Presidenza Filippelli, fasc. “Rostock 1967”, *Intervista esclusiva dell’“Ostsee Zeitung” con il presidente della provincia di Livorno, Prof. Silvano Filippelli*.

⁷¹⁹ *Ibidem*.

⁷²⁰ APRLI, b. Presidenza Filippelli e Nannipieri, fasc. “Rostock maggio 1967”, *Lettera di Silvano Filippelli al ministro degli esteri, 28 luglio 1969*.

⁷²¹ It was the name that the new political party assumed in 1966, unifying the PSI and PSDI (social democrats) after 19 years of separation. See Paolo Mattera, *Storia Del PSI 1892-1994* (Roma: Carocci, 2010).

⁷²² Italo Piccini was selected as consul in 1963. From that year onwards, he practically guided the port of Livorno until 1989, year in which the *Compagnia Portuali* ceased to exist, to be absorbed by the Italian navigation Ministry.

⁷²³ Giorgio Gabriel was also the French consul in Livorno.

⁷²⁴ The rest of the document stated the following:

«Nell’ottobre dell’anno precedente, il consiglio provinciale di Livorno aveva rinnovato all’unanimità il gemellaggio col Distretto tedesco. Il primo concreto segno del patto di amicizia fu l’invio di capi di vestiario per i bambini della provincia alluvionati, e, poche settimane dopo, l’invito a soggiornare nel distretto. L’incontro della delegazione livornese con quella del distretto di Rostock è stata da tutti ritenuta un’eccezionale possibilità per confrontare esperienze diverse in ogni campo della vita sociale. Naturale è stato anche l’apprezzamento per lo sviluppo dell’economia e dell’assistenza sanitaria e

In this case, I did not have the possibility to visit the archives in Germany, but from some documents that I have found on the Italian side it is possible to assume that the interest was reciprocated, as shown by the words that Karl Deuscher, president of the Rostock *Bezirk* wrote to Silvano Filippelli, apparently with a certain appetite towards the economic potential of a town such as Livorno:

Der gesamte Bezirk zieht sich entlang der Ostsee und erhält sein Gepräge durch solche Industriezweige wie Schiffbau, Fischfang, Hafenwirtschaft und durch eine umfangreiche Landwirtschaft». ⁷²⁵

The persistence and the primary importance of the economic aspect in the twinings is suggested by a document drafted some years later, in 1974-1975. In the cooperation agreement for the prosecution of the twinning between Livorno and Rostock, the established common program directed particular attention to institutional problems and competences of the local elective organs; to the budget and financial organization; to public education, health and social security, relations among local organs and institutions and economic enterprises on the territory. The proposed activities included the organization of conferences; in this direction, the document stated that the possibility would have been examined to «use the maritime lines existing between Rostock and Livorno for those conferences, symposiums and possible other initiatives». ⁷²⁶ Probably, that was also a way to create the possibility of exchanging goods.

The fact that Livorno was of utmost importance for commerce from the GDR side, too, is backed by the presence of an honorary consulate of the GDR in the town, coordinated by the Fremura family. As Massimo Bianchi has told me, the consulate was connected with a GDR-Italy association which was «powerful, powerful in the sense of highly attended». Fremura was the «most important shipping consortium here [in Livorno] and [through it] many delegations from Livorno went to Rostock». ⁷²⁷ The Fremura – so stated Bianchi on this point – «were certainly not a family of revolutionaries, they had this consulate of the GDR besides the one of Spain, because obviously the ships of the GDR for the Livorno port were important, I mean, there was this merchant

scolastica. [...] I contatti allacciati si profilano di grande interesse sia nel settore amministrativo, che in quello economico – specie per quanto attiene i traffici marittimi – e in quello culturale; i membri della delegazione auspicano la tempestiva prosecuzione dei primi accordi». See APRLI, b. Presidenza Filippelli, *Pagina sciolta*; APRLI, b. Presidenza Filippelli, fasc. “Rostock 1967”, *Nota poi approvata con presa d’atto in sede di consiglio provinciale in data 6-7-1967*.

⁷²⁵ APRLI, b. Presidenza Filippelli e Nannipieri, fasc. “Rostock maggio 1967”, *Karl Deuscher an Silvano Filippelli, Rostock 21.1.1966*.

⁷²⁶ APRLI, b. Presidenza Filippelli e Nannipieri, fasc. “Rostock maggio 1967”, *Accordo di Cooperazione tra il Parlamento del Distretto di Rostock (Repubblica democratica tedesca) ed il consiglio provinciale di Livorno (Repubblica Italiana) per gli anni 1974/75*.

⁷²⁷ «[...] e a Livorno c'era una potente, potente nel senso di partecipata, associazione RDT-Italia e a Livorno c'era un consolato onorario della DDR della famiglia Fremura [...] Che è la più importante casa di spedizioni marittima qui e ci furono numerose delegazioni che da Livorno andarono a Rostock». See Interview to Massimo Bianchi.

component».⁷²⁸ The details about the connections between Livorno and Rostock would have been explained directly by a component of the family himself, Arturo Fremura. On a special number of the journal *Dal Tirreno al Baltico* (“From the Tirrenian sea to the Baltic sea”), he referred to the antique habit of men of reaching new ports to get to know new peoples and cultures. In that brief article, he was nevertheless raising an important point: by creating a connection with the old tradition of Tuscan merchants who exchanged goods with the Baltic populations, he highlighted that after that period, the «birth of the nation states [...] [had] diluted the direct discourse that could exist between two towns which were different in climate, latitude, habits or language, but bonded together by a commercial relation which necessarily had to create a climate of pacific collaboration».⁷²⁹ Fremura generated those historically forced parallelisms for a precise reason – namely, to insist on the independent role of towns, and on the issue of their contrast with the state. By using an analogous argument in 1986, Fremura was building an apologetic discourse about the legitimacy and the necessity of the town twinning with Rostock, although not on an ideal level, and not in the perspective of a reevaluation of the town dimension in merely internal politics, but on the very explicit level of economic advantage. The year in which the article was written is substantial, as it signals that the contacts between Livorno and Rostock went on – and with success – for many years. Fremura continued his article with many details, saying that right in 1967, year in which the town twinning among provincial councils was established, «[they] became agents for the DSR line of Rostock, the national navy of the German Democratic Republic», in times in which the GDR was still almost completely isolated. In that sense – highlighted Fremura – first Rome and then Milan had opened representation offices of the GDR. The third point of reference was Livorno, that, «due to problems of movement of the management of the DSR line, had become the home port of the line».⁷³⁰ For the GDR, Livorno was essential as a node to commerce with certain ports of Third world countries. The first four ships that touched Livorno were directed to the Middle-East, and more precisely to the Persian/Arabic Gulf. The names of those ships were «Werner Seelenbinder, Mathias Thesen, John Schehr, Heinz Kapelle», and had been «welcomed with a mixture of curiosity and diffidence from the side of Italian exporters». Was the diffidence connected to the fact that the GDR was a socialist country? Probably that was the main reason, but not much time was needed – as underlined, again, by Fremura – «to convince everybody

⁷²⁸ «[...] ma infatti i Fremura, che non sono certo una famiglia di rivoluzionari, avevano questo consolato della DDR oltre che quello della Spagna, perché naturalmente le navi della DDR per il porto di Livorno erano importanti, cioè voglio dire c'era questa componente mercantile». See Interview to Massimo Bianchi.

⁷²⁹ ISTORECO Livorno (from now on ISTOREL), Fondo Danilo Conti, *Rapporti commerciali e rapporti d'amicizia*, in “*Dal Tirreno al Baltico*”, numero unico, a cura della sezione ANPPA Centro Porto Vasco Jacoponi e del Comitato di Amicizia Livorno-Rostock. Novembre 1986.

⁷³⁰ Ibidem.

of the seriousness of purpose and of the high professionalism of the line». The relations had not been easy from the beginning; to reach a certain normalization, a deep reciprocal knowledge of the people involved in the commercial exchanges was necessary, and the twinning was the easiest and most fruitful path to reach such an aim.⁷³¹ Further information on the GDR-Italian networks through the sea comes from a 1980 report of Danilo Conti, communist and since the beginning of the 1980s president of the Italy-GDR association.⁷³² Conti went there in '80 with a delegation of port workers, visiting the harbors of Wilmar, Stralsund and Rostock. In these three localities were «three big shipyards which produce[d] the most modern mercantile ships, which sail the seas of the world».⁷³³ Conti remained impressed by the development of the Rostock harbor, noting down that its huge expansion in the previous years – in terms of new platforms, mechanical devices for the loading and unloading of goods and thus for the efficiency of the port – was necessary due to the growth of the general traffics and the increasing necessities of the young GDR nation, but also «as the traffics towards Czechoslovakia go through Rostock».⁷³⁴ A last view on the East German ports has been given by Massimo Bianchi, who likewise visited Rostock: «I have to say, I remember the navy construction site where the poor people suffered from cold, and so on, but anyway, they produced beautiful long-distance fishing fleets».⁷³⁵

I think it is possible to affirm that these relations were beneficial both on the national and on the local level. As a matter of fact, if on the one hand they contributed to the détente, to the peace-making process and to the establishment of diplomatic contacts that were central for the whole Italian market, on the other they were also, and perhaps mostly, a source of enrichment for the Livornese entrepreneurs. In this sense, the red local administration of Livorno did what it has been described, in the previous chapter, as *guidance* or *government of development*. It acted as a link, and provided a facilitating structure, for the (not necessarily communist or leftist) commerce men of Livorno to increase their incomes. This transversal nature of relations is visible also in the many opinions gathered by different political forces in the provincial council of Livorno. Everybody agreed with the

⁷³¹ Ibidem.

⁷³² Born in 1919 in Castellina Marittima (Pisa), Conti died in 1997 in Livorno. He was an artisan and then labor union responsible in Tuscany. He entered the PCI in Livorno in 1936 and was arrested for his antifascist activity in 1939. After being condemned by the *Tribunale speciale* to 6 years of prison, Conti was released after the fall of Fascism on July 25, 1943, when he reconnected with the PCI and participated to Resistance in the 3rd *Garibaldi* brigade. After the war, he was active in the PCI in many roles. He was also member of the local council in Livorno between 1951 and 1956 and, afterwards, was sent by the CGIL, as a responsible, in Brescia, Bergamo, Terni and eventually in Rome. In the 1980s, he became president of the Livornese Italy-GDR association. See Nota biografica di Danilo Conti, in Enzo Fiorentini, *Il Pci a Livorno. Congressi e Dirigenti Dalla Liberazione Al XXII Congresso* (Rosignano Solvay: Consorzio Nuovo Futuro, 2001), p. 93.

⁷³³ ArISTOL, Fondo Danilo Conti, *Resoconto visita al porto di Rostock, 1980*.

⁷³⁴ Ibidem.

⁷³⁵ Interview to Massimo Bianchi.

twinning, although with different motivations, on the surface. In 1967, a communist member of the provincial council, Carmignoli, highlighted that they had lived «a positive experience that allowed [them] to closely see the reality of a part of the GDR, and as communists – he added – to see a socialist country projected towards the development of a society that we fight to realize in our country».⁷³⁶ The socialist Barbiero added that, in his opinion, not only Italy had to learn from the GDR, but that the «friends and comrades» of the GDR, too could profit from the «transfer» of «some experiences from Italy to the GDR».⁷³⁷ However, in 1973, in a discussion on the twinning, even the liberal Meucci saw it as an «act of good will and comprehension towards all peoples»; he stated that it «was moved by love and by will of friendship with all the peoples of every regime»; and that «the mercantile initiatives create[d] openings of huge meaning for international détente». He declared himself favorable to the bond, «despite the dissent of [his] party about the seizure and the management of power in the analogous parties of Eastern Europe».⁷³⁸ We are thus in front of a well-integrated local system, guided by communists (and socialists, in this case), but to which all political sides contributed to for their own interests.

The fair, the enterprises

In the case of Bologna, the political element behind the commercial interests was even more hidden than with Livorno. From 1968 onwards, when the second version of the twinning with Leipzig was signed by the mayor Guido Fanti (on the vicissitudes of the twinning and the first friendship pact, see 3.1), relations found a certain continuity, but more on the economic and administrative level than on the strictly political-ideological one. This apparent political coldness is mirrored in the typologies of the people who took part to the delegations – mostly administrators and specialists of certain subjects, like doctors, architects or teachers. There was not a huge flow of activists and militants from Bologna: in my view, that happened as the will was to keep these contacts with Leipzig contained, under control. For the image of the reformist Bolognese and Emilian communists, a bond with the dogmatic, strongly pro-Soviet GDR could represent almost a disturbing element: so it is possible that communist administrators paid considerable attention in making sure that the twinning mechanisms

⁷³⁶ ARPLI, b. Presidenza Filippelli e Nannipieri, fasc. “Rostock maggio 1967”, *Intervento di Carmignoli, discussione sul Patto di gemellaggio con il distretto di Rostock (RDT), approvazione del documento sottoscritto a Rostock il 8 settembre 1973*.

⁷³⁷ «[...] Ma io credo che anche gli amici e compagni della RDT traggano dal contatto con noi italiani alcuni insegnamenti, perché questo gemellaggio non ha soltanto l’obiettivo di un trasferimento di esperienze dalla RDT al nostro paese, ma anche di alcune esperienze dall’Italia verso la RDT. Questo in fondo è anche affermato dal nuovo testo del patto di gemellaggio che la delegazione ha trattato insieme ai rappresentanti del distretto di Rostock [...]». ARPLI, b. Presidenza Filippelli e Nannipieri, fasc. “Rostock maggio 1967”, *Intervento di Barbiero, discussione sul Patto di gemellaggio con il distretto di Rostock (RDT), approvazione del documento sottoscritto a Rostock il 8 settembre 1973*.

⁷³⁸ ARPLI, b. Presidenza Filippelli, fasc. “Viaggio a Rostock 1967”, *Appunti manoscritti*.

and aims did not include a strong political sympathetic attitude but were directed towards administrative and commercial issues. This last one is the reason why there was another quite large grouping of people involved in the exchanges, and namely – although always at a level in which some responsibilities were involved – the one of commerce men, small artisans, and little-medium entrepreneurs, which quite well reflected the composition of the Bolognese society.

Among the commercial interests, of extreme centrality was the fair. As is well-known, Leipzig had one of the most ancient, international fair systems in all Europe, which dated back to the Middle Ages.⁷³⁹ After 1945, it had become one of the most central trade fairs of COMECON, the council for mutual economic assistance led by Moscow, and represented a meeting platform both for the East and the West. I believe that the fair can be seen as a place of double meaning. On the one hand, it was of interest for the Bolognese administrators as, in that period, they wanted to acquire new information on the management and functioning of the system, since the Bologna fair, too – in the 1960s – was in its best phase of expansion. As a matter of fact, on February 19, 1964, the *Finanziaria Fiere* was created – a product of a bilateral agreement between communists and Christian Democrats.⁷⁴⁰ On the other hand, Leipzig was a meeting point, a bridge, a strategic space for communication, the place where both business and tradesmen and politicians met to have political colloquia or to decide economic policies.

The very twinning between Bologna and Leipzig started with an invitation at the fair. It was 1962, and Walter Kresse wrote to Dozza that he would be happy to greet him at the fair as a host.⁷⁴¹ That first invitation, however, was declined, since the Italian Ministry of Interns did not extend the validity of the passport to the GDR. On that occasion, Dozza blamed the «obstructive» attitude of the Italian authorities towards the Leipzig fair. He suggested that there was a specific will to prevent political colloquia and contacts to take place.⁷⁴² The centrality of the fair in the mutual contacts was visible in many ways over the following years; and the interest of Bologna in getting to know other systems is in my view substantiated by the fact that in 1969 the administrators of the local councils had also planned to visit Brno, in Czechoslovakia, which also hosted a fair. On the occasion of a discussion about the expenses for the sending of representatives to both cities, in 1969, the reasons

⁷³⁹ Rolf Buschmann, *800 Jahre Leipziger Messe: Festschrift Des Leipziger Messeamtes Zur Jubiläumsmesse 1965 [1165 - 1965]* (Leipzig: Seemann, 1965).

⁷⁴⁰ On the creation of the *Finanziaria Fiere*, in concomitance with the *consigli di quartiere*, see Anderlini, *Terra rossa*, p. 109. The mixed political composition was reflected in the Presidency by the DC Fernando Filicori and the Vice-presidency, held by the communist Athos Bellettini.

⁷⁴¹ ASCBO, Fondo Ufficio esteri, b. Lipsia 1960-1972, fasc. “Lipsia-Gemellaggio 1962”, *Brief von Kresse an Dozza, Leipzig, am 27.2.1962*.

⁷⁴² ASCBO, Fondo Ufficio esteri, b. Lipsia 1960-1972, fasc. “Lipsia-Gemellaggio 1962”, *Brief von Dozza an Kresse, Bologna, 9 marzo 1962*.

for the will to participate to those meetings was identified in the will of expanding and developing *tourism*: «[...] the contacts of communal representatives with cities of other countries which present particular interest, on the economic, cultural, and touristic level» – was written in the document – and which have the aim of developing «*permanent relations* with the Bolognese and Emilian area, are to be considered as concretely productive» in order to start the expansion of the «touristic flows».⁷⁴³ With specific attention to Leipzig, the document recalled the «growing interest of the town environments, to which the local public authorities considered appropriate to show lively and concrete sensibility both on the terrain of the fair manifestations in Bologna, and of the visit of the civic delegation to the Leipzig fair». Such interest and sensibility – so appeared in the document – coincided with the central orientations which allowed the renewal of the previously recalled long-term agreement between the commercial institute of the two countries, valid until December 31, 1974. It seems to me, here, that the Bolognese administrators were attentive in moving in accordance to the general tendencies, so trying to stick to the national economic guidelines. Probably, a different attitude would have recalled too much attention on a red council which, in the 1960s and especially at the end of that decade, tried to picture itself as an exemplar model of good administration not only in the communist world, but also in Italy and Europe. At the same time, the document shows how those guidelines coincided with the sensibility of the «town environments», so businessmen and fair traders. In this sense, in this case, too it is probably possible to affirm that the administrators were trying to *govern development*, so as to act as guarantors and facilitators for the commercial relations of the citizens and traders of Bologna.

The touristic/commercial contacts had started with Zagreb, too and were planned with Brno. In 1969, a contact with a town of the former communist dissident Yugoslavia or with one of Czechoslovakia, fresh veteran of the Soviet repression after Dubcek's liberalization and the "Prague spring", were after all understandable from the side of the Bolognese reformist communists. What is more difficult to conceive was a bond with a town of the strictly pro-Soviet and repressive GDR. This is probably why the twinning with Leipzig was not exactly heralded with the Bologna population on the public level. However, it was fundamental for commercial maneuvers and – as we will see – also conducted to other points of contact. The approach (or re-approach) that happened in 1969, after the long break which followed Dozza's first twinning attempt in '62, was probably facilitated by the presence of many GDR politicians at the national congress of the PCI, which took place in Bologna. It was probably also bound by the presence, for the first time, of a significant pavilion of the GDR at

⁷⁴³ Italics mine. ACSBO, Fondo Ufficio esteri, b. Lipsia 1960-1972, fasc. "Visite alle Fiere di Lipsia e Brno settembre 1969", *Incontri di delegazioni di Bologna con le municipalità di Lipsia e Brno, su invito dei sindaci delle due città, in occasione delle rispettive fiere di settembre. Invito di rappresentanze civiche a Lipsia e Brno. Deduzioni.*

the Bologna Fair, as Guido Fanti himself reminded in a letter to Walter Kresse, together with the expression of the desire of re-laying the bases for «particular relations of friendship and cooperation between Bologna and Leipzig». ⁷⁴⁴

The centrality of the fairs is, again, suggested by the composition of the delegation which participated to the fair's autumn edition between September 6 and 9, 1969. Present were the mayor Guido Fanti and Athos Bellettini (PCI); Dante Stefani (member of the local council, PCI); Carlo Maria Badini (superintendent to the communal theatre, PSDI); Giulio Cesare Alberghini, Christian Democrat and Director of the *Ente Fiere* Bologna; and Giancarlo Negretti, member of the executive council of the Bologna fairs and member of the PCI. ⁷⁴⁵ On that occasion, the two parts agreed on the draft of a common program, which foresaw a continuous contact «to exchange experiences on the development of international fairs, which is in the common interest. For this purpose, delegations of the city of Leipzig will visit the Bologna Fair». ⁷⁴⁶ Members of the Fair were present also two years later, in September 1971, in Leipzig. At that time, the delegation was composed by the assessor Venanzio Palmini; Elio Zani, association of small traders; Giuseppe Fornasini (association of traders); Giuseppe Lambertini (*Ente autonomo Fiere Bologna*); Enzo Dall'Olio (association of provincial artisans), Raffaele Turrini (federation of cooperative companies) and Dante Cruicchi, press chief of the municipality of Bologna and already mentioned for his high commitment in international relations. On that occasion, the delegation could observe «the efficiency of the fair organization and the importance of the foreign participation, the Italian one included», together with several other aspects of the Leipzig organization, which they wrote down in a long report. ⁷⁴⁷ Apparently, Bologna was considered an important interlocutor, too, as the delegation was received by the director Horst Mohr and Harry Jensen, responsible of international relations, and director of the fair. In that colloquium, the opportunity emerged, to «establish a permanent relation with the correspondent productive and representative sectors of Bologna». The group noted down the internal organization of the fair structure, highlighting that «the chamber council» (*consiglio camerale*) «included 15 members, 5 of which [were] elected by the local council, while 5 [were] nominated from the labor unions and 5 by the director, who [was] designated through election».

⁷⁴⁴ ACSBO, Fondo Ufficio esteri, b. Lipsia 1960-1972, fasc. “Delegazione bolognese 6-8 settembre 1969 Sindaco Guido Fanti”, *Lettera di Guido Fanti a Walter Kresse, Bologna, 16 giugno 1969*.

⁷⁴⁵ ACSBO, Fondo Ufficio esteri, b. Lipsia 1960-1972, fasc. “Delegazione bolognese 6-8 settembre 1969 Sindaco Guido Fanti”, *Delegazione bolognese a Lipsia*.

⁷⁴⁶ ACSBO, Fondo Ufficio esteri, b. Lipsia 1960-1972, fasc. “Delegazione bolognese 6-8 settembre 1969 Sindaco Guido Fanti”, *Programma di lavoro 1970 per il contratto d'amicizia delle Città di Bologna e di Lipsia*.

⁷⁴⁷ ACSBO, Fondo Ufficio esteri, b. Lipsia 1960-1972, fasc. “Delegazione bolognese alla fiera autunnale di Lipsia, 8-12 settembre 1971 (Assessore Palmini)”, Sottofasc. “*Delegazione bolognese a Lipsia 8-12 settembre 1971*”.

Le decisioni fondamentali sono sempre prese dagli organi elettivi. Il consiglio designa altri due membri, oltre che il direttore, a far parte di una sorta di presidenza: uno rappresenta il comune e l'altro i sindacati. Vi è uno stretto legame con l'ente locale cittadino e la regione. I membri della camera di commercio e industria svolgono una attività economica, ma della stessa fanno parte dei "soci collaboratori" che sono degli esperti. Esistono dei gruppi di lavoro suddivisi per categoria, ma fondamentalmente tre sono i livelli sui quali s'incentra l'attività dell'ente: città, provincia e regione. I dirigenti frequentano corsi e visitano spesso le aziende produttive.⁷⁴⁸

In the report, the Bolognese group observed the strong connection between the local town power, the province and the region and their strong connection with the fairs. It is reasonable to believe that they appreciated that structure, as, after all, that was not so different from the one that Bologna was implementing in those years. The connection between the local institutions and the commercial world was a benchmark for Emilians, too.

The Italian report continued with a confrontation between the Italian and East German ways of dealing with commerce in the postwar. In the GDR, the decisions «had taken into account the reality and the necessity of conserving the productive, non-monopolistic forces», those which «in Italy are a greater part of the productive process and of the social composition of the population, besides the working class and the peasants».⁷⁴⁹ The difference in the systems was highlighted in other passages. The delegation members, for instance, seemed to appreciate the balance between the private and public sector in the GDR («a form of cooperation, and not of competition, is in place between the socialist and the private sector»), the socialization of services, and the fixity of prices and salaries, although they emphasized the strong centralization and control of these decisions by the state. However, if that was true for the GDR, «the instrument and the main conduit for external trade [was] the related Ministry», at the same time in Italy that was still conducted through «channels, institutions and men who only aimed at the maximum profit». They concluded by writing: «Something better needs to be done».⁷⁵⁰ The positive assessment of the experience emerged clearly at the end of the report:

L'intera delegazione ha riconosciuto l'utilità del viaggio che si è dimostrato un valido mezzo per mettere a confronto e conoscere le rispettive opinioni ed esperienze. Lo sviluppo economico della RDT è notevole. Non vi è stata, soprattutto negli ultimi anni, forzatura nell'estensione del settore socializzato. Si procede con molta prudenza e sempre sulla base del convincimento. Il sindaco di Lipsia ha una forte personalità e i suoi collaboratori hanno dimostrato di essere all'altezza dei compiti loro assegnati.

⁷⁴⁸ ACSBO, Fondo Ufficio esteri, b. Lipsia 1960-1972, fasc. "Delegazione bolognese 6-8 settembre 1969 Sindaco Guido Fanti", fasc. "Delegazione bolognese alla fiera autunnale di Lipsia, 8-12 settembre 1971 (assessore Palmi)", *Note sul viaggio a Lipsia, 8/12 settembre 1971*.

⁷⁴⁹ Ibidem.

⁷⁵⁰ Ibidem.

Not much later, the visit was reciprocated by a delegation from Leipzig– something which appears as quite peculiar if we think that it was in 1971, two years before the diplomatic recognition. The news about the visit was given on *L'Unità* and *L'Avanti*, the communist and socialist newspapers, but also on *Il Resto del Carlino*, the most popular newspaper in Bologna. In the articles, it was signaled that the East Germans had visited Milan, too, where they had signed a friendship pact with that municipality (not a town twinning).⁷⁵¹ It seems quite clear that the Leipzig delegation was likewise interested in the fair system of Milan. However, due to political limitations in the town council and in the public opinion, they would establish a twinning with the Lombard capital only in 1977. For Bologna, anyway, the visit of the East Germans was a further occasion to strengthen relations. The delegation reached the venue of the *Ente Fiere* Bologna, where it was received by some representatives, and discussed forms of a mutual collaboration, with the aim of a «ever-growing and active presence in the reciprocal fairs».⁷⁵²

During those years, the general participation to the Leipzig fair was reaching a considerable expansion and was attractive for Italians and Bolognese. In 1971, it included 6.500 exhibitors, from 55 states, of which 12 socialist, 15 developing countries, and 27 capitalistic states. Among them were, in the «first places for importance of participation, West Germany, France, Italy, Japan, Austria, Sweden». The expositions regarded mostly the chemical sector, road vehicles, machines for the woodworking, for the graphic industry, and the medical sectors. A big section was also dedicated to the education system: to the teaching methods, didactic materials, and so on.⁷⁵³ The fact that themes such as education and health were at the center of the fair, makes us realize that they were central for the exhibition of the GDR's realizations, but also for the other participants. This suggests, again, that certain topics were transversal and reached at least a European dimension of interest. The brochure for the presentation of the fair to the Italian public also pointed out some shortcomings of the Italian enterprises: for instance, the scarce attention towards the so-called “engineering”, the sector dedicated to planning both for industries and for civil, social constructions, among which were schools, hotels, and streets. Especially in this field, the brochure explained that a concrete business interest had come from Emilia-Romagna and Lombardy and concluded that «[in that] field, too, [Italy was] deciding to start a path on which other countries have already for a long time preceded it with success». In this sense, the fair was an irreplaceable business platform, as visible from the long list of enterprises which

⁷⁵¹ ACSBO, Fondo Ufficio esteri, b. Lipsia 1960-1972, fasc. “Visita di una delegazione di Lipsia a Bologna in occasione della Fiera (4-7 ottobre 1971)”, sottofasc. “Delegazione di Lipsia a Bologna 4-7 ottobre 1971”, “*Il sindaco di Lipsia ospite della città*”, in *L'Avanti*, 7 ottobre 1971.

⁷⁵² *Ibidem*.

⁷⁵³ ACSBO, Fondo Ufficio esteri, b. Lipsia 1960-1972, fasc. “Delegazione bolognese alla fiera autunnale di Lipsia, 8-12 settembre 1971 (assessore Palmi)”, *Bollettino Fiera di Lipsia*.

decided to participate, singularly or in connection to the Italian Institute for External Trade. Among them were also important companies like FIAT⁷⁵⁴ and others, located in the twinned towns or in the immediate surroundings.⁷⁵⁵ The interest of Italy was probably also raised by the changes introduced by the *Neues Ökonomisches System* (New Economic System, NES), the series of economic reforms that the SED's secretary Walter Ulbricht presented after the 6th congress of the Party in 1963, in relation to both organizational structures and economic performance. The NES had introduced a «profit-oriented incentive system» into East Germany, thereby affecting the «previous primacy of

⁷⁵⁴ One year later, in 1972, another delegation from Bologna would have noticed the following:

«I segni di questa collaborazione sono già visibili per le vie di Lipsia e di altre città della RDT. Circolano molte FIAT-124 costruite in Polonia e si attendono le auto da Togliattigrad. Alla Fiera di Lipsia la FIAT, presente con un assortimento di veicoli industriali acquistato in blocco dalla RDT, ha intanto portato a termine quest'anno un accordo per la fornitura di una notevole partita di pezzi di ricambio». See ACSBO, Fondo Ufficio esteri, b. Lipsia 1973-1986, fasc. "1972", sottofasc. "Lipsia – Delegazione alla Fiera di Primavera, 15-20 marzo 1972 (assessore Mazzetti)", *Marco Marchetti, Lipsia: aumentano gli scambi tra Est e Ovest, ritaglio di giornale s.d. visibile (19 settembre?)*.

⁷⁵⁵ Italics mine inside the document:

«Fiera dei beni di consumo (Palazzi del Centro Cittadino)

AGROS (Rosarno), MA. AUGUSTA (Brescia), BUGARI (Castelfidardo), CADKSY (Bolzano), SINTECO (Milano), CINZANO (Torino), CONS. ESP. IMP (Napoli), FERRERO (Pino Torinese), Filat. POLLONE (Pollone), GHISSETTI (Modena), GUTTADAURO (Palermo), HAUSMANN (Roma), La/Es (Figliaro), MARTINI & ROSSI (Torino), Flli Cora (Torino), Greguoldo (Mestre), Papetta (Milano), SO. CO. LIB. RI. (Collett.) (Roma), STOCK (Trieste), STRAW (San Pietro a Ponti), VILARDI (Reggio Calabria), VINICOLA EUROPEA (Trieste), V. O. G. (Bolzano), SISME (Osimo Scalo), FARMITALIA (Milano), CALABRETTA (Acireale), ALIMENTARIA (Messina), IMPERATO (Acireale), METALREX (Volpiano), MICALE (Capo d'Orlando), COMM. SANSONI (Firenze), RESTUCCIA (Messina), SNIA VISCOSA (Milano), SPINA (Catania), COMM. ANDREAE CAMPARI (Milano), CAMPOBASSO (Bari), PROM/EST (Milano), BECAGLI (Prato), FISAC (Camerlata), MILIOR (Prato), F.LLI RAZZOLI (Prato), MARINI & CECCONI (Prato).

Fiera tecnica

O. T. E. (Firenze), POMINI & FARREL (Castellanza), CENTROTECNICA (Milano), CAPSULIT (Milano), CARLO ERBA (Milano), IMEAS (Villa Cortese), FIAT (Torino), COGIS (Milano), RONDINE (Trasporti) (Milano), CASTIGLIONE IND.LE (Cast. Delle Stiviere), TECMO (Volpiano), LE. MU. S. (Modena), MIATTON (Collett.) (Padova), MONTEDISON (Milano), ENI (Roma), ICE (Collettiva) (Roma), SASIB (Milano), TEMPI (Milano), SNAM-PROGETTI (S. Donato Mil.), NUOVA PIGNONE (Firenze), ANIC (S. Donato Mil.), SAPIEM (Cassino), IME (Roma). [...]". See ACSBO, Fondo Ufficio esteri, b. 1 Lipsia 1960-1972, fasc. 12 "Delegazione bolognese alla fiera autunnale di Lipsia, 8-12 settembre 1971 (assessore Palmi)", *Bollettino Fiera di Lipsia*.

Two years later, after the GDR's diplomatic recognition, other important companies would conclude agreements at the Leipzig fair:

«D'altra parte gli affari trattati direttamente in Fiera sono stati buoni, forse migliori delle precedenti edizioni (ma si sa che non tutti gli affari e, spesso, non quelli più clamorosi si raggiungono durante le Fiere). Uno dei più grossi contratti è stato quello concluso dall'IMEAS per la fornitura di macchine per la lavorazione dei metalli (valore di circa 500 milioni di lire). A sua volta l'Olivetti (per la prima volta presente a Lipsia) ha venduto circa 2mila macchine da calcolo, per un valore di 90 milioni. L'ENI, che aveva alla Fiera un ufficio informazioni (il settore della chimica, infatti, è presente solo nell'edizione di settembre), ha in corso trattative nel settore tessile, mentre l'AGIP ha iniziato conversazioni al fine di promuovere la collaborazione nel settore petrolifero. La FIAT (il suo rappresentante, dott. Lunardini, è stato insignito del distintivo d'onore della Fiera per meriti particolari), sta perfezionando intese per la vendita di veicoli industriali.

Buoni affari anche per aziende minori. L'intercoop di Roma, che è uno strumento delle cooperative italiane per la compravendita di beni di consumo, è presente a Lipsia da 3 edizioni: ha venduto nel settembre scorso 65.000 capi di maglieria ed ha posto, come dice il suo direttore Aldo Pagnini, le premesse per un ulteriore incremento degli scambi.

Infine le medaglie di qualità, ambito riconoscimento della Fiera: Due sono state assegnate ad aziende italiane. Sono la SIMA di Cornaredo, per una sua pressa a freddo a doppia pressione, e la Ferrero di Alba per un nuovo prodotto dolciario fabbricato nel suo stabilimento della Germania Federale. Ino Iselli». See ACSBO, Fondo Ufficio esteri, b. Lipsia 1973-1986, fasc. "1972", sottofasc. "Lipsia – Delegazione alla Fiera di Primavera, 15-20 marzo 1972 (assessore Mazzetti)", *Ino Iselli, L'Italia alla Fiera di Lipsia: gli espositori aumentano del 30%, in "L'Unità", 2 aprile 1973.*

politics over economics» and partly contributing – beyond a generational change in the élites, as seen in 5.1 – to a decentralization of the planning system.⁷⁵⁶

As previously mentioned, the Fair of Milan was an important meeting point, too. Early in 1967, Bruno Losi from Carpi was invited to participate there by Poels, a representative of the *Holzbau* factory of Wernigerode. The reason was the presentation of a holiday villa with hard roof through the LASA company (Milan). «During our talks – wrote Poels – you communicated us that your city was willing to build a residential center of more or less 50 houses. We are, from our side, interested – as twin town – in building such center with materials of our factory in Wernigerode».⁷⁵⁷ The same happened with Collegno: one of their most important industries, the mechanical factory IMPES, was involved in contacts with the GDR both via Milan and Leipzig.⁷⁵⁸ Having known about the ongoing negotiations between the sides, in 1966 Ruggero Bertotti wrote to the *ad interim* mayor of Neubrandenburg Otto Kunze, asking for his direct intervention on the issue: «it is unnecessary to highlight – so wrote Bertotti in a letter – the enormous importance that a positive effect could have».⁷⁵⁹ In this context, Bertotti also asked Kunze to adhere to the exhibition of small and medium enterprises in Piedmont, as that was the only way to allow an official delegation from Neubrandenburg to reach Collegno in that moment.⁷⁶⁰ The constellation of companies of Collegno which by 1969 seemed to work stably for the GDR were also involved in the campaign for the country's recognition.⁷⁶¹

Sectors that were particularly cared about during these international meetings were the ones of artisans, medium and small enterprises and agriculture – all fields that were highly developed in

⁷⁵⁶ Roy Vogt, “The Course of Economic Reforms in East Germany: An Interpretation,” *Canadian Slavonic Papers / Revue Canadienne Des Slavistes* 18, no. 2 (June 1976): 168–77., p. 168.

⁷⁵⁷ ASCC, Carteggio gemellaggio Carpi-Wernigerode, b. Corrispondenza gemellaggio CP-Wernigerode, fasc. “Anni 62-79”, *Lettera di Poels a Bruno Losi*, 29.2.1966.

⁷⁵⁸ Other enterprises of Collegno and the industrial belt around Turin showed an interest:

«Preg.mo Ing.,

Le comunico qui di seguito l'elenco delle ditte che hanno inviato il materiale e i cataloghi da esaminare:

- V. Gallino & C., Via Torino 15 – Reg. Margherita;

- Elettrorava, Strada Savonera, 40 – Savonera (Torino),

- IMPES, via Manzoni, 4 – Regina Margherita (Torino)

- Mandelli Giovanni, via Torino 60 – Regina Margherita (Torino)

- CAMUT, Via Antonelli 32 – Regina Margherita (Torino)

- F.lli Sandretto, Via Manzoni – Regina Margherita (Torino)

- Coppo Alessandro, via Antonelli 42 – Regina Margherita (Torino)

- HYDROMAC, via XXVII marzo – Collegno (Torino)

- SAIT, via Torino-Pianezza 500, Torino». See ASCO, Gemellaggi, b. anni 60, fasc. “Leipzig 1966”, sottofasc. “Leipzig 10-14.3.1966”, *Lettera di Ruggero Bertotti all'ing. Weier, rappresentanza commerciale della DDR a Milano*, 10 febbraio 1966.

⁷⁵⁹ ASCO, Gemellaggi, b. anni 60, fasc. “Nbg 2”, *Lettera del sindaco di Collegno Ruggero Bertotti al sindaco ad interim di Neubrandenburg Otto Kunze* 5 gennaio 1966.

⁷⁶⁰ ASCO, Gemellaggi, b. anni 60, fasc. “Leipzig 1966”, sottofasc. “Leipzig 10-14.3.1966”, *Lettera di Ruggero Bertotti a Otto Kunze*.

⁷⁶¹ ASCO, Gemellaggi, b. Neubrandenburg 1970, fasc. “Verbali 1969”, *Riunione comitato di gemellaggio*, 16.10.1969.

the three regions taken into account as case studies: Emilia-Romagna and Tuscany in particular, but also Piedmont. Once again, the municipalities acted as political links to foster connections with the GDR's productive sphere. In 1971, during Palmini's visit to Leipzig, the members of the delegations paid considerable attention towards the GDR's organization in this sense, highlighting continuities and discontinuities with the German past:

Va ricordato che l'artigianato ha una lontana tradizione in Germania. Attorno al 1870 gli artigiani tedeschi erano raggruppati in corporazioni, in associazioni professionali e fondarono anche delle società di credito per gli investimenti. Vi furono poi cooperative per la compra-vendita, unitamente a delle casse di mutuo soccorso in caso di malattia e di decesso. Fra le leggi che gli amministratori della RDT vararono nel dopoguerra in difesa dell'artigianato, va ricordata quella del 1950, che interessa la maggior parte delle imprese artigianali, quelle che non occupano più di 10 persone. Gli artigiani sono associati tra loro in cooperative, a cui si aderisce volontariamente. Sempre secondo l'opuscolo citato vi erano nella RDT 151.000 imprese artigiane indipendenti che occupavano oltre 375.000 persone e più di 4.100 cooperative di produzione artigianale con oltre 200 mila soci (questa parte è cresciuta negli ultimi anni). I dirigenti della camera artigianale di Lipsia hanno invitato una delegazione di artigiani a recarsi in visita nella loro città e regione. L'on. Pflanz ha detto che è nell'interesse delle forze democratiche dei due paesi di stabilire una corrente di scambi e di conoscenze. L'artigianato tedesco si occupa soprattutto delle riparazioni e della manutenzione. Esistono anche delle scuole per la formazione e l'apprendistato professionale. Nelle cooperative artigiane l'utile è così suddiviso: 55% alla cooperativa per gli investimenti, 30% ai soci, 15% per i premia ed altre spese. La regione di Lipsia annovera 435 cooperative di questo genere, 172 delle quali sono a Lipsia, con una media di soci variabile da 40 a 60. La loro produzione tocca settori molto qualificati, come gli oggetti artistici di smalto, gli oggetti di legno, in ceramica, i capi di vestiario. Vi sono 280 cooperative per lavori stradali ed edilizi. Il vice presidente della camera artigianale è un fontaniere. Nella regione di Lipsia gli artigiani sono 34.000, 22 mila dei quali sono soci di cooperative e gli altri 12 mila indipendenti. Nel 1971 sono sorte 7 nuove cooperative. La casa degli artigiani, dove ha sede la direzione camerale, possiede un ristorante, un caffè e una sala per riunioni o per feste.⁷⁶²

Despite the report being quite schematic, technical and neutral in the language – a high attention needed to be deployed in touching upon the delicate relation with the GDR – the general tone, the detailed description, the affinities with some aspects of the Bolognese and Emilian organization, seem to signal a general sympathetic attitude towards the GDR's system. For instance, it is difficult not to think about the people's houses or people's clubs in Emilia when reading about the wide diffusion of cooperatives and about the fact that the «house of the artisans [...] had a restaurant, a café and a room for meetings or for parties». Similarly, the East German production was portrayed as made of «very qualified sectors», such as «artistic enamel objects, wooden and ceramics' objects, clothing». In my view, the interest displayed by Bologna was at one time related to the German tradition of artisans and cooperatives – connected to the Prussian past and to the memory of the social democratic territorial organization before Hitler's seizure of power – but also to the

⁷⁶² ACSBO, Fondo Ufficio esteri, b. Lipsia 1960-1972, fasc. “Delegazione bolognese 6-8 settembre 1969 Sindaco Guido Fanti”, fasc. “Delegazione bolognese alla fiera autunnale di Lipsia, 8-12 settembre 1971 (assessore Palmini)”, *Note sul viaggio a Lipsia, 8/12 settembre 1971*.

peculiarities of the socialist organization. The GDR's economic success was the result of a pragmatic combination of the two. After all, despite the Cold War context, the two worlds had more in common than one would at first glance think. A second visit of a delegation from Bologna took place in 1972; in that year, members of the group were the assessor Giuseppe Mazzetti, Paolo Bonetti (for the association of small and medium enterprises), Enzo Bentini (again, from the *Ente Fiere*), Virgilio Fuzzi (association of artisans in the province of Bologna), Gianluigi Rarberis (association of tradesmen), Dante Bondi (for *Confesercenti*, the association which represented the small and medium enterprises in the commercial environment), Massimo Bellotti (*Federcoop*, federation of cooperatives), and Orio Frisoni (for STEB – typographic cooperative from Bologna).⁷⁶³ On that occasion, again, the composition of the delegation mirrored the specific interests of the traders. «The quality of German machineries – so stated the 1972 report, drafted by the Italian side – (for instance for the woodworking or for typographic works), of ceramics, of leather goods, is well known by the traders and the artisans of Bologna». These, «through the contacts between the municipality of Bologna and the towns of the democratic Germany», looked for a direct relation with the German producers.⁷⁶⁴ One year before the GDR's recognition, the statement of purpose was very clearly written down: «It is necessary to conduct [...] a work which is political and operative at one time, to highlight the potential of the Bolognese and Emilian democratic movement in promoting and coordinating the meetings [...]».⁷⁶⁵ This – besides being a way of circumnavigating the problem of recognition – was *also*, and clearly in the case of the influential Emilian movement, a statement of robust independence and autonomy in the socio-economic field. The East Germans themselves showed particular appreciation towards the Bolognese organization in this environment. During their visit to Bologna in 1971, Leipzig's mayor Müller and the other group members visited the electronic center of the Bologna municipality together with the assessor Palmi, meeting the center's director Gianfranco Azzaroni, and they had confrontations with various personalities of the world of provincial craftsmanship.⁷⁶⁶ The colloquia included information of «juridical, economic and social order» and were finalized, also to the compilation of the «*respective* catalogues of goods that could

⁷⁶³ ASCBO, Fondo Ufficio esteri, b. Lipsia 1960-1972, fasc. "1972", sottofasc. "Lipsia – Delegazione alla Fiera di Primavera, 15-20 marzo 1972 (assessore Mazzetti)", "*Rientrata da Lipsia la delegazione bolognese*", in *L'Unità*, marzo 1972.; ASCBO, Fondo Ufficio esteri, b. Lipsia 1960-1972, fasc. "1972", sottofasc. "Lipsia – Delegazione alla Fiera di Primavera, 15-20 marzo 1972 (assessore Mazzetti)", *Delegazione di esperti economici a Lipsia – 15 marzo 1972*.

⁷⁶⁴ ASCBO, Fondo Ufficio esteri, b. Lipsia 1960-1972, fasc. "1972", sottofasc. "Lipsia – Delegazione alla Fiera di Primavera, 15-20 marzo 1972 (assessore Mazzetti)", *Rapporto sul viaggio a Lipsia effettuato da una delegazione di esperti economici bolognesi in occasione della fiera primaverile – 15/20 marzo 1972*.

⁷⁶⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁷⁶⁶ ASCBO, Fondo Ufficio esteri, b. Lipsia 1960-1972, fasc. "Visita di una delegazione di Lipsia a Bologna in occasione della Fiera (4-7 ottobre 1971)", sottofasc. "Delegazione di Lipsia a Bologna 4-7 ottobre 1971", *Resoconto della visita, di Dante Cruicchi*.

possibly be exported»,⁷⁶⁷ so as to make both sides aware about the possibilities.⁷⁶⁸ Furthermore, in the venue of the municipality in Palazzo D'Accursio, they met representatives of the cooperatives and the traders' associations, also visiting the pasta factory in Corticella (Bologna).⁷⁶⁹ East Germans trusted the Bologna municipality and saw it as a faithful intermediary, a trusted guarantor in communication. On this point, Dante Cruicchi noted down, in 1972, that «overall, a certain tendency ha[d] been found, from [their] hosts, to not be willing to establish relations with other authorities or institutions other than the Municipality of Bologna». The Leipziger visitors asked the communal representatives to act as a «constant reference point» for all the initiatives.⁷⁷⁰

The same interest with regard to craftsmanship, machineries, and agriculture was showed by other towns twinned with the GDR, predominantly from Emilia-Romagna but not only. In 1972, three citizens of Reggio, Otello Montanari,⁷⁷¹ Francesco Artioli⁷⁷² ed Eros Mattioli,⁷⁷³ economic experts and members of the PCI, asked to be sent to the sister city Schwerin, to visit it and «take contact with directors, technicians and workers of industrial companies, in fields such as constructions' preparations, blast furnaces, ceramics, textiles, agricultural machines» (which, they highlighted, «also in our province and region are particularly developed, especially in the context of the small industry and of the production cooperatives»).⁷⁷⁴ The visits continued even years later, in 1976, when a

⁷⁶⁷ Italics mine.

⁷⁶⁸ ACSBO, Fondo Ufficio esteri, b. Lipsia 1960-1972, fasc. «Visita di una delegazione di Lipsia a Bologna in occasione della Fiera (4-7 ottobre 1971)», sottofasc. «Delegazione di Lipsia a Bologna 4-7 ottobre 1971», «Necessità di 'riconoscere' la 'esistenza' della R.D.T., in *L'Unità*, 11 ottobre 1971.

⁷⁶⁹ ACSBO, Fondo Ufficio esteri, b. Lipsia 1960-1972, fasc. «Visita di una delegazione di Lipsia a Bologna in occasione della Fiera (4-7 ottobre 1971)», sottofasc. «Delegazione di Lipsia a Bologna 4-7 ottobre 1971», *Resoconto della visita, di Dante Cruicchi*.

⁷⁷⁰ ACSBO, Fondo Ufficio esteri, b. Lipsia 1960-1972, fasc. «1972», sottofasc. «21-25 novembre 72, viaggio delegazione di Bologna, programma di lavoro», *Relazione sul viaggio a Lipsia di una delegazione del Comune di Bologna, 21-25 novembre 1972*.

⁷⁷¹ «Stadtrat sowie Mitglied des Sekretariats der KPI in Reggio Emilia, Leiter der Abteilung für Wirtschaftspolitik». See StaS, R1/896, *Renzo Bonazzi an Horst Pietsch, Reggio Emilia, den 2. August 1972*.

⁷⁷² «Stellvertretender President des Bundes des Klein- und Mittelindustrie sowohl in Reggio Emilia als auch in Emilia-Romagna».

⁷⁷³ «Doktor der Wirtschaftswissenschaften, der die deutsche Sprache gut kennt». Antonio Zambonelli, one of those who have been interviewed for this research, has talked about Eros Mattioli, too, remembering that he may have even lived in the GDR for a while, in the 1950s, maybe teaching at the university. He described Mattioli as a very knowledgeable person, who «really had the myth of [that] place, he always repeated of this state of workers and farmers, he repeated this formula as an act of faith». In the original, extended Italian interview: «Poi c'era anche un reggiano molto bravo, che aveva studiato alla Humboldt Universität Scienze economiche, e lui era uno di quelli che proprio aveva la *nostalghia*, si chiamava Mattioli Eros, è morto da circa tre anni. Era una persona coltissima, sapeva tutto di economia, di filosofia e di poesia. [...] Per 5, 6, 7 anni, mi citava sempre il nome di questo suo professore di scienze economiche. E lui aveva proprio il mito della DDR, ripeteva sempre di questo «stato degli operai e dei contadini», ripeteva questa formula come un atto di fede». Italics mine. See Interview to Antonio Zambonelli, Codemondo (Reggio Emilia), January 2, 2018.

⁷⁷⁴ StaS, R1/896, *Renzo Bonazzi an Horst Pietsch, Reggio Emilia, den 2. August 1972*.

delegation of the Association of agricultural cooperatives of Reggio Emilia reached Berlin with the aim of studying the East German developments in that field.⁷⁷⁵

The economic bonds through twinned cities continued in the 1980s, too, signaling that economic aspects were their *starting engine*.⁷⁷⁶ The economic interest is clearly stated in a document from 1988, in which the administrators of Carpi complained that the visits from Wernigerode had not been reciprocated enough, over the years. Despite the non-reciprocity, the conviction was that – especially in the delicate juncture of 1988 – interrupting the relations with Wernigerode could have been «negative» and could have «represent[ed] a loss, a damage» from the cultural and social point of view but mostly «it could [have] also open[ed] the possibility for a new phase of economic relations, which is, probably, what interests us more».⁷⁷⁷

Economy and trade were the *fil rouge* which crossed these relations. However, what I have noticed from the documents is that a fruitful exchange was hoped for also in other fields. The will to deal with an exchange of ideas and views on *kommunalpolitischer Probleme* was stated very early, with the manifestation, mostly from the Italian side, of the desire to see how hospitals, cultural institutions, schools, and social security issues were organized.⁷⁷⁸

5.2.2 Local welfare

Health

Caro Campedelli,
la delegazione di medici nel breve tempo del suo soggiorno ha potuto effettuare un esame sommario della realtà e ha potuto avere alcuni scambi di opinioni. Si tratta di una delegazione molto rappresentativa, della qual cosa noi siamo molto lieti. Tutti i medici e il presidente Colli si sono interessati a fondo e hanno avuto incontri molto utili nella nostra Città. [...] Io prego di voler tenere in considerazione ciò che sarà una conseguenza dello scambio di delegazione di medici: e cioè che la DDR possa essere chiamata a far parte a pieno diritto di tutti gli organismi sanitari internazionali.⁷⁷⁹

At the beginning of the 1970s, the mayor of Wernigerode Martin Kilian wrote to Losi's successor, Onorio Campedelli, to express his satisfaction about the successful outcome of a visit of a group of

⁷⁷⁵ StaS, R1/896, Ugo Benassi, *Sindaco di Reggio Emilia*, a Horst Pietsch, *Öberbürgermeister der Stadt Schwerin*, 24 agosto 1976. Ugo Benassi had substituted Renzo Bonazzi, whom in 1976 was made as a candidate by his party to the political elections to enter the Italian Parliament and thus left his position as a mayor.

⁷⁷⁶ ASCC, Carteggio gemellaggio Carpi-Wernigerode, b. Gemellaggio Carpi-Wernigerode (RDT), anni '62-'79 I°, fasc. "anni 62-79", *Lega Nazionale dei Comuni Democratici*, Ruggero Gallico a Bruno Losi, Roma 17 ottobre 1963.

⁷⁷⁷ ASCC, Consiglio comunale 9-30 giugno 1988, *Verbale n. 628 del 30-06-1988*, *Oggetto: Informazione del sindaco su una recente visita di una delegazione a Wernigerode (DDR)*.

⁷⁷⁸ ACSBO, b. Lipsia 1960-1972, fasc. "Lipsia-Gemellaggio 1962", *Brief von Kresse an Dozza, Leipzig, am 27.2.1962*; ASCO, Gemellaggi, b. anni 60, fasc. "Neubrandenburg delegazione 1968", *Nota per Ilse Höwe, sindaco ad interim, 7 maggio 1968*.

⁷⁷⁹ ASCC, Carteggio gemellaggio Carpi-Wernigerode, b. Corrisp gemellaggio CP-Wernigerode 62-79 I°, fasc. "Corrispondenza varia", *Martin Kilian al sindaco di Carpi Onorio Campedelli, traduzione italiana*.

doctors to East Germany. In so doing, he also clearly expressed the broader strategic purpose behind such travels, which he defined and regarded as a «consequence»: that is, the fact that the GDR could finally «be called to be part, in its own right, of all the international health organisms»,⁷⁸⁰ such as the World Health Organisation. The double political use of the health environment is to be seen here, too. The international connections within the health system were beneficial to and moved in parallel with diplomatic recognition, primarily: in case they appreciated the organization of health in the GDR, Italian doctors and hospital leaders could advertise in favor of the country's recognition of existence as a state entity. This is also the reason why delegations on the national level were organized directly by groups of MPs, as was the case with a visit organized by the Thomas Mann Center in 1971.⁷⁸¹ However, there is reason to believe that they also represented a pure object of attention for administrators, assessors and technicians.

In the case of a group from Carpi, in 1971 the delegation was composed by Dante Colli (DC), Artico Casarini (PCI), Saverio Asprea (PSI), Gianfranco Diacci (PSI), Danilo Gobesso, and Paolo Donato Palladini. The tour included visits to the *Kreiskrankenhaus* (district hospital), and in particular to the station of intensive care, the pharmacy, and the clinic for women. The group proceeded with the visit of factory clinics, especially of the *VEB Elektromotorenwerk*, and in particular of the sauna, the physiotherapy section, the ambulance. Beyond receiving a general impression of the actual implementation by seeing them from real experience, the delegation was also provided with some theoretical background, about topics such as the construction and organization of the health machine in the GDR, the conception of ambulant assistance in connection with the Polyclinic hospital, the prophylactic reality in the country, the situation and the assistance of the elderly and the invalid ones, and the confrontation with similar structures in Italy. The outcome was described as positive from the GDR's side.⁷⁸² However, also the delegation leader from Carpi, Colli, Christian Democrat and president of the civil hospital Ramazzini, sent a satisfied letter to the mayor of Wernigerode, with an invitation to Carpi and expressing gratitude for giving them «the possibility to get to know such a representative town and also very committed users, [together with] an organization of research for all citizens». ⁷⁸³ As the hospital was independent from the Carpi local

⁷⁸⁰ Ibidem. Also see: StaWe, WR III/1253 Städtepartnerschaft mit Carpi Band, *Kilian an Campedelli, Wernigerode, 3 nov 1971*.

⁷⁸¹ “L'organizzazione Sanitaria Nella Repubblica Democratica Tedesca: Impressioni e Documenti Di Una Delegazione Medica Italiana (Dicembre 1971)” (Roma: Centro Thomas Mann, 1972). To the trip participated Giovanni Berlinguer, from Sassari; Gianfranco Donelli, Elio Guzzanti, and Giuseppe Lojacono, Rome; Aldo Fabiani, from Trieste; Edoardo Gaffuri, from Padua; Giulio Maccacaro from Milan and Giuseppe Spalatin for the Italian Ministry of Health.

⁷⁸² StaWe, WR III/1253 Städtepartnerschaft mit Carpi Band 7, *Bericht über den Besuch der italienischen Ärztedelegation in Wernigerode, Wernigerode, den 22.11.1971*.

⁷⁸³ Ibidem.

administration, Campedelli and their collaborators could not directly influence the composition of the delegation. However, Augusto De Pietri made sure to write to Wernigerode, communicating that inside the group there was a person of trust, «our comrade» Artico Casarini, vice president of the administration council of the hospital and assessor to tax administration of the municipality.⁷⁸⁴ De Pietri also suggested the possible directions of the visits:

Conoscendone la composizione e i pochi giorni di soggiorno, certamente converrete con noi sulla necessità, oltre ad uno scambio generale di informazioni sul sistema generale di assistenza mutualistica ed ospedaliera in atto nei nostri due Paesi, di fare loro visitare possibilmente qualche centro ospedaliero ove siano attuate cure specialistiche e funzionino attrezzature particolari. Ben sapendo dei notevoli progressi compiuti dalla medicina nella DDR, riteniamo che sia appunto questa cosa che li interessa particolarmente. Ad ogni buon conto questo è solo un suggerimento. Parlando con loro potrete rendervi conto meglio sul da farsi.⁷⁸⁵

The mayor highlighted the «considerable progress» achieved by medicine in the GDR and suggested that what could interest the participants even more was the visit to hospitals where specialized care was active and particular machineries were working. Also in this case, as we have already seen with the governance of economy, the communist administrators acted as links.

A similar experience was made in 1972 by a Bolognese delegation in Leipzig, which was positively impacted by the scale and organization of the neighborhood polyclinics. The issue of neighborhoods and decentralization, as we have seen in chapter 4, was central for Bologna. We can notice, by reading the delegation report, that the attitude towards what the Italians saw was positively oriented: these structures «did not foresee the stay of the patients, but uniquely the execution of analyses and cure of patients for whom the stay is not necessary». A further topic which raised interest was the one of grassroots sanitary institutions, and in particular the role of school and factory doctors inside them. These doctors, who were depending on a state institute, but could also exercise their profession in private, were members of collectives, to which also directors, party leaders and labor unionists participated.⁷⁸⁶

Preventive medicine also attracted a considerable attention, probably being the issue that more than others was considered advanced in the GDR. This branch of medicine, along the current definition, included first, everything that was aimed at preventing the emergence of the illness; second, the early diagnosis of pathologies which were not yet fully developed; and third, rehabilitation of patients who did not have full physical and psychic capacities. In this frame, a great

⁷⁸⁴ ASCC, Carteggio Carpi-Wernigerode, b. Corrisp gemellaggio CP-Wernigerode 62-79 I°, fasc. «Corrispondenza varia», *Onorio Campedelli a Martin Kilian, Carpi 30 ottobre 1971*.

⁷⁸⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁷⁸⁶ ACSBO, Fondo Ufficio esteri, b. Lipsia 1960-1972, fasc. «1972», sottofasc. «21-25 novembre 72, viaggio delegazione di Bologna, programma di lavoro», *Relazione sul viaggio a Lipsia di una delegazione del Comune di Bologna, 21-25 novembre 1972*.

importance was health education.⁷⁸⁷ This area of medicine, however, was not only a prerogative of the GDR, but had raised interest in whole Europe since the early 1970s, and in Italy, too, especially among the leftist parties, as it was strongly connected with the concept of “public health” and the role of the public institutions in increasing health education.

An example of this comes from the case of Bologna and Leipzig. In 1974, Eustachio Loperfido,⁷⁸⁸ assessor to health of the Bologna Municipality, visited the twin city Leipzig with a highly qualified delegation of doctors⁷⁸⁹, whose declared aim was to carry out a survey of the local hospital and a study of the techniques which had been developed in the previous years. In a letter sent to Leipzig as appreciation for the hospitality received, Loperfido affirmed:

la visita a Lipsia ci ha permesso di approfondire la conoscenza delle strutture della sua città in un settore che a noi sta particolarmente a cuore, quello della medicina preventiva e riabilitativa e di constatare la grande attenzione che l'Amministrazione comunale e quella statale dedicano alla soluzione dei gravi problemi dell'infanzia, degli anziani, degli handicappati e della salute in generale [...]

To then conclude:

faremo tesoro di quanto abbiamo visto e sentito e useremo le vostre esperienze nel nostro lavoro. Pensiamo che questo sia una applicazione concreta e feconda dei rapporti di amicizia e di collaborazione che legano le nostre due città.⁷⁹⁰

The sentence of Loperfido – «we will treasure what we have seen and heard and we will use your experiences in our work» appears, more than a ritual or a ceremonial expression, as a declaration of intents, especially if read against the backdrop of the report that accompanies it, composed of many pages of detailed notes about the undertaken visits and the organization of the entire sanitary and social system in the GDR.⁷⁹¹ These indications allow to hypothesize that the East German experience had actually been used by Loperfido, although apparently without much advertisement, as, perhaps,

⁷⁸⁷ For a definition of “preventive medicine”, see Treccani online, http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/medicina-preventiva_%28Enciclopedia-Italiana%29/. Last visited on September 30, 2018.

⁷⁸⁸ Candidate and elected with the PCI, Loperfido fulfilled the role, between 1970 and 1980, of communal assessor to hygiene and health. He was a child neuropsychiatrist and he was the initiator of the socio-sanitary consortiums, which to a certain extent anticipated the sanitary reform of 1978. He was involved, already since the early 1970s, in the closing of the so-called “children’s insane asylums”. He also dealt with kindergartens and other infant schools. See “Loperfido, Eustachio, Medico, (Matera 1932 - Forlì 2008),” *Archivi Città Degli Archivi*, n.d., <http://www.cittadegliarchivi.it/pages/getDetail/sysCodeId:IT-CPA-SP00001-0000319#contenuto>. Last visited on September 30, 2018.

⁷⁸⁹ The components of the delegation were: Eustachio Loperfido, born in Matera (Basilicata) in 1932, surgeon; Antonio Faggioli, surgeon, born in Alfonsine (Ravenna, Emilia-Romagna) in 1933; Carla Marchesini, surgeon, born in Bologna in 1946; Walter Bellettini, doctor, born in Bologna in 1924; Carlo Flamini, surgeon, born in Forlì (Emilia-Romagna) in 1933. See ACSBO, Fondo Ufficio esteri, b. Lipsia 1973-1986, fasc. 9 “Lipsia – Visita ass. Loperfido 24 febbraio 1974”, *Componenti delegazione per Lipsia*.

⁷⁹⁰ ASCBO, Fondo Ufficio esteri, b. Lipsia 1973-1986, fasc. “Visita ass. Loperfido 24 febbraio 1974”, *Lettera di Eustachio Loperfido a Hans-Jürgen Gemkow, 1 aprile 1974*.

⁷⁹¹ ASCBO, Fondo Ufficio esteri, b. Lipsia 1973-1986, fasc. “Visita ass. Loperfido 24 febbraio 1974”, *I servizi sanitari e sociali della Repubblica democratica tedesca*.

counterproductive for the image of Bologna. To this regard, if a general interest towards the Italian communists was clearly visible from publications such as Heinz Timmermann's one, a young West German scholar, author of some essays about the PCI published in 1974⁷⁹², the Emilian capital, too was at the center of attention. As a matter of fact, in the same years a group of progressive Swiss journalist had decided to conduct a field research, to then publish a pamphlet on the Bolognese administrative model, titled *Das rote Bologna*.⁷⁹³ The authors themselves narrate, in the volume, how in the 1970s the concern of Loperfido was especially focused on the vulnerable ones, and particularly on children. The assessor was described by the journalists as one among «the most advanced advocate of alternative solutions to the problems of disabled children», «in the guise of specialist (psychiatrist) and politicians [...] one of the most competent critics of exclusive mechanisms». Against the backdrop of these pieces of information, if on the one hand it is difficult to *exactly evaluate* the impact on Bologna of what had been learned in East Germany, on the other it is possible to assume that Loperfido took that experience into account, in his ten years as assessor to health (1970-1980). Anyway, it is striking to notice how, still in the 1970s – in the context of an increasingly more convincing PCI as a governmental force both at the local and national level, after the reaching of the political aim of GDR's recognition and despite the divergences with the SED on the ideological level – the assessor regarded as appropriate and rather, *fruitful* to refer to the East German experience in one of the fields that he cared about the most. Not casually, Fausto Anderlini has described the local government of the Emilian, and Bolognese PCI as «ideal communism, real social democracy» (*comunismo ideale, socialdemocrazia reale*):⁷⁹⁴ the identity of the communist administrators – even if on the surface they appeared as increasingly far from revolutionary ideas, and at the stable guide of an efficient town – also passed through a twinning with a town of the dogmatic GDR.

Most likely for this reason, in order to make it as balanced as possible in the distance towards the GDR the report by Loperfido was written in a rather neutral language. However, it is possible to identify some topics of interest and a very detailed observation of the mechanisms. For instance, Loperfido showed a close attention towards the connection between workplace and insurance. In the GDR, when a job was offered, a *duty* of insurance was strictly tied to it, through the payment of social

⁷⁹² Heinz Timmermann, *I Comunisti Italiani: Considerazioni Di Un Socialdemocratico Tedesco Sul Partito Comunista Italiano* (Bari: De Donato, 1974).

⁷⁹³ Max Jäggi, Roger Müller, e Sil Schmid, *Das Rote Bologna: Kommunisten Demokratisieren Eine Stadt Im Kapitalistischen Westen* (Zürich: Verlagsgenossenschaft, 1976). Italian Version: Max Jäggi, Roger Müller, and Sil Schmid, *Bologna Rossa. I Comunisti Al Governo Di Una Città* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1977). The book had had an international diffusion, as it had been published in English, too: Max Jäggi, Roger Müller, and Sil Schmid, *Red Bologna* (London: Writers and Readers, 1977).

⁷⁹⁴ Fausto Anderlini, *Terra Rossa. Comunismo Ideale Socialdemocrazia Reale: Il Pci in Emilia-Romagna* (Bologna: Istituto Gramsci, 1990).

insurances of a 10% of the salary directly by the worker, and of the same amount by the factory. This way, the worker had the right to medical, dental, pharmaceutical assistance and to «all the possible forms of healthcare», to «the therapeutic treatment at the hospital and at home», and to the «prophylactic and rehabilitative treatments».⁷⁹⁵ «All the services – noted down Loperfido – are given without time limits and without any request of direct participation to the expenses by the citizens». No value judgment was given explicitly in the report, and no confrontation was drawn with the situation in Italy in that context. However, we know that the Italian system worked differently, with no or scarce connection to the job of the patient, and that the public service – before the national sanitary reform in 1978 – did not guarantee the access to health to all Italian citizens. Before the law 833/78, the provision of sanitary services was based on “mutual societies”, that is associations of doctors that guaranteed assistance to a worker or his/her family in exchange for a periodic tuition.⁷⁹⁶ It was a *sort* of sanitary insurance that had long been criticized, not least in the popular cinema, such as in the well-known 1968 movie starring Alberto Sordi, titled – in English – “Be sick...it’s free” (*Il medico della mutua*). In that movie – with the forms and modes of the Italian comedy, and through the magnificent interpretation of Sordi in the guise of the young and astute doctor Guido Tersilli – the director Luigi Zampa conducted a harsh denunciation of the sanitary system and the “mutual societies”, suggesting that those favored waste of public money and clientelism. The Italian Left – and especially the communists – were among the main critics of that system, and the approval of the new law about the national sanitary service (*Servizio sanitario nazionale, SSN*) had been in the political agenda for years. Loperfido’s notes can be read also against the backdrop of these reflections.⁷⁹⁷

The assessor proceeded then in his description of what he had seen, putting emphasis on the existence of a private sector, which, however, was also in convention with the state. The workers

⁷⁹⁵ ACSBO, Fondo Ufficio esteri, b. Lipsia 1973-1986, fasc. “Lipsia – Visita ass. Loperfido 24 febbraio 1974”, *I servizi sanitari e sociali della Repubblica democratica tedesca*.

⁷⁹⁶ L. 23 dicembre 1978, n. 833 – Istituzione del Servizio Sanitario Nazionale.

⁷⁹⁷ As in the case with Modena, as Claudia Finetti as well highlighted, emphasizing that these initiatives in the field of welfare were taken because of the fundamental absence of state laws on this:

«A Modena l’ente comunale avrebbe per primo intessuto una rete di iniziative sui temi della salute dei lavoratori, con profonda sensibilità verso gli stimoli e le nuove proposte che provenivano dalla medicina del lavoro. Quanto nel gennaio 1968, l’Ufficio igiene del Comune presentò alla cittadinanza il primo progetto sulla salute della popolazione in età lavorativa, il modello di prevenzione cui si riferiva era costituito dai servizi di medicina scolastica, attivi da tempo sul territorio modenese. L’idea era di istituire un poliambulatorio per il controllo sistematico e periodico delle condizioni fisiche dei lavoratori. In assenza di leggi dello Stato cui fare riferimento l’iniziativa si iscriveva tra i locali, autonomi provvedimenti di *welfare*. Erano i primi approcci verso una sanità diffusa sul territorio, sul modello della proposta nazionale di riforma del sistema sanitario. Il servizio si rivolgeva in forma universalistica agli addetti di tutte le categorie dell’industria, dell’agricoltura e del terziario compresi gli artigiani, con riguardo anche alla diagnosi precoce dei tumori femminili», see Claudia Finetti, “Il Sindacato Nello Sviluppo Del ‘Modello Emiliano’ (1963-1978),” in *Un Secolo Di Sindacato. La Camera Del Lavoro a Modena Nel Novecento*, ed. Lorenzo Bertucelli et al. (Roma: Ediesse, 2001), 329–405., pp. 388-389.

were free to choose the doctors they preferred both in the public and private sector. The sale itself of the medicines was strictly regulated: only the ones admitted by the state could be used, and pharmaceutical propaganda was prohibited. The care about prevention was to be seen also in the «strong recourse to physiotherapy treatments: bathing and massages, medical and breathing gym, [...] radar-therapy, infra-red and ultra-violet rays, orthopedic gym and swim».⁷⁹⁸ The attention of the state towards the needs of the citizens was proved, so appeared to suggest Loperfido, by its high investments: the health sphere was included in a “package”, which could be resumed under the label of “social and cultural services”, together with social and cultural activities, education and sport. For these services, in 1972, the state invested 32.7 million (East German) marks, an equivalent – so wrote Loperfido – of the 27% of the national income, with an average «expense, for each citizen, of 1.924 marks (approximately 481.000 Italian liras)». For Leipzig, where the population reached an amount of 581.000 citizens, the communal administration had spent, «in 1972, 134 million marks (33 billion and 500 million liras)» for sanitary and social services.⁷⁹⁹ Such services were organized «on a territorial basis (7 districts), with district presidiums (outpatient clinics of the factories and of the district) and inter-district ones (5 hospitals and university clinics)». We can assume that Bologna was not indifferent to that delocalized system. Loperfido concluded by noting that «the electronic elaboration of data and informatics allow[ed] quick, functional connections between the presidiums of the different levels», in my view implicitly suggesting that informatics – a field that in the GDR would have developed even more in the 1970s – represented a plus in comparison to the Italian context.⁸⁰⁰

Five years before, in 1969, a delegation of doctors from Livorno had also had a good experience in studying the basic sanitary service, its organization and rationalization in the GDR. From what they could see, in East Germany, and especially in Rostock, they had managed to «unify the preventive, diagnostic and curative act, giving particular importance to the first one of these [...], realizing the fundamental objective of the global protection of health». In this case, too, the Tuscan doctors revealed to be highly impressed by the network of hospitals and ambulatories on the East German territory and declared that «all [those] experiences, very interesting for the delegation, [would have] surely contributed to [their] work for the realization of the national sanitary service, in an achieved service of social security» in Italy.⁸⁰¹ This seems to be a persistent element in the analyses

⁷⁹⁸ ACSBO, Fondo Ufficio esteri, b. Lipsia 1973-1986, fasc. “Lipsia – Visita ass. Loperfido 24 febbraio 1974”, *I servizi sanitari e sociali della Repubblica democratica tedesca*.

⁷⁹⁹ Ibidem.

⁸⁰⁰ Ibidem.

⁸⁰¹ APRLI, b. Presidenza Filippelli e Nannipieri, fasc. “Rostock”, *Documento redatto ed approvato dalla delegazione che ha visitato Rostock e le sue strutture sanitarie, Rostock 31.3.1969*.

and reflections of the doctors, although the conditions of the visits were not always exemplary, and among the positive commentaries about the general system, there were also some negative ones about the brevity of the tours and some shortcomings in their organization. Unlike Bologna, where everyone seemed to be satisfied with the focus on preventive medicine, the Livornese doctor Franco Ugolini, in a report, pleaded for more attention on the specific interests of the single personalities involved: «[...] a detailed program will make a better selection among delegations, avoid “tourism”, deepen the knowledge and improve the outcome of the visits».⁸⁰²

From the Livornese side, it is interesting to note that such visits connected to health went on until the late 1980s quite actively. In 1978, visiting a hospital in Stralsund, new topics were observed and reported, such as the health conditions of the workers inside the factory. The members of this delegation noted the East German commitment in the «reconstruction of buildings, to improve the work and life conditions of the collaborators, as well as to improve the residence conditions of the patients».⁸⁰³ This aim was achieved through a close collaboration of the labor union – the integrated system between the Party, the mass organizations connected to it, and other political-cultural structures proved to be successful, despite the rigid context in which these relations unfolded. In the clinics, particularly developed appeared to be, once again, the prophylaxis, the therapy and occupational medicine (*medicina del lavoro*). The diseases and illnesses that could derive from the exposition to toxic materials or to the general working conditions were controlled. For the prevention of tumors, «all the population, from the age of 14 years old, [was] subjected to a series of [...] analyses to recognize lung cancer from the very beginning, insisting in particular on those factory workers whose job [was] particularly dangerous». Every two years, the workers were called for a check-up with the factory doctor.⁸⁰⁴ The issue of health in the factory was a central one in 1960s and 1970s Italy, too, from the side of the parties, of the labor unions – the most researched by Italian historiography – of national and local institutions, but also from environmental associations and the workers themselves. All these actors can be considered as part of a broad movement which became a central protagonist of this long-term season process of elaboration of the sanitary reform, between the ‘60s and the ‘70s. A practical outcome of this period was, without doubt, the institution of centers of preventive medicine, managed by local institutions and in which the labor union was considered as a fundamental interlocutor, directly involved in the addressing of the interventions. These centers

⁸⁰² APRLI, b. Presidenza Filippelli e Nannipieri, fasc. “Rostock”, Livorno, Documento redatto ed approvato dalla delegazione che ha visitato Rostock e le sue strutture sanitarie, 15 aprile 1969.

⁸⁰³ APRLI, b. Presidenza Filippelli e Nannipieri, fasc. “Rostock”, *Incontro con il direttore dell’ospedale di Stralsund*. 1978.

⁸⁰⁴ *Ibidem*.

represented the competences of both preventive medicine and professional medicine, unifying everything in one structure.⁸⁰⁵

Carpi, for instance, had such a center. Interestingly, I have found a copy of an (Italian) document from 1973 which explains the functioning, the aims and the political conception of this center in the communal archive of Wernigerode.⁸⁰⁶ Although this, of course, does not prove any connection in the way such structures were pragmatically implemented, with regard to the other side of the Iron Curtain, I think it evidences at least that a transfer of ideas happened, and that the *political understandings* of such implementations were dramatically close in the two countries. As it was highlighted in the conclusions of that document:

La prevenzione non è un mito ma un fatto politico che investe il complesso dei rapporti di produzione e dei rapporti sociali. Per questo è necessaria un'inversione di rotta che faccia dell'uomo e dell'equilibrio uomo-ambiente un valore da difendere. La prevenzione non indica necessariamente interventi di tipo medico; essa è prima di tutto una scelta ideologica; è l'idea guida capace di cambiare radicalmente l'intervento sanitario nell'ambito di una riforma sanitaria, territorializzata e democratizzata.⁸⁰⁷

At the core of the idea of prevention, was therefore a political idea, where man was put at the absolute center, first and foremost as «an ideological choice». The sanitary intervention needed to be reformed in the sense of an increased democratization and territorialization. As slightly disturbing as this idea may appear, the GDR system was based at least on a strong territorialization, as we have learned from Loperfido's notes. This idea was exactly at the core of the ideas for the Italian sanitary reform, as it is written in the Carpi document: the new presidiums had to be dislocated «in functional units which had the neighborhood (or the fraction, or the small municipality) as a base inside a broader territorial dimension». Following this direction, the little publication included a fundamental statement which, in a first phase of this work, has been useful to identify the ideas at the center of the Italian communist conception of local government, and to the potential connections with East Germans. The «inspirational concept» at the basis of the centers was linked with the operative «indissoluble nature» of each and every «instrument aimed at the safeguard and the improvement of the state of psycho-physic well-being of the citizen (green areas, playgrounds, kindergartens, nursery

⁸⁰⁵ Before the institution of these centers, there were analogous experiments, but focused on either preventive or professional medicine, as it is the case with Carpi itself, which administration – sensitive to the topic of the transformations from an agricultural to an industrial economy – wanted to start a service of professional medicine already in 1968. At that time, a similar service (*Servizio di Medicina del Lavoro*) was already active in Bologna, which provided the dedicated machineries and the specialized technicians for these purposes. After that, a service of preventive medicine was started. For more insights, see Elena Davigo, “Il Movimento Italiano per La Tutela Della Salute Negli Ambienti Di Lavoro (1961-1978)” (Tesi di dottorato, Università di Firenze, 2018). See StaWe, WR III/1256 Städtepartnerschaft mit Carpi Band 10, *Comune di Carpi, Centro di medicina preventiva – Documento sulle prime esperienze di Medicina Preventiva nel Comune di Carpi, Carpi, febbraio 1973*.

⁸⁰⁶ Ibidem.

⁸⁰⁷ Ibidem.

schools, outpatient clinics, hospital, cultural centers, etc.)». All those elements, which represented one whole, had to be at the basis of the new structure of the sanitary system.⁸⁰⁸

These ideas were backed through the use of two political arguments: the first one was that the range of pathologies in Italy was connected to underdevelopment illnesses, but first and foremost to illnesses with «traumatic, toxic, degenerative, psychosomatic» causes, connected either to the rapid development of capitalism and of the capitalistic organization of work, or to «situations of stabilized and high industrial level».⁸⁰⁹ While the argument about capitalism could not work in the East German context, it did in Italy. However, the GDR was also a highly industrialized society – among the first ten in the world –⁸¹⁰ and therefore it had to develop a well-functioning system of protection for its citizens. The second argument regarded the absolute necessity and centrality of local institutions in this process. To this regard, the documents – in this case, a 1969 draft of the sanitary programming in the province of Modena – denounced the evident «limits, in power and means, of the local institutions». If those limits had been overcome, the collaboration among the different subjects working towards the reform could have led to positive outcomes. In this sense, an ideal link was hoped-for and established between the battles of workers and the battles for local autonomies (*Autonomie*).⁸¹¹

Sanitary issues were a deeply felt topic in the early 1970s, especially from the local administrations and seem to have carried with them a communist, or leftist at least, specificity with special regard to health in the factories. In this sense, the problems of the GDR and the ones in Italy were, after all, similar ones, both in the effect of industrial work on citizens and in the solutions proposed by communist administrators and politicians. The protections of citizens' and workers' health, however, does not seem to represent a convergence only on the communist side, but appears to reach also a wider transversal nature. As it is the case with the 1969 inter-party commission reunited in Modena,⁸¹² also other political forces participated to the discussion. This aspect connected to transversality is reinforced by the testimony of Massimo Bianchi, for the Livorno case. In our discussion, he has brought out the example of Fernando Barbiero, committed president of the Italy-GDR association in Livorno during the 1980s and a socialist. Barbiero – has remembered Bianchi –

⁸⁰⁸ StaWe, WR III/1256, *Comune di Carpi, Centro di medicina preventiva – Documento sulle prime esperienze di Medicina Preventiva nel Comune di Carpi, Carpi, febbraio 1973.*

⁸⁰⁹ *Ibidem.*

⁸¹⁰ «In some ways, the GDR was the great communist success story as it was considered one of the most industrialized countries in the world. Whereas other communist bloc nations suffered economically, the 'Red Prussians' appeared to have made communism work». See Gregory Witkowski, "The German Democratic Republic: State Power and Everyday Life," *History Compass* 5, no. 3 (2007): 935–42., p. 936.

⁸¹¹ ISTOREMo, APCIMo, b. 1969, f. 509, *Bozza di documento sulla programmazione ospedaliera e sanitaria nella provincia di Modena elaborata dalla commissione provinciale interpartita, Modena – ottobre 1969.*

⁸¹² *Ibidem.*

«had studied medicine and had become primary doctor in pneumology. [...] He came to Livorno, [...] was elected in the provincial council on behalf of the social democrats, then entered the PSI [...] he became president of the Province in '75 and he was a reformist socialist, I mean, an autonomist, but he had this friendly relation with the GDR because he had found it and cultivated it. [...] It was a heartfelt thing, eh...».⁸¹³ The reason of such a strong bond, for Bianchi, was connected to the fundamental subordination of the PSI to the PCI, which persisted even later on in the years after 1956: «you [just] did not speak badly about the Eastern countries... There was not this... This difficulty was born, this conflictual relation was born with the Center-left... I have to say that then, if you look at the list of the members of the GDR, there were not only socialists-communists. There were also men of culture, *doctors*, also of other [political] orientations...».⁸¹⁴ Barbiero, a doctor himself, was one of them. Asked about the interest that could take these people to be part of the GDR-Italy association, Bianchi has answered the following:

[...] in alcuni campi si diceva che la medicina, la scuola, insomma era comunque un'esperienza internazionale, era la Germania comunque tu la rigirassi. Mentre l'associazione Italia-Bulgaria non sarebbe stato nessuno, ma sai comunque la Germania è la Germania, prendi anche i successi sportivi, voglio dire, i successi scientifici, c'era anche questo fascino nel rapporto secondo me [...] certo la Germania dell'est non era un paese arretrato eh, cioè non era Bulgaria e la Romania... Mancava la libertà, in maniera soffocante, ma non è che fosse un paese disadattato. No, era un paese nel quale la tecnologia c'era.⁸¹⁵

Apparently, the problem that many had with the GDR was the suffocating lack of freedom, but after all, in the productive sense, «Germany was Germany», a highly developed country which could perfectly contribute to the European discussion also in terms of health issues.

A further contribution on preventive medicine in the GDR, although late in 1980, came, again, from Livorno, and precisely from an article published on the previously mentioned journal “Dal Tirreno al Baltico”. In it, Alberto Mascotelli, a doctor,⁸¹⁶ noted that despite the «deficiencies which are normally found in all the core transformations, with the slaughter of old structures and of the power and privilege positions», the system in the GDR was «valid [...] in every aspect on the three fundamental directives: in the field of prevention, care and rehabilitation».⁸¹⁷ So continued Mascotelli:

È attraverso questa realtà uniforme in cui i problemi vengono risolti e gli errori corretti!!! E attraverso la operatività costante e il contatto diretto tra gli utenti e gli operatori che si riesce a coordinare

⁸¹³ Interview to Massimo Bianchi.

⁸¹⁴ Italics mine. Ibidem.

⁸¹⁵ Ibidem.

⁸¹⁶ It has not been possible to find more information about him and his political positioning.

⁸¹⁷ ArISTOL, Fondo Danilo Dolci, *Alberto Mascotelli, “Realtà socio-sanitaria a confronto”*, in “Dal Tirreno al Baltico”, numero unico, Livorno 18 aprile 1980.

validamente ogni servizio e renderlo funzionale e consono alle necessità del momento! Il decentramento dei servizi è stato attuato in maniera capillare per cui in ogni momento ed in ogni evenienza il cittadino [sic!] può veramente contare su intervento tempestivo ed efficiente! Penso che se si volesse analizzare il tutto sarebbero necessarie tante e tante parole, che la esiguità dello spazio a disposizione purtroppo non consente! Una purtuttavia un confronto con quanto accade nel n. s paese è possibile anche se i momenti politici sono oltremodo diversi.

Noi, purtroppo nell'attuazione del Servizio sanitario che, approvato dopo un iter parlamentare irto di opposizioni e di rinvii, e ripeto purtroppo, siamo molto in ritardo sugli obiettivi fissati dalla legge!!! E qui non voglio criticare nessuno, ma solamente fare delle constatazioni che sono intimamente legate a questo importante problema!

In complesso la legge di Riforma Sanitaria se realizzata nella misura del 70% ci consentirebbe di raggiungere obiettivi e soluzioni soddisfacenti! Ma il complesso dei problemi che s'incontrano in fase di realizzazione delle difficoltà enormi, delle remore di non facile soluzione anche perché legati a fenomeni delle vecchie strutture della gestione della salute! E ciò crea ostacoli in un paese in cui gli sforzi per una nuova realtà Socio-sanitaria sono frammentari, e slegati, seppure notevoli!

Sono problemi che possono determinare se non affrontati con competenza, con onestà e soprattutto con l'aiuto di tutte le forze democratiche, il fallimento della stessa riforma o nella migliore delle ipotesi un carrozzone unico pieno di discorsi ma povero di contenuti. È necessario, in proposito, avere idee molto chiare per non vanificare gli sforzi sin qui compiuti! L'attuazione di questa riforma è ormai improrogabile! Necessita ora di essere realizzata, perché credo, che al di sopra degli incontri formali, dei vari programmi elaborati, sia questa la strada per raggiungere gli obiettivi fissati e dare finalmente al paese una riforma degna di un paese civile! Dott. Alberto Mascotelli.⁸¹⁸

Even if in a different period, with different tones, the core of the written intervention by Mascotelli was, again, the sanitary reform and – in that context – not its creation but its incorrect application. Against that evaluation, the health system in the GDR was praised, being described, although certainly not without a certain rhetoric, as highly functional: «the decentralization of services ha[d] been implemented in a capillary way», for the good of the citizen.⁸¹⁹

Many other examples could be provided here.⁸²⁰ Overall, in my view, the high attention that the local administrations kept having towards this issue, as in most of the reported cases, even after 1973, so after the GDR's diplomatic recognition, proves that the interest in how things had been implemented in the East German territory was real. This perspective would also be substantiated by the fact that numerous were the politicians, administrators, labor unionists or workers who travelled to East Germany to spend a period of rehabilitation there, or to cure specific diseases.

⁸¹⁸ Ibidem.

⁸¹⁹ Ibidem.

⁸²⁰ For instance, the role of healthcare, the variants of the projects of hospitals' building, the political conception behind the decisions, were at the center of the visits of a delegation from Collegno (Rivoli hospital), in 1974. See NeuSta, 2.00 AE, *Aktenvermerk aus dem Arbeitsgespräch beim Gen. Dieter Mueller, 1. Sekretär der Kreisleitung der SED zum Delegationsaustausch Collegno-Neubrandenburg für das Jahr 1974, Neubrandenburg, 24.5.1974*. Members of the delegation were Luciano Manzi, PCI; Gian Piero Antinelli, PSI; Sergio Bozzola, PCI; Michele Rossino, DC; Eugenio Tonini Bossi, DC; Vittorino Trombetta, PCI; Riccardo Nigro, di sinistra non iscritto a nessun partito; Franco Donadio, PSI; Enrico Mensi, DC; Domenico Sciortino, PCI; Vincenzo Ciani, PCI; Valeria Cividino. See NeuSta, 2.00 AE, Nr. 4952, *Elenco nominativo dei componenti la delegazione dell'ospedale di Rivoli che si recherà nella città di Neubrandenburg (DDR) dall'1 all'8 settembre 1974*.

The bonds, the connections and convergences on the health topic, can, for me, be found at this level of implementation of public services for the well-being of every single citizen, in which the territorial structures and the municipalities played a prominent role. On this point, there was a specific communist *political solution*, which responded to a socialist inspiration. Nonetheless, the safeguard of citizens' health was likewise – probably first – under the eyes of the Western powers and other political forces, which interpreted it against the backdrop of democracy and capitalistic prosperity.⁸²¹

Education

When talking about education, here, I am referring to a variety of elements, such as schooling and the school system, the organization of day care, and the policies towards children in general. In the 1960s and 1970s, education was also a key issue in the whole of Europe. On both sides of the Iron Curtain, the influences were multiple and intertwined with each other. The first example that comes to mind is the one of *kindergartens*. The name itself, ironically, is German, and its paternity is attributed to Friedrich Fröbel, creator of a special school in Thuringia, around 1840.⁸²² Early childhood education, at that time, was experimented especially by Scandinavian countries, which were considered, at least in Western Europe, an absolute reference point on that. In Italy, the discussion had been opened in the 1950s. From then onwards, a movement, especially at local levels, started to overcome the old Fascist-shaped, oftentimes Catholic assistance structures, which carried with them a traditional vision of women. Women, and especially politicized, socialist and communist ones, were the main promoters of childcare and preschool and they organized meetings, conferences and campaigns throughout Italy.⁸²³ At the same time, the parties themselves – the PCI in particular – and the men of the parties made use of their role and of the private-public nexus as a tool of

⁸²¹ On the competition between East and West on the level of economic development, productivity and consumption, and also reforms, see Silvio Pons, "General Introduction," in *The Cambridge History of Communism*, ed. Silvio Pons and Stephen A. Smith, vol. I, World Revolution and Socialism in One Country 1917-1941 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 18.

⁸²² Peter Weston, *Friedrich Froebel: His Life, Times and Significance* (Roehampton: University of Surrey Roehampton, 1998).

⁸²³ Rita Montagnana (1895-1979), socialist, then communist, first-rank figure of antifascism and exile, and, also, wife of Palmiro Togliatti, had identified the topics in the thoughts of communist women already in 1945: beyond the political activities, women, along the idea of Soviet morality, had to be good wives and mothers, caring about "family, divorce, love". See Rita Montagnana, *La Famiglia, Il Divorzio, l'amore: Nel Pensiero Delle Donne Comuniste* (Roma: A.P.E., 1945). The UDI – *Unione Donne Italiane* – organization of leftist women, was actively involved in the propaganda for social policies connected to family in the following years. The line of the party was aimed at presenting the role of women as part of a path towards progress as shown, for instance, by the positions of the PCI's secretary Togliatti. See Palmiro Togliatti, "Discorso Alle Donne," June 3, 1945. Palmiro Togliatti, *Le Donne Comuniste per Il Rinnovamento d'Italia* (Roma: Edizioni di cultura sociale, 1955). However, women were in fact mostly beneficial to the increasing of PCI's political consent. This is not, of course, to say that the topics they dealt with were unimportant, but that they were not seen by the party as emancipatory or in the perspective of women's liberation, but as an element of the party strategy, and as an almost separate category inside the party.

propaganda, as they believed that this topic could be more effective and better conveyed as a prerogative of women.

The ultimate aim was to move towards a more modern and inclusive model. The Italian law that enshrined the birth of this conception of *asili nido* on the level of municipalities arrived in 1971, defining these schools for children until 3 years old as a «social service of public interest».⁸²⁴ In many ways, the red regions, and Emilia-Romagna first, anticipated this tendency. Well-known worldwide is the so-called “Reggio Emilia approach”; its conception had already started since 1963 thanks to the educationalist Loris Malaguzzi, from Reggio Emilia. A similar process happened with Bologna, in the second half of the 1960s. Kindergartens had thus become a boast of the Emilian communists, not because they invented them, but rather due to the way they had been organized and for the role of the red municipality in fighting for, organizing, and guaranteeing those services to the families. In the case of Reggio, also for the creative pedagogic approach that was employed, which considered (and considers) children as human beings, seen as bringers of «strong potentials of development and subjects of rights». In that conception, children «learn, and grow up, in relation with the others».⁸²⁵

Adriana Lodi, assessor to education in Bologna in the 1960s, has narrated, in a recent interview, that although the municipality did not have much money to travel to other countries, she paid the expenses by herself and travelled for instance to Denmark, to go and see how the preschool system was working there.⁸²⁶ This signals that those experiences, in Europe, were not a peculiarity of communists, but also that the issue of transnational transfer existed, and had an impact on the implementations of those solutions, even though often not explicitly.

Such transfers about educational issues were also visible with the GDR, although with even less openness, which I explain with the unwillingness to advertise a relation with a politically highly reprehensible subject. Also, this could be connected with a certain local pride, that permeated the Emilian administrations as subjects with a strong *agency* and that has, in my opinion, been perpetuated both in the public memory and in the private reminiscences of the protagonists. The administrative relations with the GDR in general have been, if not downgraded, often minimized. With specific regard to education, the reasons are difficult to grasp, but we can make some hypotheses – on the basis of the one interview I have on this topic, and of the crystallization of memory on this

⁸²⁴ L. 6 dicembre 1971, n. 1044 – Piano quinquennale per l'istituzione di asili-nido comunali con il concorso dello Stato.

⁸²⁵ Reggio Emilia Approach, in <https://www.reggiochildren.it/identita/reggio-approach/>. Also see the recent Carolyn Edwards, Lella Gandini, and George Forman, *I Cento Linguaggi Dei Bambini: L'approccio Di Reggio Emilia All'educazione Dell'infanzia*, 3rd ed. (Azzano San Paolo: Edizioni Junior, 2010). [First edition: Junior, Bergamo 1995].

⁸²⁶ Interview to Adriana Lodi, Assessore all'Igiene, Sanità, Assistenza 1964-1970, in Michele Mellara and Alessandro Rossi, *La Febbre Del Fare: Bologna 1945-1980* (Bologna: Cineteca di Bologna, 2010).

topic over the years.⁸²⁷ On the one hand, the minimization could be due to the fact that these administrators and technicians concerned with education did not actually care about the GDR's experience, or perceived it as marginal, in their own minds. On the other, however, it is also likely that those trips had not been understood or processed, or that they had not been experienced with clear awareness, for a multiplicity of reasons which could move from personal interests and stories, political conviction, antipathy towards the GDR regime, impossibility or unwillingness to distinguish between the positive and the negative sides of "real socialism" in that country; and, again, sense of belonging to the "Emilian way" of governing. With regards to this aspect, the fact that the PCI's administration was to not give too much (public) importance to those bonds could have had an unwitting impact on the perception of the GDR from the beginning, creating a sort of preconception. These are, of course, speculations that I am making, on the basis of the image that educational issues have today, and of the evidence that those trips to East Germany have happened, and appeared to have raised some interest, at least on paper. It is a pity that I did not have the opportunity to interview the principal promoters of the twinnings, such as the mayors or the leading technicians, as they probably had a different level of consciousness towards the political meaning of those visits to the East.

The discourse on education was shaped in every detail for the Italian guests, from the GDR's side. Some German documents show that proper political aims (*politische Zielstellung*) were listed and the people involved in the twinning process were supposed to follow them.⁸²⁸ For instance, on the occasion of the visit of a teachers' delegation in 1972 to Neubrandenburg, the focus was, first of all, on the knowledge transmission of the social order of the GDR and of its educational system. However, many other themes were identified as important for Italian teachers: the socialist economic progress in the GDR; the foreign politics and the pursuit of peace; the (state) political line about education and about the formation of the "socialist personality" as it had emerged from the 8th Congress of the SED; the cultural politics in the GDR; the role of communal politics in Neubrandenburg in relation to educational matters; problems, experiences and results in school lessons; and social conditions of the workers of the town.⁸²⁹ Many were the aspects, according to the

⁸²⁷ I am referring, first, to the many conferences, meetings promoted by the municipalities and, after 1970, by regions, and by other publications. See, for instance, Unione Donne Italiane and Lega per le autonomie e i poteri locali, *Una Scuola Pubblica e Gratuita per Tutti i Bambini Dai 3 Ai 6 Anni: Atti Del Convegno Nazionale, Bologna, 22 Febbraio 1970* (Roma: Visigalli-Pasetti arti grafiche, 1970), 3.; or the thesis in pedagogy by Denise Ravaioli, "Contributi Sulla Situazione Degli Asili Nido Nella Realtà Territoriale Della Regione Emilia-Romagna" (Università di Bologna, 1977). On the national level, in parallel, see Unione Donne Italiane, "Le Donne Aprono La Vertenza per Gli Asili Nido e per Le Scuole per l'infanzia: Atti Del Convegno Nazionale, Roma 18 Febbraio 1970" (Roma: SETI, 1970). Some later studies appeared in the end of the 1980s, such as, for instance, Patrizia Orsola Ghedini, *Asili Nido Tra Esperienza e Progetto: La Realtà Dell'Emilia-Romagna Nel Contesto Nazionale* (Scandicci: La Nuova Italia, 1987).

⁸²⁸ NeuSta, 2.00 AE, Nr. 4952, *Bericht über die italienischen Lehrerdelegation zum Lehrersymposium vom 31.3.1972-4.4.1972*.

⁸²⁹ Ibidem.

observers in Neubrandenburg, from which Italians from Collegno were impressed: most of all – they wrote – they looked at the construction of *Kinderkrippen* (crèches, childcare structures) in the city; and they appeared to be overwhelmed by the socialist work in the fields of education and learning, as well as by the «great knowledge of our pupils», the «relation between teacher and student», and in general about the relations of individuals with each other.⁸³⁰ In this sense, symposiums of teachers were part of the GDR’s strategy to reach recognition or spread the outcomes of the socialist system, not dissimilarly to what we have seen in the field of health. For this purpose, they organized one meeting each year, sometimes combining Italian and French groups of teachers. On two of these occasions, in 1969 and in 1972, the educators from Collegno travelled to the twin town, the first time accompanied by the mayor Bertotti.⁸³¹ All the participants received a detailed file with explanations about every single aspect of the school and education system in East Germany and in Neubrandenburg. For instance, the *Antonin-Zapotocky-Oberschule* prepared an illustrated project for the visitors, in Italian, which contained various illustrations of the main cultural points of the city, together with the history of the school, and an exposition about the educational structure in the GDR from Kindergarten until *Abitur* (final high school exam). An in-depth explanation was provided about forms and methods of the teaching of different subjects, from German to foreign languages (in that case, Russian and English), from math and natural sciences to laboratorial activities in physics, chemistry and biology.⁸³² A specific section was dedicated to the “polytechnic teaching” – a conception that was rooted in the Marxist tradition, as it was aimed, ideally, to the building of totally developed individuals. Its implementation had first been started by Krusciov in 1956 and had been followed by Walter Ulbricht in the GDR, in the second half of the 1950s. Polytechnic education was established as official system by a state law of February 1965. Being called a “Ten-Year Comprehensive Polytechnic Secondary School” (*zehnklassige allgemeinbildende polytechnische Oberschule*), it consisted of ten years of obligatory education, from year 6 to 16.⁸³³ While the purpose, and what appeared on the surface of the propagandistic language of the SED, was the production of an “all-round developed socialist personality”,⁸³⁴ the reality was much more contradictory, and it led

⁸³⁰ Ibidem.

⁸³¹ The teachers who travelled with Bertotti were Giovanni Cuselli, Vittoria Martelli, Antonio Taricco, Walter Nadalin. See NeuSta, 2.00 AE, Nr. 4952, *Programm und Durchführung des Symposiums mit französischen und italienischen Lehrern und Erziehern vom 31.3.-10.4.1969 in Neubrandenburg*.

⁸³² ASCO, Gemellaggi, b. anni 60, fasc. “Neubrandenburg delegazione 1968”, *Progetto per la cartella illustrata per Collegno, traduzione in italiano*.

⁸³³ David Childs, *The GDR: Moscow’s German Ally*, vol. 5, Routledge Library Editions: German Politics (London: Routledge, 2015), pp. 171-172. [First editions: 1983; 1988].

⁸³⁴ On this concept, see Angela Brock, “Power and Society in the GDR, 1961-1979: The ‘Normalisation of Rule’?,” in *Producing the ‘Socialist Personality’? Socialisation, Education, and the Emergence of New Patterns of Behaviour*, ed. Mary Fulbrook (New York: Berghahn, 2009), pp. 220-252.

to the building of a hard-working, highly trained and skilled but also conformist worker – something that was beneficial for the maintenance of power by the central state and the SED. During the meetings with foreign teachers, before recognition, local authorities made sure that this propagandistic image of the “socialist personality”, and the seriousness of the GDR’s educational model, were represented properly. This attitude, from the East German side, continued even after 1973, but with less rigidity – as the main objective, for them, had been reached.

What is more interesting to note, in my view, is the Italian perspective, as it is not so bound to recognition, or at least not only to that. Similarly to what we have seen with health, some of the most interesting reports and opinions were actually drafted after 1973. For instance, even if I was not able to find a detailed report written by Collegno teachers about the two meetings in 1969 and 1972, useful information comes from a diary that the children of the Collegno middle school compiled during and after a trip to the GDR in 1974. This document was meant to be sent to East Germans, so we have to pay attention to the underlying tendency to please the interlocutors; also, we can suppose that the young children were helped by their (politicized) teachers. However, their words are representative of the kind of people that were selected by the local administrations for these travels and of the language and the vision that was used in their writings. Quite clearly, the teachers who cared about the drafting of the report had to be members or at least sympathizers of the PCI, and most likely the children, too, were sons and daughters of communists. «Some of us notice that in the socialist society (the German one, at least) there is more attention to substance than to form, more importance is given to efficiency than to aesthetics» – so wrote children and teachers, who drew a comparison with the situation in Collegno: «the visit to the vacation center, with its ateliers and playground spaces, made us reflect on socialist politics towards youth: we concluded that here no marginalization exists, while it is so frequent at our place».⁸³⁵ In this case, too – as it was with health – one of the main arguments was linked to the opposition between the capitalistic societies and the socialist ones. The latter, they wrote, did not produce marginalization.

In 1974, so in unsuspecting times to imagine such a level of indoctrination, pupils and teachers seemed to be excited about the principles of socialism: the attention to the collective values, the scarce emphasis on possession, the care for common spaces.⁸³⁶ Special interest – especially from the teachers’ sides – was devoted to the integration of school and factory, and the permanent education developed in Neubrandenburg. Various reflections followed together with a confrontation with the Italian situations. They noted that the contacts with the work environment of the adults was not aimed

⁸³⁵ ASCO, Gemellaggi, b. Neubrandenburg 1974-75, fasc. “Neubrandenburg”, *Diario di 20 giorni nella Repubblica democratica tedesca, resoconto della visita estiva dei ragazzi delle scuole medie di Collegno*, 8 -26 agosto 1974.

⁸³⁶ *Ibidem*.

at the integration of the adolescents into the existing social conditions, but rather at the preparation of youth in bringing social development forward.⁸³⁷ Although in the Italian case, too a certain grade of control and propagandistic veil was present, the length of the reports; the attention; the involvement; and the integration between the two local communist societies on educational issues, pushed by Ruggero Bertotti, allow to think that the twinning with Neubrandenburg was a powerful instrument for Italians, at least to initiate a debate on schools, *Ausbildung*, etc.

This level of attention towards the school system from the side of Collegno is not surprising, if we consider that that was very important to the mayor Bertotti. The educational system, youth education, and children structures were absolutely at the center of its attention. Mostly thanks to his initiative, the school system in the little town of the Turin industrial belt had known a real boom: when Bertotti left his place in 1975, Collegno had 35 schools. In 1961, when he was first elected as mayor, the school buildings were only 3.⁸³⁸ His high sensibility towards this topic also encountered the experience in Neubrandenburg, where he himself travelled multiple times, bringing, as we have seen, students, teachers, and showing enthusiasm towards the educational system in the GDR. Particular eagerness was aroused by the structures for the young and the little, such as playgrounds, common spaces and so on. We can also imagine that he selected personally, inside the PCI and its organizations, the people that could be more receptive towards such a system. On this issue, Heinz Hahn, mayor of Neubrandenburg from 1968 until the reunification and personally involved in the town twinning with Collegno, has stated that

[Auch] das Schulwesen war sehr gefragt. Kindereinrichtungen ganz besonders, weil ja die Italiener Kinder lieben, ja? Ist ja auch ein freundlich eingestelltes Land gegenüber den Kindern. Ich habe mich immer gewundert, die Kinder durften überall mit, was bei uns nicht so gang und gäbe war, abends bei Tanzveranstaltung, ja... ja, da waren die Kinder bis Mitternacht. Ja, aber das ist nun mal so, das ist eine ganz andere Mentalität, ja? Solche Einrichtungen, die wir hier geschaffen haben waren natürlich vom großen Interesse. Dann... unsere Stadt war ja nicht irgendeine Stadt. Wir haben 30.000 Wohnungen gebaut; [Wir haben] 94 Prozent unserer Frauen waren berufstätig; damit war verbunden die Frage, wo bringen wir die Kinder runter? Also mussten wir Kindergärten und Kinderkrippenplätze schaffen.⁸³⁹

This interview that I was able to conduct with Hahn is precious on many levels. First of all, it represents a counterpart to the pieces of information – reports, letters, etc. – that are stored in the communal archives. On the one hand, it is important to have a statement from a protagonist of that time about the strong interest of Bertotti – and implicitly, of the communist society that rotated around him – on educational issues. On the other hand, Hahn’s sentences open many other questions and

⁸³⁷ Ibidem.

⁸³⁸ Vincenzo Santangelo, “Amministratori, Funzionari Di Partito e Quadri Dirigenti: Il Pci a Torino e in Provincia. 1946-1970,” in *Alla Ricerca Della Simmetria. Il Pci a Torino 1945/1991*, ed. Bruno Maida (Torino: Rosenberg & Sellier, 2004), 63–166., p. 147.

⁸³⁹ Interview to Heinz Hahn.

problems, as it always happens with oral history. Firstly, in his memory, the interest of the Italians is filtered through the cultural differences: his words are somehow representative of the way cultural categorizations, and also political visions, played a role in the unfolding of relations. The sentence on Italians and their love for children, and the emphasis on the different educational mentality, implicitly contain a judgment, probably also in relation to the way people and politicians thought the issues were faced in a *capitalistic* country. This leads to a further remark on Hahn's public role and the crystallization of his memory on these episodes and the contacts with Italy. During the interview, the former mayor has decidedly shown a nostalgic attitude, with regard to the GDR's era and the political-administrative realizations of that time, on several occasions described in positive terms, as it appears from his statements on the commitment of the Neubrandenburg administration in the building of *Kinderkrippen* and *Kindergärten* for the good of the women. His positive evaluation of (his) administrative experience is concretely demonstrated by the fact that, during the interview, he more than once stated his pride for still living in a block of units of public housing that the Neubrandenburg municipality had built between the 1960s and the 1970s. Hahn's interview is then a valuable instrument that confirms, also through memory, the East German point of view and celebrative attitude when addressing their "comrades" from Collegno.

A different typology of memory on educational issues is represented by the interview I have conducted with Antonio Zambonelli, teacher and educationalist from Reggio Emilia. As such, he travelled to the twin town Schwerin in 1973, with a small delegation from the municipality composed by Ildo Cigarini, «*Schulinspektor, leitender Mitarbeiter der Abteilung Volksbindung*»; Enrico Azzali, «*Verantwortlich für Erziehung, Gesundheitswesen*»; Paolo Bargicchi, Giancarlo Folloni and Edgardo Ferretti.⁸⁴⁰ Overall, he did not seem to have an impressive remembrance of the GDR's system, but, I find, from his words this appears to be due more to the negative judgment of the East German repressive and dogmatic regime, rather than to the school organization in itself. His testimony, in my opinion, represents an example of what the political tradition of Emilian "communist reformism" was and has nowadays become: at that time, the local success of the leftist administrations in the management of the citizens' and workers' life represented an element of pride, as we have stated, and this is particularly visible in the field of pedagogy and in Reggio Emilia, with the famous system implemented by Loris Malaguzzi becoming a worldwide model. The (strong) memory of those successful times for the local administration and its implementations – despite the political turmoil of the present days and the disappearance of the old political categories in what has been defined from

⁸⁴⁰ StaS, R1/896, *Programm zur Betreuung einer Parlamentsdelegation (Bereich Volksbildung) aus Reggio Emilia vom 10. bis 16.12.1973.*

many sides a post-ideological era – is still very lively. It has been kept alive in the public sphere; and it is alive – as I have previously mentioned – also in the minds and memories of the protagonists, as, I think, is the case with Zambonelli. In his case, the two red lines that cross the interview are, in my view, the claim of “absolute paternity” of the *Kindergarten* experience in Reggio Emilia, together with a bad evaluation of the system in East Germany and a somewhat belittling and reductive attitude towards the implementations there. These elements are visible from his narration of the experience in 1973:

AZ: Noi facevamo, insomma, attività molto vivaci, cioè la Germania era veramente un mortorio. Le scuole: ho mi ricordo che notavo, e avevo scritto in una relazione, che mi colpiva positivamente per esempio un aspetto, l'educazione all'ascolto, no? [...]; poi per quanto riguarda i bambini della scuola d'infanzia questo abituarli a stare all'aria aperta, tutti questi bambini che andavano a fare la doccia all'aperto, non in dicembre... [laughs] facevano vedere anche le fotografie di come vivevano... erano aspetti anche belli. E poi loro erano molto fieri di un fatto che noi invece stavamo discutendo vivacemente in Italia a quell'epoca perché poi a Reggio Emilia avevamo appena fatto la mostra sui libri di testo, che fu un fatto rivoluzionario, anche lì Umberto Eco era tra i nostri “consulenti” [...] Eravamo perciò proprio impegnati in un... in questo riesame del li... addirittura si arrivava alla negazione del libro di testo, il libro bisogna reinventarlo. Eran delle esagerazioni magari, però [...].

TM: C'era un dibattito aperto...

AZ: C'era un dibattito molto forte. Leggere che “la donna è la femmina dell'uomo”, mettevamo in discussione anche le definizioni dei dizionari, delle enciclopedie... [...] di dimensioni nazionali, io avevo scritto [...] un articolo su questo [...] sulla rivista dell'Istituto nazionale, su questa faccenda dei libri di testo... e in Germania era una roba da matti. L'aggiornamento per esempio: loro erano fieri di una cosa, che in Germania [...] in tutta la Repubblica democratica tedesca... sono le 11 del mattino e in tutte le scuole [...] si sta facendo la stessa materia; [...] cioè era un meccanismo *tedeschissimo* di, di, di... si fa qui si fa là, si fanno le espressioni [...] si fanno qui, si fanno in tutte le città della Ger[mania]... in tutte le scuole superiori si fanno le stesse cose, negli stessi orari, contemporaneamente; poi l'aggiornamento; che per noi l'aggiornamento era insomma, eran dei dibattiti che non finivan più; [gli insegnanti della DDR invece] ogni anno dovevano leggere e poi venivano sottoposti a veridica, ad esempio un classico del marxismo: “L'Imperialismo fase suprema del capitalismo”, [...] sì sì ma anche se uno insegnava matematica [...] tutte robe così erano queste scuole; che funzionavano bene, andavan tutti a scuola, avevano, insomma, quel che serviva c'era, però il contenuto era di un ideologismo spaventoso.⁸⁴¹

From these testimonies, it appears as clear that Zambonelli did not completely despise the East German system: indeed, he appreciated and closely observed some aspects such as the education to listening; the open-air activities; the punctuality, a “very German” (*tedeschissimo*) mechanism, the good general functioning of the structures and the percentage of pupils that actually went to school. However, he appeared to be critical towards the rigidity of the system and labeled the activities in the GDR as fundamentally uninteresting, if compared to the lively debate that was taking place in Italy in the 1960s and 1970s. This is the important point that we can extrapolate from his statements.

⁸⁴¹ Interview to Antonio Zambonelli.

However, over and above the *memory* of Zambonelli, is the fact that the municipality of Reggio Emilia sent a delegation of technicians to see and learn how things had been implemented in Schwerin – signals, this, that there was some kind of interest. Zambonelli himself has recalled that

No, eravamo noi che andavamo a conoscere e dovevamo riferire qui, tant'è che io appunto feci una lunga relazione scritta, a macchina, da consegnare all'assessorato qui, poi non so che fine abbia fatto, non credo che abbia avuto una vasta eco dopo, però l'intento era quello.⁸⁴²

Zambonelli did not appear to be fully informed about the outcome of his visit with the delegation. One possible explanation for this could be that the visit in Schwerin, for the municipality of Reggio, did not represent anything more than a demonstration of political proximity with the East, in the context of the municipal international relations. However, it could also be that the technicians and administrators were actually interested at least in comparing the management of education in the GDR. I think it is possible to talk at least about *influences* and *suggestions*.

Another element that needs to be taken into consideration is that, in Zambonelli's own admission, he does not remember much about that experience. He recalled that his fellow traveler Cigarini, he «really had a pedagogic education, so he was expert about, he quoted some Polish educationalists [...] I do not remember really well, although [I was] teacher in my turn, I did not know [them], at that time». Anyway – he concluded – «my report has been lost».⁸⁴³ We could long speculate about the loss of the report, whether it has represented a casualty, or it has been a precise maneuver from the side of the municipality, in order not to give too much exposition to the fact that such an informative travel had been made. When asked about the diffusion of the “Reggio Emilia approach”, Zambonelli has pointed out that it was probably received more in the West than in the East, «because that was a libertarian model, so to say, that had little to do with that dogmatism».⁸⁴⁴ As complex as it is to read between the lines, especially on such a delicate topic as *Kindergärten*, what can be asserted for sure is that the municipality of Reggio Emilia, in the person of its mayor Renzo Bonazzi, was willing to start such an exchange. As it appears from a document stored in the communal archive of Schwerin – the ones in Reggio Emilia have apparently been lost after the moving of the archive venue –⁸⁴⁵ the Department for School and Social Services (*Assessorato Scuole e Servizi Sociali*) was

⁸⁴² Ibidem.

⁸⁴³ Ibidem. «Comunque la mia relazione si è persa; comunque il nostro compito era, dato che sia Cigarini, sia l'altro di cui non ricordo il nome – mi pare che era laureato proprio in pedagogia, per cui era esperto, citava spesso Wygotsky [...] che io, ancorché insegnante a mia volta, non lo conoscevo [...], all'epoca; e abbiamo visitato varie scuole. E in una di queste scuole appunto ci hanno dato questo coso qui a ricordo della nostra permanenza là. Poi ci avevan dato anche un opuscolo che era “*DDR stellt sich vor*”, si presenta».

⁸⁴⁴ Interview to Antonio Zambonelli.

⁸⁴⁵ So I have been told by the archive responsables, after my first visit.

«interested – after [that first] start –⁸⁴⁶ in developing the relations around the complex of the experiences undertaken in the *Kindergärten*, nursery schools, primary schools, social services and free time of the boys».⁸⁴⁷ The will to develop those contacts with Schwerin had been discussed in a meeting and then approved, with the aim of «deepening the knowledge and proposing exchanges of experiences on schools, social services and health».⁸⁴⁸ This is a further proof that those were the topics that interested almost all local administrations in the time juncture of the 1960s and 1970s.

Actually, however, the one of 1973 was not the first visit of Reggio Emilia to Schwerin. Already in 1966, professor Franco Boiardi (member of the PSIUP) had been there in representation of the municipality to start the first contacts, and Kindergartens seemed to already be at the center of his attention.⁸⁴⁹ His experience is reported in a long document drafted by East Germans, which needs to be treated with care because of its producing subjects, but at the same time shows first, that the municipality sent someone to Schwerin, singularly and already in early times, for what could perhaps be defined as an *explorative* expedition; and second, that there was a precise interest towards Kindergartens, at least from what we can assume from the German documents – the only ones available.

Entsprechend eines Wunsches des Prof. Boiardi schloss sich daran eine Besichtigung der Kinderkrippe, des Kindergartens und der polytechnischen Oberschule Schwerin-Lankow zu. Prof. Boiardi war von der modernen Einrichtung und Ausstattung dieser Erziehungseinrichtungen in hoher Grade überrascht. Er nutzte die Möglichkeit, um an die Erzieher und Lehrer sowie den anwesenden Stadtschulrat eine Reihe von Fragen zur pädagogischen Konzeption dieser Einrichtungen zu stellen. Unter anderen spielte dabei eine Rolle, ob nicht durch Kinderkrippe und Kindergärten das Verhältnis der Eltern zu ihren Kindern leide. Weiter interessierte ihn besonders, mit welchen Mitteln und Methoden ein zeitungloser Übergang des Kindes von der Kinderkrippe in den Kindergarten, vom Kindergarten in die Schule, und von der Schule in die Berufsausbildung gesichert wird und wie dabei Unterschiede zwischen Kindern alt und ohne Kindergartenerziehung ausgeglichen werden. Alle diese Fragen könnten von den Erziehern überzeugend beantwortet werden. Prof. Boiardi erzählte selbst, einige wenige Befürchtungen, die er in diesen Fragen bisher gehabt habe, wären jetzt verschwanden. *Er habe besonders diese Frage gestellt, weil in Reggio Emilia kürzlich kommunale Kinderkrippen und Kindergärten aufgebaut werden seien, die bisher nur wenigen Erfahrungen [s...?] könnten und wegen ihrer anti-religiösen Haltung von den allgemein üblichen Kindergärten und -Krippen auch keine Erfahrungen übernehmen könnten. In diesem Zusammenhang tat es um Übergabe entsprechender Materialien über die Vorschul- und Schulerziehung in der DDR, um diese für die Arbeit in den Einrichtungen seiner Stadt zu benutzen.* Eine entsprechende Kollektion dieser Materialien würde ihm übergeben bzw. nachgesandt. Er betonte, dass er weder in Italien noch in einem beliebigen anderen Land in derartiges Niveau der Volksbildung und der staatlichen und gesellschaftlichen Bemühungen um das Wohl der Kinder feststellen konnte als er in der DDR und das seiner Meinung nach gerade diese Beispiel eine hervorragende Wirkung auf alle entwickelten kapitalistischen Staaten Europas haben müsse, wenn diese den sozialistischen Weg beschreiten wollen.

⁸⁴⁶ With “start“ they meant the first delegation sent to Schwerin, that is right the one in which Zambonelli was included.

⁸⁴⁷ StaS, R1/896, *Renzo Bonazzi a Horst Pietsch, Reggio Emilia, il 14 novembre 1973.*

⁸⁴⁸ Ibidem.

⁸⁴⁹ StaS, R1/896, *Bericht über die Betreuung den Herrn Professor Dr. Boiardi, Franco aus Reggio Emilia / Italien anlässlich seiner Besuchsreise in die DDR von 11. bis 16.4.1966, von Dobratz, Stellvertretender des Oberbürgermeisters; Schwerin, den 19.4.1966.*

Zum Beispiel der DDR sei für diese Staaten besonders wichtig, weil in diesen westeuropäischen Staaten gegenwärtig ehrliche Ausgangsbedingungen herrschen, wie sie bei Beginn des sozialistischen Aufbaus in der DDR vorhanden waren.⁸⁵⁰

The East Germans reported that Boiardi was asking for materials about *Kindergärten* and *Kinderkrippen* in the GDR, in order to use them for the work in Reggio Emilia, where at the time similar structures were in a preliminary phase. Whether this really happened, it is, again, difficult to determine with precision. However, the very fact that the East Germans appeared to be aware about the developments in Reggio and about the competition between religious and anti-religious crèches, must mean that there had been a discussion on that, with the Emilian professor and perhaps also in other venues and occasions that we are not aware of. The same discourse on the difficulty in determining the actual use of what had been learned can be made for this case. Probably, the further conception process of *asili nido* and the “Reggio Emilia approach” went on autonomously, later and progressively assuming the characters of a realization with independent traits.

With regard to these assumptions, I feel like expanding the explanation given by Cyrille Guiat, in his comparative work on cultural policies in French and Italian communism 1960-1980, who has written that in Reggio Emilia, one of his two case studies, «the set of policies implemented under the mayorships of Renzo Bonazzi and Ugo Benassi was not highly ideological in content».⁸⁵¹ Surely, the revolutionary road had been abandoned in favor of the «provision of a series of public, municipal services designed to be accessible to a wide majority of the Reggian population», but the bond with the Soviet sphere remained. Guiat admits this in his conclusions, affirming – although, actually, with reference to the cultural field – that «the cultural policy of Reggio tends to confirm the view that Italian communism never totally severed its links with Moscow».⁸⁵² I surely agree with his point, but I also argue that that did not just happen for merely ceremonial reasons – Guiat brings as example the invitations that the municipality kept sending to East European and Soviet ballet companies – but was more substantial, as I have tried to show, albeit among many ambiguities and explanatory holes, through these educational issues.⁸⁵³

Going back to the Bologna case, there is another moment in which it is possible to observe, tangentially, an interest on education. When 1974 assessor Loperfido had been to Leipzig with a delegation of doctors (see *Health*), in his report he also touched upon the problem of children and disabled children, their health and the connections between the health system and the schools. From

⁸⁵⁰ Ibidem.

⁸⁵¹ Cyrille Guiat, *The French and Italian Communist Parties: Comrades and Culture* (Portland: Frank Cass, 2003), p. 156.

⁸⁵² Ivi, p. 177.

⁸⁵³ The other case study Guiat focuses on is the French one of Ivry-Sur-Seine (Paris), where instead, in his opinion, the teleological dimension remained stronger. See Guiat, p. 178.

his words, we learn about the handling, in the GDR, of children born “at risk” and about health network services present in childcare structures, pre-schools and schools, as well as in special schools for disabled children, depending on the Education Ministry:

Il 30% dei bambini sono considerati “nati a rischio” e soprattutto quelli nati da madri giovani (19-24 anni), nubili e primipare; come tali vengono sottoposti a particolari e sistematici controlli. Di fatto solo il 6% ha un peso alla nascita inferiore ai 2.500 grammi e questi sono soprattutto figli di manovali e di famiglie numerose. Sei settimane dopo il parto la puerpera e il neonato vengono visitati nei presidi di distretto (vi è un pediatra ogni 10.000 abitanti e quindi ogni 140 bambini nel primo anno di vita); ad ognuno dei controlli successivi si valuta la necessità o meno di procedere ad accertamenti di secondo livello che vengono richiesti su schede particolarmente predisposte per la elaborazione elettronica dei dati. Le stesse richieste di accertamenti possono partire dai servizi di rete che seguono il bambino negli asili nido, nelle scuole materne e dell’obbligo. Le risposte tornano al presidio di distretto che assiste il bambino secondo le indicazioni ricevute. Sono praticate ai bambini le seguenti vaccinazioni obbligatorie: antivaiolosa, antipoliomelitica, antidifterica, antitetanica, antimorbillosa, antipertossica, contro la Tbc. (con B. C. G.). I bambini con handicap sensoriali o neuromotori particolarmente gravi sono assistiti in centri di riabilitazione che fanno capo all’assistenza sanitaria e sociale; alcuni vengono preparati alla frequenza alle scuole speciali che dipendono dal Ministero dell’Istruzione.⁸⁵⁴

Bologna, however, was likewise a model to look at, at that time, and internationally visible. Therefore, when the delegation of Leipzig came to Bologna, in 1971, the East Germans visited a preschool, too. However – and this is in my view relevant – they were not accompanied by the assessor, but by a functionary of the Department for Public Education of the Municipality of Bologna.⁸⁵⁵ To explain this choice, two are the possibilities, which remain partially open: either there was no interest at all towards the East German implementations from the side of Bologna, but only a self-advertising attitude, or there was, but it was disguised behind other visits, oriented towards different issues – such as the economic ones that we have seen in the previous session – which were easier to show to all citizens, as they concerned the productive environment and did not jeopardize the successful image of communist reformism in the town.

Town Planning

Town Planning and social housing were also internationally common topics in the 1960s and 1970s, as shown by the fact that the same *Fédération Mondiale des Villes Jumelées* published a number of informative documents about the topic. I have come by one of these in the communal archive of Carpi. In 1966, the title of the short document was *L’Urbanisme au service de l’homme* (“Town Planning at the Service of Man”). Administrators of many countries, both from the East and

⁸⁵⁴ ACSBO, Fondo Ufficio esteri, b. Lipsia 1973-1986, fasc. “Lipsia – Visita ass. Loperfido 24 febbraio 1974”, *I servizi sanitari e sociali della Repubblica democratica tedesca*.

⁸⁵⁵ ACSBO, Fondo Ufficio esteri, b. Lipsia 1960-1972, fasc. “Visita di una delegazione di Lipsia a Bologna in occasione della Fiera (4-7 ottobre 1971)”, sottofasc. “Delegazione di Lipsia a Bologna 4-7 ottobre 1971”, *Resoconto della visita, di Dante Cruicchi*.

the West, had been invited to narrate their experience on the topic. The opening of the document, drafted in many languages and also in English, went as follows:

The reason why the United Town Organisation has thought of a congress to be attended by men of various origins and from many different countries is that the need has been felt to discuss the vast and complex problem of the harmonious development of metropolises, towns and villages, with special attention to the realistic possibilities of modern town planning at the service of man in his environment. Town planning is as old as the world itself. Formally it was subject to essentially rural economic criteria. Man established himself on the earth because it was the source of its nourishment: town planning arose naturally, from necessity.

Archaeologists and sociologists agree that, although towns have existed for at least five or six thousand years, the recent notion of “urbanization” only dates from the 19th century in Europe – from what we call “the industrial revolution”, when the principles of man’s life were placed on bases completely different from those he had known until then. [...]

Is there no turning back from the pitiless growth of the metropolises and big towns? Is the only solution to be found in world-wide birth control, as considered by certain sociologists? We don’t think so. It seems much more simple [sic!] to imagine human conglomerations remaining with human dimensions, the only condition being that man find in them more than what attracts people in the overcrowded towns, i. e. not only work, but also a decent place to live in and their dignity. In short: the application of gradual urbanization still possible in medium sized towns.⁸⁵⁶

The conceptual frame the FMVJ played on was the almost atavistic necessity, for human beings, to organize the cities they lived in; stemming from there, they identified a generic and inclusive *topos* that could apply to every local administration in every country of the world, governed by every possible political force: namely, the attention to *man* «in his environment», and the necessity for modern town planning to rotate around that concept.

That frame was accepted by all the adherents to the FMVJ, but communist administrators had a more specific way of conceiving town planning along Marxist standards. When we think about the “socialist town”, in the USSR or in the countries of “real socialism”, those canons are easily recognizable, be they applied to old urban centers, which the socialist economy developed along its canons, or to the new cities, created in rural or non-urbanized areas and built around the functions and necessities of the different areas, such as agriculture, industry, or science.⁸⁵⁷ In the GDR, there were, too such centers of new foundation, such as Eisenhüttenstadt. Most of the other cities, however, had to deal with a traditional town center and classic architecture, that had variously been destroyed and devastated by the massive bombing of the Allied forces in the last phase of World War II, as it is

⁸⁵⁶ ASCC, Carteggio gemellaggio Carpi-Wernigerode, b. Archivio – anno 1969, fasc. “Città gemelle Congressi Adesioni Proposte”, sottofasc. “Richieste di gemellaggio”, *Supplément à la Revue de les Cités Unies. Conférence de Coopération Mondiale Intercommunale organisé par la Fédération Mondiale des Villes Jumelées (Conseil des Communes du Monde). Statut Consultatif à l’ONU et à l’UNESCO. Monastir (Tunisie), les 6, 7 et 8 Avril 1966. Thème : « L’Urbanisme au service de l’homme ».*

⁸⁵⁷ See the book, and especially the essay by Heinz Heineberg, in Richard Anthony French and Frederick Edwin Ian Hamilton, eds., *La Città Socialista. Struttura Spaziale e Politica Urbana* (Milano: FrancoAngeli, 1983), with particular reference to pp. 378-410, focused on urban town planning in West and East Berlin.

the case with Dresden. Until around 1955, the prevailing style was the so-called “socialist classicism”, that recalled Soviet architecture of Stalin times, with grand and lavish buildings. In East Germany, it was re-named as *Zuckerbäckerstil* (“wedding cake style”). The 1950s were the period in which a research of a national way to architecture started, so East German started looking for a combination of socialist architectural principles with a re-interpretation of the old, tradition architectural styles. With the beginning of Krusciov’s period and destalinization, and increasingly more in the 1960s and 1970s, the tendency was to adopt a more austere style, with attention towards *industrialization* and to all the structures aimed at favoring more space and a decent life for the increasing number of workers who participated in such industrialization – common spaces, but most of all big blocks of social housing (the so-called *Plattenbau*).⁸⁵⁸ Therefore, the necessities of the GDR in terms of town planning in the 1960s and 1970s were mostly connected to the necessity of building new houses for factory workers, though paying attention to the former structure of the towns, when they were present.

To this last regard, Italy had similar problems. There, too the Allied bombings had disfigured historical cities, and the postwar primary necessity, for all political forces, was reconstruction from the rubble. In this direction went the *INA-Casa* plan, approved in 1949 and extended until 1963, which represented a modern experiment of *welfare state*, as a state project for the realization of public residential housing in the whole of Italy.⁸⁵⁹ It was promoted by the left-wing group of the DC, and in particular by Amintore Fanfani, who was at that time Minister of Work and Social Security.⁸⁶⁰ Its reference model was the Beveridge Plan in Great Britain, the model presented in the British Parliament in 1942 which would have become the center of social security policies for Labor until the beginning of the 1950s.⁸⁶¹ In this sense, the plan represented an important reformist moment in the DC governments. However, the discussion about it had involved other political actors: social Christians, collectivist communists, as well as, for instance, characters such as the enlightened, leftist entrepreneur Adriano Olivetti.⁸⁶² With their different matrixes, they nevertheless shared the ideas of

⁸⁵⁸ On architecture and town planning in the GDR, see Frank Werner, *Stadt, Städtebau, Architektur in Der DDR: Aspekte Der Stadtgeographie, Stadtplanung Und Forschungspolitik* (Nürnberg: Inst. für Ges. und Wiss. (IGW) an der Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg, 1981).; another, more recent work on the relation between cities and town planning, in the optic of *Alltagsgeschichte*, is Christoph Bernhardt and Heinz Reif, eds., *Sozialistische Städte Zwischen Herrschaft Und Selbstbehauptung: Kommunalpolitik, Stadtplanung Und Alltag in Der DDR* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2009). About the treatment of old cities, see Brian Ladd, “Socialist Planning and the Rediscovery of the Old City in the German Democratic Republic,” *Journal of Urban History* 27, no. 5 (July 2001): 584–603.

⁸⁵⁹ On *INA-Casa*, see Paola Di Biagi, *La Grande Ricostruzione: Il Piano Ina-Casa e l’Italia Degli Anni Cinquanta* (Roma: Donzelli, 2001).; Luca Lambertini, “Community Work Nelle Periferie Urbane: L’Ente Gestione Servizio Sociale-Case per Lavoratori,” *Storicamente* 1, no. 69 (2005), <https://doi.org/10.1473/stor354>.

⁸⁶⁰ A.A.V.V., *Fanfani e La Casa. Gli Anni Cinquanta e Il Modello Italiano Di Welfare State. Il Piano INA-Casa* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2002).

⁸⁶¹ Gerhard A. Ritter, *Storia Dello Stato Sociale* (Bari: Laterza, 1996)., p. 12.

⁸⁶² Olivetti (1901-1960) was well known because in his factory, he believed in a system in which the profit had to be reinvested for the benefit of workers. On his world view and his impact on Italian society, Alberto Saibene, *L’Italia Di*

envisioning cities starting from the neighborhoods, and, as Giorgio La Pira affirmed, the *INA-Casa* brought about «not houses, but cities»:⁸⁶³ together with the housing were common spaces, gardens, childcare, schools, churches, other collective spaces, and so on. After the *INA-Casa* expired in 1963, other instruments, laws and norms were established in the context of the programming of social housing. For instance, the law number 167, of April 18, 1962, promoted municipal plans for the economic and popular housing, and here is when local institutions fully started taking control, or at least to acquire more decisional power, on these matters.⁸⁶⁴

The attitude of the PCI towards the *INA-Casa*, and in general towards the urban developments in the postwar period, was partly ambiguous. On the one hand, in the optic of political competition, the *national* party put itself in opposition. As Francesco Bartolini has highlighted,

For Togliatti, immediately after the war, the city was not yet the appropriate site where one could measure the modernization of the nation and the transformation of the strategies of capitalism. Only in the early sixties, when economic growth and migration from the countryside were changing the faces of many Italian metropolises, would the communist leader also speak of the “big new real estate” as a “class force” [...], which was born “from the development of the city, the extension and the movement of the industrial areas and the speculation on the land”. According to him, it would have been necessary to introduce “expropriation measures of the building sites” to limit this new force. Here is not difficult to identify echoes of the first political conflicts over city planning and urban development, which had involved the communists alongside some liberal-radical groups during the fifties.⁸⁶⁵

However, this attitude probably softened over time, especially in the 1960s, when the new *agency* given to local institutions in urban issues – and also to the ones governed by the PCI – somehow included them among the protagonists of the urban changes, giving them the possibility to shape them in a communist way. In that context, communist local administrations needed a political basis to their new initiatives.

I argue that the contacts with the GDR in the 1960s and 1970s can be explained against the backdrop of this need, by the red local administrations, to give a precise political-ideological, Marxist inspiration to the local urban implementations. On these grounds, how did the exchange on town planning qualify in the context of town twinnings’ exchanges? As we have seen in chapter 3, the IUAV architects in Venice have travelled many times to the GDR, to study its architectural model and its social innovations. From that experience, they published two notebooks, one of which had

Adriano Olivetti (Ivrea: Edizioni di Comunità, 2017).; Giuseppe De Rinaldis, *Chi Era Il Socialista Adriano Olivetti?* (Trento: Edizioni Del Faro, 2014).

⁸⁶³ On this sentence by La Pira, announced on the occasion of a new *INA-Casa* neighborhood, *Isolotto*, in Florence, see Gabriele Corsani, ““Non Case Ma Città’: L’Isolotto Nell’idea Di Città Di Giorgio La Pira” (April 15, 2004).

⁸⁶⁴ Paola Di Biagi, “Il Piano *INA-Casa*: 1949-1963,” *Il Contributo italiano alla storia del Pensiero - Tecnica* (2013), Treccani Online, n.d.

⁸⁶⁵ Francesco Bartolini, “Changing Cities. An Urban Question for the Italian Communist Party,” in *Cities Contested. Urban Politics, Heritage and Social Movements in Italy and West Germany in the 1970s*, ed. Martin Baumeister, Bruno Bonomo, and Dieter Schott (Frankfurt a. Main/New York: Campus Verlag, 2017), 53–72., p. 57.

been conceived in direct dialogue with the red local administration of Pesaro.⁸⁶⁶

However, the municipalities themselves also sent their experts to learn about the new techniques and ideas behind town planning. Of course, travelling to an Eastern country for knowledge exchange had a strong political meaning, but at the same time those exchanges on architecture and town planning seemed to be less problematic to treat for local councils, and more acceptable for the Italian public, than the ones related to health and education. Reggio Emilia, for instance, was much more open in expressing opinions about such topics. As the Emilian city planner and assessor of the Reggio Emilia municipality Ermanno Pignatti wrote to “genosse Diercke” in Schwerin, in 1972:

Wir haben die Möglichkeit gehabt, sowohl auf sozialem als auch auf dem Gebiet des Städtebaus die Verwirklichungen und Erfolge zu feststellen, die die Überlegenheit des sozialistischen Systems beweisen. Wie bekannt sind dagegen in den kapitalistischen Ländern Bauwesen und Städtebau der Rente und der Spekulation untergestellt oder dadurch stark bedingt.

Der Meinungs- und Erfahrungsaustausch ist unbedingt nützlich, um tiefer die Tätigkeit in der DDR auf dem Gebiet des Städtebaus kennenlernen zu können und damit unsere Beziehungen zu verbessern. Das gibt uns auch eine stärkere Anregung, uns für die Anerkennung der DDR durch die italienische Regierung einzustellen.⁸⁶⁷

Pignatti openly talked about the achievements and successes of Schwerin in urban issues and wrote that the visit proved the «superiority of the socialist system, both in the social field and in the one of urban planning», using the usual argument of the limits of the capitalistic system. In this case, too, the Italian diplomatic recognition was a central aim – but I think that Pignatti’s words are unambiguous: the socialist system was considered *superior*, and as we have seen from many examples, this was a spread conviction among many of the actors involved in translocal exchanges through the twinnings. Pignatti also wrote to the main architect of Schwerin, Andreas, to thank him for the visit and state, once again, that «our» [their] «common activity [was] supposed to provide the people with a better future».⁸⁶⁸ With his words, Pignatti clearly located himself in the broad family of socialism, considering him, Andreas and the urbanists of both countries as following the same ideal: putting *man* at the center of the city. Together with Pignatti was also a long list of city planners, urbanists and technicians working together with or inside the municipal administration of Reggio Emilia in the field of “territorial planning”: Giulio Bigi, Remo Tanzi, the engineers Umberto Venturi and Gian Paolo Mazza, Giuliano Gandolfi, plus a journalist from “L’Unità”, Roberto Scardova, and

⁸⁶⁶ Gruppo Architettura IUAV Venezia, “Quaderni Di Documentazione 2: Anno Accademico 1973-1974: Le Città Medie Italiane: Struttura Fisica e Funzionale Delle Aree Centrali (Bologna, Modena, Ravenna, Rimini): Le Città Medie Dei Paesi Socialisti: Struttura Fisica e Funzionale Delle Aree Centrali (Merseburg, Spalato)” (Venezia: IUAV, 1973).

⁸⁶⁷ StaS, R1/896, *Ermanno Pignatti, Stadtrat für Städtebau Reggio Emilia, an Genosse Diercke, Schwerin; Reggio E. den 15. Okt. 1972.*

⁸⁶⁸ *Ibidem.*

Davide Fontanesi, driver.⁸⁶⁹

The interest of the delegation was mainly directed towards «realizations of public and private initiative», the «methods of public control on urban interventions», the «planning of interventions», the «services [and their] management», and the powers of the municipality.⁸⁷⁰ All these requests – which are in line with the idea of red local institution that we have seen so far – were presented in a proposal of the Department for City Planning to the town twinning committee. In the document, it was mentioned that the initiative came from assessor Pignatti, who wanted to both involve urban planners and technicians of the city and repeat the experience made in other study trips such as the ones «organized in the last years in Sweden, Denmark of Great Britain». His aim was to visit Schwerin and Bydgoszcz and possibly other German or Polish towns.⁸⁷¹

Other exchanges also occurred with smaller towns, such as Carpi. Early in 1965, for instance, most likely the mayor Losi (the letter is not signed) sent a communication to Neubrandenburg, recalling a meeting of the representatives of “municipalities for peace” in Dresden years before. «Among the things that I have visited, I remember seeing a House-Hotel for old workers. Being our intention to realize a similar thing in Carpi, I would kindly ask you to contact the mayor of Dresden to see if it is possible to have a copy of the projects of that House-Hotel».⁸⁷² This sounds like a very concrete interest that Carpi had towards the way housing structures were built in the GDR. Similarly, the communal archive stores – although accompanied by no report or notes – a ground plan of the roof of a *Kindergarten* in Carpi, prepared in June 1967 by the Carpi municipality. Maybe East Germans were interested in constructing the roof with their materials (see 5.2.1).⁸⁷³ In the case of Carpi, the urban question was perceived as central by the mayor Losi, in relation to the quick industrial expansion of the Modenese area and of its economic and social progress.⁸⁷⁴ An exchange

⁸⁶⁹ StaS, R1/896, *Renzo Bonazzi an Horst Pietsch, Reggio Emilia, den 15. September 1972.*

⁸⁷⁰ StaS, R1/896, *Renzo Bonazzi an Horst Pietsch, 2 luglio 1972.*

⁸⁷¹ *Ibidem.*

⁸⁷² ASCC, Carteggio gemellaggio Carpi-Wernigerode, b. Corrispondenza gemellaggio CP-Wernigerode, fasc. “anni 62-79”, *Lettera a “Bruno” da parte di un carpigiano, 23.12.1965.*

⁸⁷³ StaWe, WR III/1255, *Comune di Carpi – asilo nido di via G. Leopardi, pianta tetto, tav. 9, 10 giu 1967.*; ASCC, Carteggio gemellaggio Carpi-Wernigerode, b. Corrispondenza gemellaggio CP-Wernigerode, fasc. “anni 62-79”, *Lettera di Poels a Bruno Losi, 29.2.1966.*

⁸⁷⁴ «Riflettendo infatti sulla vicenda politica e umana di Bruno Losi, sorge un desiderio, una domanda di maggiore conoscenza del passato, che scaturisce però da bisogni e da interrogativi di oggi. Prendiamo ad esempio lo sviluppo urbanistico di Carpi. Non c'è dubbio che il volto della città destinato, pensiamo, a permanere a lungo scaturisce essenzialmente dalla città storica quella che si consolida all'inizio del XVI sec. e dalla grande espansione degli anni 50 e 60. Si tratta allora di comprendere le ragioni, le organizzazioni, il gioco degli interessi, ma anche soprattutto il ruolo dell'amministrazione locale, nel corso della vicenda urbanistica, si badi, non da indagare in astratto, ma di cogliere un processo economico e sociale concreto. Perché economico, sociale e culturale fu innanzitutto il fenomeno dell'inurbamento dei contadini, dei braccianti e degli operai nel corso del dopoguerra. Si è più volte sottolineato come questa prodigiosa espansione sia aumentata in modo ordinato e disciplinato, consegnando a noi una periferia che, se oggi bisognosa di qualificazione, ha garantito e garantisce standard significativi di qualità della vita. Si è sottolineato il valore delle scelte di pianificazione urbanistica di quegli'anni: dal Piano Regolatore; il Piano Airaldi del 59' che contemplava tra

of opinions and ideas also took place between Modena and Potsdam, twinned through the labor unions. Modena was strictly connected to Carpi. In 1969 a group of experts, guided by the head of the town planning department in Modena Vittorio Caruso, and by the assessor to town planning in Carpi Onorio Campedelli, established a dialogue with their GDR's correspondents.⁸⁷⁵

However, when talking about urban matters, it is interesting to take Bologna into account, as it was the undisputed center of experimentation in the 1960s, with important characters of the world of town planning as responsables of the municipal departments, and therefore of these changes. The two most important names are undoubtedly those of Giuseppe Campos Venuti, Roman architect and famous for his intellectual elaboration on the connection between the role of municipalities and town planning, as his own production demonstrates;⁸⁷⁶ and Pier Luigi Cervellati, architect, urbanist and later assessor in Bologna (1964-1980).⁸⁷⁷ The call of Campos Venuti had been a direct consequence of the turn marked by the Emilian PCI's regional conference in 1959, as it was just after that that he was nominated assessor to urban issues with Dozza.⁸⁷⁸ The inauguration of the Economic and Social Housing Program (PEEP), regulated by the previously recalled law 167/1962 happened almost simultaneously with the arrival of Campos Venuti.⁸⁷⁹ These are the two main turning points that Francesco Bartolini has identified as central in the Bologna transition between the Fifties and the Sixties.⁸⁸⁰ That plan, officially adopted in 1963, «allowed cities with more than 50.000 inhabitants to outline ten year plans in order to estimate their future housing demand. In Bologna, the construction of PEEP complexes was entrusted to public bodies [...] and housing cooperatives, with the aim of reducing the final cost of houses».⁸⁸¹ Vanni Bulgarelli, interviewed for this research, but also author of a recent essay on urban planning in Emilia-Romagna, has established a connection between the

l'altro l'intuizione delle esigenze più importanti di viabilità compresa la circondariale che con la D.C.C. d'oggi decidiamo di intitolare a Bruno Losi precedentemente i Piani di Fabbricazione, le scelte relative alle zone artigianali, ecc.», See ASCC, Consiglio comunale 14 gennaio-17 marzo 1988, *Verbale n. 283 del 27.02.1988. Oggetto: Commemorazione di Bruno Losi – Sindaco di Carpi dal 1945 al 1970 Anniversario della scomparsa.*

⁸⁷⁵ ISTOREMo, APCIMo, b. 52-1969, fasc. “Repubblica Democratica Tedesca”, *Comunicato stampa 9.9.1969.*

⁸⁷⁶ His main publications in the 1960s are Giuseppe Campos Venuti, *Amministrare l'urbanistica* (Torino: Einaudi, 1967), and Giuseppe Campos Venuti, *Urbanistica Incostituzionale* (Venezia: Marsilio, 1968). Likewise in the 1960s, about the problems that municipalities had to face with legislation. The urban planner also collaborated with the IUAV architect Aymonino. Might it be an example of this the publication to which they both worked about *centri direzionali*, with attention to foreign experiences such as the one in the United States: Carlo Aymonino and Pierluigi Giordani, eds., *I Centri Direzionali. La Teoria e La Pratica. Gli Esempi Italiani e Stranieri. Il Sistema Direzionale Della Città Di Bologna* (Bari: De Donato, 1967).

⁸⁷⁷ *Storia amministrativa del Comune di Bologna: Cervellati, Pierluigi*, in “Iperbole”, <http://informa.comune.bologna.it/storiaamministrativa/people/detail/36265>. Last visited on September 30, 2018.

⁸⁷⁸ Vanni Bulgarelli, “Politica Urbanistica e Modello Emiliano,” in *Il “Modello Emiliano” Nella Storia d'Italia: Tra Culture Politiche e Pratiche Di Governo Locale*, ed. Carlo De Maria (Bologna: Bradypus, 2014), 135–58., p. 149.

⁸⁷⁹ Luciano Leonardi, Franco Morelli, and Carlo Vietti, *La Storia Del Peep: Politica Urbanistica ed Edilizia a Bologna Dagli Anni Sessanta Al Piano Strutturale Comunale* (Bologna: Edizioni Tempinovi, 2008). I particularly thank both Enrico Pontieri and Marco Gualtieri for the important bibliographical suggestions on urban issues and planning.

⁸⁸⁰ Bartolini, “Changing Cities.”

⁸⁸¹ Bulgarelli, “Politica Urbanistica.”

instrument of deficit spending and decentralization, as implemented by the Dozza administration (see chapter 4) and the new urban policies.⁸⁸²

To what extent were these novelties implemented by looking at foreign countries, of the East in this case? Without the pretension of finding an answer to such a complex question, by looking at the Bologna-Leipzig relations we notice that in 1971, when the Leipzig delegation visited the “red” town, it was brought to visit the PEEP of the “Filanda”, factory for the processing of canvas, in the Barca neighborhood. The assessor Venanzio Palmi and the architects Luciano Ghedini and Riccardo Merlo, from the municipality’s technical office, accompanied the Germans.⁸⁸³ A similar visit was carried out by the Bolognese in 1972, in a climate of general satisfaction («We must say that the discussion has happened in a climate of full reciprocal faith»)⁸⁸⁴ The Italian delegation, despite some complaints about the excessive brevity of the single visits, seemed to be impressed by the urban development of Leipzig, an ever-growing center of more than 600.000 inhabitants, which expansion in terms of *Einwohner* was foreseen as reaching a number of 750.000 in 1980.

È previsto per Lipsia [...] uno sviluppo stellare, con la creazione di grandi agglomerati nel territorio circostante, collegati con autostrade e con treni alla città. Il centro storico diverrà centro direzionale, con la costruzione di centri commerciali, di uffici, di locali per l’università (aule e pensionati studenteschi). Dopo la visita al cantiere (nel quale si usa prevalentemente materiale prefabbricato), ci siamo recati ad un ufficio di quartiere. In tutta Lipsia esistono sette quartieri, ognuno dei quali fornito di proprie strutture.⁸⁸⁵

Neither Campos Venuti nor Cervellati, however, seem to have directly participated to those exchanges. Instead, technicians of the municipal offices were sent to take notes and to participate to discussions. Again, one question arises: was there no interest at all from their side, or was it simply too compromising for Bologna, in that period, to show too close contacts with the GDR? Taking Cervellati into account, we only know, from a telegraphic, internal communication, that in 1972 he asked Dante Cruicchi if he could acquire a book by Kurt Junghanns from East Berlin.⁸⁸⁶ That book

⁸⁸² See Bulgarelli. The Plan of 1969, as a matter of fact, was directed towards the construction of missing services in the center of Bologna, but compatibly with the historical structures and residential areas; but the directional activities, and also the commercial ones, had to be delocalized, and the neighborhoods were to acquire more centrality. On this, see Giuseppe Rebecchini, “Bologna”, in Gruppo Architettura IUAV Venezia, “Quaderni Di Documentazione 2: Anno Accademico 1973-1974: Le Città Medie Italiane: Struttura Fisica e Funzionale Delle Aree Centrali (Bologna, Modena, Ravenna, Rimini): Le Città Medie Dei Paesi Socialisti: Struttura Fisica e Funzionale Delle Aree Centrali (Merseburg, Spalato).”, p. 24.

⁸⁸³ ASCBO, Fondo Ufficio esteri, b. Lipsia 1960-1972, fasc. “Visita di una delegazione di Lipsia a Bologna in occasione della Fiera (4-7 ottobre 1971)”, sottofasc. “Delegazione di Lipsia a Bologna 4-7 ottobre 1971”, *Resoconto della visita, di Dante Cruicchi*.

⁸⁸⁴ ASCBO, Fondo Ufficio esteri, b. Lipsia 1960-1972, fasc. “1972”, sottofasc. “21-25 novembre 72, viaggio delegazione di Bologna, programma di lavoro”, *Relazione sul viaggio a Lipsia di una delegazione del Comune di Bologna, 21-25 novembre 1972*.

⁸⁸⁵ Ibidem.

⁸⁸⁶ ASCBO, Fondo Ufficio esteri, b. Lipsia 1960-1972, fasc. “1972”, sottofasc. “21-25 novembre 72, viaggio delegazione di Bologna, programma di lavoro”, *Lettera di Pierluigi Cervellati a Dante Cruicchi, Bologna 1 febbraio 1972*.

had been published (only) by the *Deutsche Bauakademie and Henschelverlag* of East Berlin in 1970, and was a biography of Bruno Taut (1880-1938),⁸⁸⁷ one of the German pioneers of architecture and social thought, which would have later been published in Italian, too, but only in 1978.⁸⁸⁸ Surely we cannot label the intellectual interest by Cervellati as a sign of interest for the GDR as a whole, and as a model for town planning. However, it is possible to follow the suggestion indicated by the thin thread that connects Taut, as an exponent of architectonic rationalism but also an author of many publications on housing politics in the cities,⁸⁸⁹ and Kurt Junghanns, East German author of his biography. The very fact that that book had been published in East Germany meant that some aspects of Taut's work were worth of consideration in socialist terms. Far from considering Bruno Taut a communist *ante litteram*, the East Germans, however, revalued him for his attention to housing as a social issue, and as an actor that could communicate, in a simple way, first and foremost with the working masses.⁸⁹⁰ That tradition was also reclaimed by Cervellati, although in a very different context. Certainly, one could also hypothesize that Cervellati was not attracted at all by the GDR, and that he had asked for that book for pure intellectual reasons, and as it was the only one available on Taut's life.

Proceeding from these suggestions and small signs, I would like to draw attention on the memories of Vanni Bulgarelli, in the interview we have realized together. His point of view on the topic is particularly interesting for me, as he has also worked for many years in the field of town planning and, as an expert, has published scientific works. Bulgarelli had been to Wernigerode twice, in 1972 and 1974.⁸⁹¹ His testimony is remarkable, and in my opinion provides a pertinent explanation, about some aspects related to this section. As the author of this dissertation, and on the basis of my analysis of sources, I myself sympathize with some points that Bulgarelli has raised, related to the communication between the local communist areas, especially in Emilia-Romagna, and the GDR.

The first point regards what he has defined as a general «socialist inspiration», to be found in the Emilian area especially: «the socialist inspiration [...] is one of the inspirations, of the keys to understanding, then, of course, re-read through Rodari, Gramsci, the educationalists, “Italian style”», but it is «the great idea of the social dimension, which completes the local dimension. For us, *the social is the local*».⁸⁹² The reformist socialists of the beginning of the 20th Century had already started

⁸⁸⁷ Kurt Junghanns, *Bruno Taut 1880-1938* (Berlin: Henschelverlag, 1970).

⁸⁸⁸ Kurt Junghanns, *Bruno Taut 1880-1938* (Milano: FrancoAngeli, 1978).

⁸⁸⁹ See Taut, Bruno, Enciclopedia Treccani online, <http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/bruno-taut/>.

⁸⁹⁰ Ibidem.

⁸⁹¹ Interview to Vanni Bulgarelli, Modena, December 27, 2017.

⁸⁹² «[...] cioè l'ispirazione socialista dalle nostre parti è una delle ispirazioni delle chiavi di lettura, poi naturalmente riletta attraverso Rodari, Gramsci, i pedagogisti, all'italiana ma è la grande idea della dimensione sociale, che si sposa con la dimensione locale. Per noi il sociale è il locale»; see Interview to Vanni Bulgarelli.

to engage in education and assistance, as it has been highlighted in chapter 4. Always paying attention not to draw direct lines between those experiences and the postwar ones, very different in forms, modes and platforms towards which they were referring, it is worth to take up Bulgarelli's suggestion about a *tendency* that started in the first years of 1900 and developed later, that has maybe more to do with the fact that the *local subjects* were the promoters of these policies, thus showing *agency*, rather than with the policies themselves. In this sense, for Bulgarelli, the welfare state (in Emilia-Romagna) was *local*, had a strong «territorial connotation» also from the perspective of urban planning, meaning that there was no national reference point in terms of architectural language in Italy. In his opinion – and I agree with that – the Soviet bloc became a benchmark for all these Italian territorial realities not really in terms of aesthetics, but in the affirmation and comprehension of the centrality of architecture in the way public and common spaces were imagined, in schools especially. This is of course a quite impalpable element:

quest'idea in cui lo Stato sociale è uno stato sociale locale che ha un forte connotato territoriale che si caratterizza anche da un punto di vista dell'edilizia, dal punto di vista delle caratterizzazioni, da una forte progettualità locale. Anche in questo caso se tu vai a vedere le forme poi un po' si assomigliano qua e là, ma ogni ufficio tecnico si progetta le sue cose. Se tu vai a vedere le progettazioni degli asili nido e delle scuole materne, delle scuole elementari degli anni '50, '60, fino a tutti gli anni '70, ma ancora adesso, non c'è uno standard nazionale, non c'è un centro nazionale che produce degli stili o dei linguaggi che poi vengono presi, c'è una rielaborazione attraverso quella che può essere la cultura dell'ufficio tecnico, del progettista, che insieme ai pedagogisti elaborano, come a Reggio Emilia eccetera, un'idea di pedagogia abbinata a un'idea di architettura e un'idea di architettura abbinata ad un'idea di pedagogia: lo spazio centrale comune, le aule aperte. Il blocco sovietico diventa un punto di riferimento non tanto dal punto di vista di questi linguaggi, ma dal punto di vista della comprensione che questo è un elemento estremamente importante e qualificante, in particolare per quanto riguarda i ragazzi.⁸⁹³

Regarding this aspect, Bulgarelli was rightly reluctant in establishing parallelisms: «our reality – he said – was so different that it would have been unthinkable to be able to import architectural and urbanistic models». However, he added, «through other paths something was actually there». With that, he meant that Italian architecture was in a way influenced by the research that had been conducted in the GDR about a “national language” of architecture, which aimed at recuperating Bauhaus, trying to «insert Saxon, Silesian stylistic themes», through an «abandonment of the monumental style». The Italian architecture, in his opinion, was influenced by that in the implementation of schools, equipped house blocks, green areas, in general all the elements of *socialization* of the city, in the research of a new language, which was «not characterizing and not aulic». A similar attempt, such a rational approach in Italy, in his view, is detectable, for instance, in the rural village of *La Martella*, close to Matera, or in all the neighborhoods of *INA-casa*. For

⁸⁹³ Ibidem.

Bulgarelli, that realism was a «refusal of the refinedness [*aulicità*] of the previous architecture, at the same time [being] the attempt to build a new language, which does not even rely upon the labels of Bauhaus and European rationalism anymore...». The reasons why that model was not *completely* applied in Italy, for Bulgarelli, can be found in two main reasons. Firstly, a communal “house plan” was missing, and that was due to the centralization introduced by the *INA-Casa*. He claimed that the «elaboration of an autonomous language [was] missing, because it was not the municipality to make projects». This was surely true in the 1950s and by the beginning of the 1960s, but what about the later phase? I think that Bulgarelli refers here to the lack of a long-term project, as later on, as it has been shown in this very section, the agency of the municipalities in urban planning was much higher, thanks to the regulating plans and other de-localization measures. Secondly, the municipalities were constantly confronted with the problem of money: the fact that they had acquired more agency did not mean that they received constant financing by the state. The communes and the local private companies had to accommodate urban planning and constructions in «cities of small-medium dimension as Carpi, for instance, but also as Modena»:

È un paradosso invece quello che ti dirò, quando a Wernigerode andiamo a vedere quello che ti racconto fra un secondo, questa cosa invece c'è, e Wernigerode aveva la metà degli abitanti di Carpi, allora, e perché? Perché c'è lo stato, perché c'è un *player* che ha la possibilità di investimenti di quella portata, da noi non lo può fare né il Comune né il mercato privato.⁸⁹⁴

The way the East Germans had to cut costs, told again Bulgarelli, was through the use of prefabricated constructions. This was something that started at the end of the 1960s in the bigger cities, as before they «were not able to build enough houses and the costs were extremely high». For that reason they started using prefabricates, to have a good «construction quality and be able to build more rapidly».⁸⁹⁵

However, the real contact between Italy and East Germany in urban planning and architecture was not to be found on an aesthetic level – and this is the second point – but on the one of the symbolic value of the GDR. Here, Bulgarelli raises the *competition* element: East Germany was continuously confronted with the Federal Republic, constantly pushed to demonstrate that it was doing better than its capitalistic half. In this sense, the social state was, at the same time, a field of encounter – as it represented the state’s response to the people’s basic necessities both in the East and in the West – but also of rivalry. On this topic, Bulgarelli mentioned that «we [we, communists, and people who travelled to the GDR] found ourselves [in that (Eastern) conception]» («*ci ritrovavamo*»), as the welfare state represented the «good side of socialism» («*il buono del socialismo*»), while there were other, darker aspects:

⁸⁹⁴ Ibidem.

⁸⁹⁵ Ibidem.

Sicuramente questi viaggi, per quanto riguarda diciamo la conoscenza e la cultura, sono momenti in cui, almeno, noi ci ritrovavamo. Cioè se io dovevo vedere le cose che ci dividevano, le tante che ci dividevano, e quelle che ci univano, questa idea dello stato sociale, dei bambini, della scuola, dell'istruzione, della formazione, della tutela delle donne eccetera, questo era un tratto distintivo in cui ci riconoscevamo perfettamente, *il buono del socialismo*. E in fondo, questo è il punto, la DDR era quest'immagine. Era, a differenza di altri, che erano “the dark side of socialism”, questa era invece la faccia buona del socialismo e la DDR è stata concepita anche in molti versi così, e perché? Perché intanto c'era la Germania dell'Ovest, e quindi il tema era il confronto fra i due. Non sarebbe mai stato accettabile che in Germania vivessero come in Polonia, che andavano a cavallo fino agli anni '80, ma non per sport, perché non avevano i soldi per comprare le macchine nei villaggi rurali. Questo sarebbe stato inconcepibile. Non solo c'era l'apparato industriale che era rimasto diciamo dell'Est [...] quindi c'era una conoscenza, una roba veramente importante, e quindi una capacità produttiva, ma c'era proprio l'intenzione di dimostrare che la DDR poteva essere l'alternativa alla BRD, con lo stesso *skill* dal punto di vista economico, professionale e anche di benessere. Questa scelta è una scelta che fu fortemente sostenuta dall'Unione Sovietica che finanzia e sostiene, soprattutto nell'invio di materie prime. E quindi il sostegno alla DDR perché era la dimostrazione, lì era la vetrina, e volevano dimostrare agli occidentali che arrivavano che loro stavano bene quasi quanto... Questa era l'idea e che i valori sociali del socialismo loro li stavano realizzando, noi li stavamo raccontando in una dimensione locale in cui c'era questo socialismo capitalista, difficile da spiegare ovviamente, che aveva questa dimensione locale con un forte connotato sociale e aveva la dimensione nazionale con un forte connotato invece mercantile, speculativo, capitalistico, di sfruttamento fortissimo, insomma. Questo elemento è un elemento che loro comprendevano perfettamente ed era così, nel senso che tu lo troverai sui libri, e questa è una scelta compiuta politicamente a sostegno.⁸⁹⁶

Overall, the linking point between the two worlds appears to be the conception of the city as a *social subject*. Connecting to this last idea, I would like to recall a sentence by Francesco Bartolini in a recent essay. He has written that the portrait of the Italian communist city, and of Bologna in particular, «did not include references to the model of the ‘socialist city’ as experienced in Eastern Europe», and that «[that] absence [was] not surprising because it characterized most of the discussions inside the Party regarding all Italian metropolises». To sustain his arguments, he brings as a proof the fact that the communist journal “Rinascita”, in 1974,⁸⁹⁷ had published some interviews with Italian architects and urban planners on the problems of the cities, and the references to the idea of Soviet city were completely absent.⁸⁹⁸ When it comes to purely technical urban issues, and to aesthetical aspects, the shapes of the buildings, etc., I cannot help but agree with his reflections. For Bologna, especially, the style, the history, the historical buildings of the town were not comparable with the Eastern towns. However, I think Bartolini’s analysis may be underestimating some aspects, that, however, are probably more related to the political culture of communist administrations and to their modes of self-representation than with urban issues themselves.

Collectivization, collective spaces, social housing, decentralization, bringing the man at the center of the city: when considering the *conception* that was behind the town planning itself, there

⁸⁹⁶ Ibidem.

⁸⁹⁷ See Rinascita 11-30, 1974, quoted in Bartolini, “Changing Cities.”, p. 63.

⁸⁹⁸ Bartolini., p. 63.

was an ideal convergence, and one cannot avoid detecting an attention of the local PCI to these elements. Probably the local level made the difference, in this case. “Rinascita” was a journal with a national diffusion which represented and reproduced the PCI’s official line; and in 1974, it was probably not wise to flaunt contacts with the Soviet sphere too openly. Another aspect that, in my opinion, has not been taken in full consideration in Bartolini’s explanation is the influence that local boast could have on town implementations. The city of Bologna, with their big names – Campos Venuti, Cervellati – and as the showcase of Italian “democratic communism”, acted, and wanted to be perceived, as an independent actor in implementing its town structure. One last remark to Bartolini’s statement regards the peculiarity of the GDR, which was not completely a product of Soviet times, but – as I have explained at the beginning of this section – had started a process of implementing a “national way” of town planning and architecture, looking for a coherence with the previous German tradition. In a way, then, it was not Poland or Hungary: that tradition had a long history and was more likely to be appreciated by Italians.

5.2.2.1 Interpreting communist administrative exchange

C’era quindi nelle regioni rosse, o per lo meno in parte consistente dei loro cittadini, uno scarto fra due poli. Un polo era la proiezione verso un mondo mitico e lontano, una proiezione chiamata “internazionalismo”, magari ancora “internazionalismo proletario”, secondo il canone della vulgata. L’altro polo era il riconoscersi in un sistema locale con tutti i suoi ingredienti umani e culturali, politici ed economici e con i relativi vantaggi di benessere, di protezione, di identità.⁸⁹⁹

So writes Mario Caciagli about the meaning of internationalism for red regions at the local level: it was a projection towards a mythical world, which coexisted with the stable presence and self-recognition inside a local system which guaranteed protection and identity. This quote can be a useful lead-in to some reflections that serve as interpretative closures to this part of the dissertation dedicated to convergences.

First of all, it allows to introduce the concept of *internationalism* and its meaning in general, in the time frame of the 1960s and 1970s, and after the important watershed of 1968. To which extent did the position of the PCI change? What weight did ’68 have when looking at the affairs regarding twinnings and administrative exchanges? To what extent, in this context, did internationalism interact with localism? The PCI’s reaction towards the Prague facts is at least ambiguous. The party expressed for the first time its contrariety towards the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia, as we have seen. This allowed it to reach a certain autonomy within the communist movement, which was not gladly received by Moscow. However, the PCI never reached a definitive trimming with the Soviet power.

⁸⁹⁹ Mario Caciagli, “Tra Internazionalismo e Localismo: L’area Rossa,” *Meridiana*, Questione settentrionale, 16 (January 1993): 81–98., p. 95.

The new secretary Luigi Longo, which had taken over Togliatti after his death in 1964, stick to the old Togliatti formulation of a “unity in diversity”, trying to keep a moderate position as a sort of bridge in comparison to those that were considered as more extreme, such as Berlinguer’s ideas of a “third way” between the Soviet system and social democracy. As Silvio Pons has argued, despite the «depoliticization of the relation with URSS and the breakdown of the Soviet myths», even during the late Cold War the bond with Soviet Russia did not come to an end but revealed an identity basis which was «increasingly tenuous, but indelible».⁹⁰⁰ A similar point has been brought by Maud Bracke in her work dedicated to the Italian and French communist parties in front of the Prague crisis. In her work, she has claimed that the internationalism of the PCI/PCF was a matter of deep and unavoidable identity.⁹⁰¹

But what was and is internationalism? How was it historically defined, and how do I read it in this dissertation? Over time, it has been described, as a doctrine and as a discourse, in many ways; it has showed different faces, depending on the context. Internationalism had a specific meaning in the 1920s. When the communist parties were founded in the West, following the events and impulses brought about by 1917 in Soviet Russia, the so-called “proletarian internationalism” of Marx and Engels, and the official doctrine underpinning the very formation of these new parties were what was at stake. That initial conception was also a constitutive element of Soviet-aligned communism in the 20th Century, and in the Cold War, but not the only one. When looking specifically at ’68, however, Maud Bracke has stressed that in one way or another, in *practical terms*, internationalism meant subjection to the Soviet Union and the defense of its interests. In organizational terms, internationalism was embedded in the global communist movement, which bounded together many different kinds of organizations within the same concept, such as the World Federation of Democratic Youth, the World Trade Union Confederation or the World Peace Council. When referring to the identity roots of internationalism, to its substance, she identified three dimensions: the belonging to the global communist movement, the participation to a global strategy, and the adherence to a global doctrine.⁹⁰² Internationalism, in 1968, could be a multifaceted concept: a mixture of all the identity elements described by Bracke, but also a variety of declinations, depending on the different national (and local) realities to which it was applied to.

In the specific case of Italy, the notion of internationalism changed, in parallel with the transformations brought about by Prague. Longo himself (who was secretary between 1964 and 1972)

⁹⁰⁰ Silvio Pons, “L’Urss e Il Pci Nel Sistema Internazionale Della Guerra Fredda,” in *Il Pci Nell’Italia Repubblicana 1943-1991*, ed. Roberto Gualtieri (Roma: Carocci, 2001), 3–46., p. 44.

⁹⁰¹ Maud Anne Bracke, *Which Socialism? Whose Detente? West European Communism and the Czechoslovak Crisis of 1968* (New York: Central European University Press, 2007).

⁹⁰² Bracke.

and his position have been lately interpreted as a moment in which a “new internationalism” was created. Recent studies have reevaluated the Longo phase, relatively short compared to the ones of Togliatti and Berlinguer, from being confined to a moment of transition to representing a creative experimentation moment. Togliatti’s ideas on polycentrism and “unity in diversity” were re-elaborated, and the PCI started to find an independent position,⁹⁰³ which could be defined as “ambiguously autonomous” within the international communist family between 1964 and 1972. The dissent of the PCI, at least until 1975, was directed only towards the rejection of the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia, therefore without assuming the meaning of «a dissociation from the belonging to the international communist movement». ⁹⁰⁴ We can argue that that never happened until 1989.

How did all these modifications impact the local levels, those “communist islands” as the case studies I have selected for this work, where the PCI governed? The line set by Longo had an effect on the local contexts, as it shaped and regulated from above the kind of relations that were acceptable at that time. Twinning with the East, and with the GDR, in a way, were coherent with the national policies of the PCI, as they allowed a bond with the Soviet bloc to remain active. That bond would not have been broken even after 1972, when Berlinguer became secretary, and despite Eurocommunism, which can be seen more as a technical expedient than a real distancing from the Soviet power. However, internationalism, in these Italian contexts, had a particular meaning. For red local administrations, it was a way to reach a communist self-representation of the communities, to reinforce identities with specific characters.

“Soviet myths” in local Italy, in those “red political territorial subcultures”, in the early 1950s in particular were macroscopic, somehow easy to detect, as they represented a major part of the local culture, as it has been shown in the work by Marco Fincardi on the Reggio Emilia area. In his analysis, Fincardi has used oral history. By interpreting some memories of the 1950s gathered immediately after the fall of Soviet communism in the early 1990s, he has developed the concept of *piccole Russie* (“little Russias”). What he meant is that, in those areas, everyday life, the work environment, and almost the totality of the collective spaces were actually organized following the myth of Soviet Russia.⁹⁰⁵ A collective idealization had happened there, with the Soviet Union being seen as a place of social progress and equality. The local administrations and communist parties had re-interpreted

⁹⁰³ See the works by Alexander Höbel; Alexander Höbel, *Il Pci Di Luigi Longo, 1964-1969* (Napoli-Roma: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 2010). On the previous life of Longo during war and Resistance, see Alexander Höbel, *Luigi Longo, Una Vita Partigiana (1900-1945)* (Roma: Carocci, 2013).

⁹⁰⁴ Agosti, *Storia Del Partito Comunista Italiano 1921-1991.*, p. 99.

⁹⁰⁵ Marco Fincardi, *C’era Una Volta Il Mondo Nuovo. La Metafora Sovietica Nello Sviluppo Emiliano* (Roma: Carocci, 2007).

that idealistic tension pragmatically, in the organization of civil spaces and in the building of shared, cooperative, joint political-social cultures. They had towards the USSR an undisputed faith. The sense of expectancy about a revolutionary change was real, especially from the sides of the workers and sharecroppers, who found themselves in the middle of violent and difficult work struggles and waited for a new wind coming from the East. Red areas such as Emilia-Romagna, Tuscany, Umbria, etc. represented a reference point against the central government's authoritarian, capitalistic nature. In this sense, the research for local autonomy that I have presented in 4.2 was paired with an almost scatological waiting, as if a promised land was about to come.⁹⁰⁶ As Fincardi, again, as highlighted:

The Soviet Union was for these people a symbolic capital to be invested, in their own dreams and projects of a new world; projects and dreams that could fully acquire value thanks to a passionate work. Of the Soviet Union nothing at all was thrown away: it was a source of resources to mobilize people, to make them feel as a community launched towards progress.⁹⁰⁷

The Soviet model was to be seen not only in the pragmatism of the construction and organization of social and civil spaces, but also in the symbolism of everyday life in militants and citizens of the “red areas”. For instance, extremely common was the exposition, in the houses of Emilian militants, workers and farmers, of portraits of the founders and leaders of communism: having Lenin or Stalin in a fireplace was a symbol of dignity and signaled an «ennobling belonging».⁹⁰⁸ The same importance was attributed to names: *Giuseppe* – the Italianization of *Iosif* (Stalin) – was extremely common among newborns in the immediate postwar. It went together with Soviet-like names transliterated into Italian, such as *Vladimiro* or *Wladimiro*. These habits are representative of the faith towards Soviets which permeated the whole Emilian area, but also Tuscany. The organization of society and of collective spaces, the symbolism in picking names and choosing cultural references – all these elements contributed to the progressive construction of a loyalty towards the party that touched almost religious peaks and represented the political-ideological basis and starting point for a process of democratization of the Italian Communist Party. Here, it can be discussed the degree to which the concept of “political religion” can be successfully applied with reference to these local contexts. In Italian research, one of the last historians who has utilized it is Emilio Gentile.⁹⁰⁹ The term has been linked to the sacralization of politics by movements and regimes,

⁹⁰⁶ As shown, again, in Fincardi. An interesting snapshot of the relation between Soviet myth and reformism in the Asti province (Piedmont), and in a longer time frame, is provided in Mario Renosio, *Tra Mito Sovietico e Riformismo. Identità, Storia e Organizzazione Dei Comunisti Astigiani (1921-1975)* (Torino: Edizioni Gruppo Abele, 1999).

⁹⁰⁷ Marco Fincardi, *C'era Una Volta Il Mondo Nuovo. La Metafora Sovietica Nello Sviluppo Emiliano* (Roma: Carocci, 2007), p. 167.

⁹⁰⁸ Fincardi, p. 168.

⁹⁰⁹ See Emilio Gentile, *Le Religioni Della Politica. Fra Democrazie e Totalitarismi* (Bari: Laterza, 2001). Originally, the term has been applied to regimes or totalitarian states. The paternity of the concept has been attributed to the Austrian

which would adopt a system of faiths, expressed through rituals and symbols, in order to develop a collective conscience built on the principles and values of their respective ideology. In this sense, we could acknowledge the fact that the PCI had become, in the early 1950s and particularly in certain parts of Italy, and thanks to an intense indoctrination and propaganda work, *almost* a sacred entity, the object of a cult built on the grounds of the glorious Soviet revolution and its consequences. However, I believe that some of the characteristics and dynamics of communist-socialist power in the red regions, and of Italian communism as a whole, cannot be completely assimilated to the notion of political religion – above all, the strongly democratic orientation of the PCI, which was clear ever since the “Salerno turn” in 1944 and represented a benchmark of Palmiro Togliatti’s strategy as a party leader. In the secretary’s conception, the PCI had to find its place not outside, but *within* the Italian, newly built postwar democratic order, at most – and that was the precise aim to be pursued in the “red areas” – representing an ideological counterpart to the Western, US-oriented version of democracy. In this sense, Italian postwar communism developed different features from communism in the Soviet Union and in popular democracies. This is not to say that aspects such as a certain degree of dogmatization, the tendency to the indoctrination of the masses and the cult of the leader were not at all present. However, they were not as coercive as in the Soviet regimes, where those elements represented fundamental roots for the maintenance of power. In Italy, being a member of the communist party was still a (democratic) choice, although activism suggested, and implied, embracing a whole religious-like world of codes and symbols.

One good example of what could perhaps be called a *democratic religion* of Italian communism can be provided by the development, since 1945, of party schools, which mechanisms and functioning have been optimally described by Anna Tonelli in a recent publication.⁹¹⁰ The PCI deployed a considerable amount of resources and party personnel for the education of cadres on the territories. In this case, too, the prototype was the Soviet one, but soon, as Tonelli has explained, such a «rigid model from which it [had taken] inspiration, once it was translated *in loco*, show[ed] more openness in the sense of socialization, with larger gateways compared to a crystallized approach».⁹¹¹ One of the consequences of such an increasing openness over the years was the juxtaposition and pairing of an analysis of the Italian social reality to the mere fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism, which at the very beginning represented the only object of the lessons.⁹¹² The high attention towards the schools is proved by the fact that the PCI spent money (e. g. 100 million liras, allocated between

philosopher Eric Voegelin in his essay written at the end of the 1930s: Eric Voegelin, *Die Politischen Religionen* (Stockholm: Bermann Fischer, 1939).

⁹¹⁰ Anna Tonelli, *A Scuola Di Politica. Il Modello Comunista Di Frattocchie (1944-1993)* (Bari-Roma: Laterza, 2017).

⁹¹¹ Tonelli, p. 31.

⁹¹² Tonelli, p. 49.

1952 and 1955 to build the central party school of *Frattocchie*),⁹¹³ time and effort for their construction. Education centers progressively multiplied, spreading from the center (Rome) towards the peripheries, at interregional and regional levels. In this period, in the party schools, a basic practice for activists was the so-called oral autobiography, also borrowed from the Soviet Union. Each and everyone had to conduct a critical examination of their whole life – family origins and their influence, existential and political experiences, and other circumstances, so as to prove maturity in presenting critical and self-critical capacities.⁹¹⁴ These practice, together with a well-organized teaching system, led to overall positive outcomes. Through a capillary territorial articulation, party schools succeeded in impacting on communist local societies, too.

Things began to change after 1956, as a result of a general rupture which included Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin's crimes and the increasingly stronger inclination of the PCI towards a national way to socialism. The schools' new courses were designed for a different target of cadres, who did not come from Resistance and exile anymore (about these foundational experiences and their impact in the building of the Italian postwar administrative élite, see 5.1). The public autobiographies, the training of the political personality, the obligation of a critique and self-critique were all deleted.⁹¹⁵ Furthermore, following Gramsci's old suggestion of confronting different political cultures, communist education started including external solicitations and inputs, as a cultural choice. The new political profiles were coherently shaped against the backdrop of the PCI's vocation as a «national and internationalist» party and of its sociological transformation, which included the presence of more and more so-called “professional politicians” as leading personalities.⁹¹⁶ Overall, party schools offer a privileged perspective on the level of *religiousness* of the party and its fluctuation in the 1950s.

The almost unconditional faith that had characterized the PCI's approach to activism especially in the first half of the 1950s faded in the following decades but was not completely lost. It remained in the political culture of these red areas, in the experiences and the memories of militants and administrators,⁹¹⁷ in the common belonging to international antifascism and Resistance, with a strong Marxist connotation; and, I argue – as I have tried to show through the empirical materials in this chapter – in the conception of welfare implementations and pragmatical issues such as the

⁹¹³ Tonelli, pp. 150-151.

⁹¹⁴ Tonelli, p. 72. Specific about autobiographies in the same period, see the work by Boarelli: Mario Boarelli, *La Fabbrica Del Passato. Autobiografie Di Militanti Comunisti (1945-1956)* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 2007).

⁹¹⁵ Tonelli, p. 137.

⁹¹⁶ Tonelli, p. 138.

⁹¹⁷ On this persistence of the bond with the USSR, and in some cases also of Stalin's memory, after 1956, see Marc Lazar, *Maisons Rouges. Les Partis Communistes Français et Italiens de La Libération à Nos Jours* (Paris: Aubier, 1992), p. 324.

economic ones, which coincided with the apogee of red administrations in the 1960s and 1970s. At that point, however, the reference point had been moved, not casually, from Soviet Russia to the countries of Eastern Europe, and in particular to the GDR. As Caciagli has highlighted, the postwar faith in the Soviet myth had ensured the possibility for strong, local identities to develop, but such identities expanded and matured in the 1960s and 1970s.⁹¹⁸ With Caciagli I have opened, with him I close: this kind of projection towards a mythic world, as he has argued, was visible in the recalling of a long-term vocabulary and set of habits connected to the Third International, to the centrality of the working class, and so on. However, this sense of communist global belonging was paired with the sense of belonging to a local system with economic peculiarities and a political, cultural and human distinctiveness, which brought many advantages in terms of protection and well-being.⁹¹⁹ The twinings between Italy and the GDR, in my view, are to be read exactly against the backdrop of the continuous oscillation between these two aspects.

The reference to Eastern communism in Italian local contexts did not translate in a punctual application of what had been implemented in the Soviet bloc, or in a complete transfer of experiences, but rather in a fundamental agreement, and namely the one about the centrality of man in the socialist system. That idea was strong in the GDR and in its way of organizing social life and assistance in the local contexts. There was this ideal convergence, which, however, *de facto had* an impact on the way social policies in the two countries were actually implemented. The local administrations were central in this game, especially in Italy – their action possibilities increasingly grew, and with them the possibility to shape the cities along certain aspects of socialist criteria.

Of course, the town twinings with the GDR were not exclusive: many were the bonds with other cities in the Eastern bloc – Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, sometimes even Russia. However, as it has been shown, East Germany was a symbol on many levels, not least for its proximity and continuous competition with its Western half. Christina Léon, in her study about the French center of Ivry-Sur-Seine, in the banlieue of Paris, has noticed a similar symbolic value in the twinning of Ivry-sur-Seine with the town of Brandenburg. She has defined the GDR as a «political model» for Ivry, because that was perceived as the place where, thanks to a massive financing from the state, social services could be implemented, whereas the French little town was in difficulty:

In Ivry verfolgte der kommunistische Stadtrat die Strategie, soziale Engpässe, etwa den Mangel an Mitteln für den Ausbau von Kinderkrippen oder Hospitälern, auf die ungenügende Kooperationsbereitschaft des Departementpräfekten und somit das außenstehende politische System zu schieben. Dagegen schien die Partnerstadt Brandenburg aus dem Vollen schöpfen zu können, da

⁹¹⁸ Mario Caciagli, “Tra Internazionalismo e Localismo: L’area Rossa,” *Meridiana*, Questione settentrionale, 16 (January 1993): 81–98., pp. 86-87.

⁹¹⁹ Ivi, p. 95.

sozialpolitische Programme in der DDR massiv subventioniert wurden. Ivrys Delegationen lernten während ihrer Besuche jene soziokulturellen Einrichtungen der DDR kennen, welche einerseits die Aufbauleistung der sozialistischen Gesellschaft widerspiegelten und andererseits Übereinstimmungen mit dem französischen System aufwiesen. Dies erleichterte Verständnis und Austausch in diesen lebensweltlich orientierten Politikbereichen und unterstrich, dass ‚nicht alles was von der westdeutschen Norm abwich, diktatorspezifisch ist, wie umgekehrt auch nicht alles Westdeutsche demokratischespezifisch ist‘. Vielmehr kamen in der französischen Demokratievariante zentralstaatliche und etatistische Traditionen zum Tragen, die tendenziell die ostdeutschen Strukturen näherstanden als denen in der föderalistisch verfassten Bundesrepublik. Gerade die zentralstaatlich gelenkten, jedoch von den Kommunen und Betrieben lokal administrierten sozialpolitischen Maßnahmen der DDR standen in unmittelbarem Vergleich zu der stagnierenden Situation in Ivry.⁹²⁰

A similar discourse can be made for the Italian twinned cities; however, besides the (omnipresent and essential) problem of money (see 4.1 and 4.2), I argue that there was a specific interest in *the way* social structures in the GDR had been conceived of and realized. Local welfare represented the “good of socialism”, and namely what could still be absorbed from a culture that on other levels was judged as repressive and dogmatic. In this sense, it is useful to recall the category of *Fürsorgediktatur*, or “welfare dictatorship”, as it has been elaborated by Konrad Hugo Jarausch. To him, the expression captures «the central contradiction between socialism’s emancipatory rhetoric and the corrupt practice of Stalinism within a single analytical category». On the one hand, it explains the basic contradiction between care and coercion in the social system developed by the SED, that colors «the seemingly paradoxical memories of former GDR citizens»; on the other, it «recalls the ideological goals of socialism, and the vision of egalitarian social reform that it hoped to achieve for the benefit of the lower classes such as workers and peasants» (from here the reference to the GDR as the “peasants’ and workers’ state”). Also, the term captures «the forced nature of the GDR’s socialist utopia and the coercive methods used to achieve its goals».⁹²¹ In a way, we could affirm that Italian “reformist” communists could only embrace and value as “edible” the egalitarian part connected to *care*, whereas they mostly rejected the *coercive* one. That use of socialism in the GDR was beneficial to what Fausto Anderlini has called, in the Emilian case, a «pragmatic, managerial reformist, of govern of contradictions after development processes», which, however, always kept very firm the «polar star of class interest and of a specific declination of “welfare”».⁹²²

A last specification is necessary, right with reference to the use of the word *welfare*. The term, as it is well-known, was born as a specific Western concept, as a way to find a compatibility between

⁹²⁰ Christina Léon, *Zwischen Paris Und Moskau: Kommunistische Vorstadtidentität Und Lokale Erinnerungskultur in Ivry-Sur-Seine*, Pariser Historische Studien 99 (Berlin: Oldenbourg, 2012), p. 251.

⁹²¹ Konrad Jarausch, “Care and Coercion: The GDR as Welfare Dictatorship,” in *Dictatorship as Experience. Towards a Socio-Cultural History of the GDR*, ed. Konrad Jarausch (New York-Oxford: Berghahn, 1999), 47–72., p. 60.

⁹²² Anderlini, *Terra Rossa.*, p. 29.

the capitalistic industrial development and social justice in the second postwar.⁹²³ The welfare's presence has been identified as a common element in all developed countries; «as a result of the economic and industrial development and the necessity of offering an answer to the problems lifted by market economy»;⁹²⁴ and as an instrument of the state to provide to the well-being of its *citizens*, as holders of a citizenship.⁹²⁵

By looking at the empirical evidence of Italian-GDR twinings, it is worth asking whether it is conceivable to talk about *welfare* also as an *Eastern* concept. I think it is possible to still use the term with reference to the GDR and the socialist system – as I have done throughout this dissertation – although by emphasizing its specific nature and characters.⁹²⁶ While, for the democratic societies of the West, welfare was substantially an integration of the profile of citizenship, in the GDR it was intimately connected with the nature of socialism itself; there was almost no need to *conceptualize* it, it was inherent to the project of socialism-building. In this sense, the way of conceiving the social issue was specific to the East.

This being said, a basis of *common* reasoning on the basis of the way services needed to be organized in an industrial society – as the GDR also was – was present. In this declination – of *social state* – this element was not a specific product of postwar times but was rooted in previous experiences. For the German case, Konrad Jarausch has beautifully explained that the desire of “freeing humanity from risk” and the call for a “social service state” were already present not only in the (authoritarian) Prussian government, but also in the public discourse during the Weimar Republic, and even under National Socialists, although, in that context, the social question turned into «a

⁹²³ Ideally, the expression should belong to a precise historical moment, and namely to the immediate postwar in Great Britain. There, the word was opposed to *warfare*, which indicated the economic necessities of the conflict. William Beveridge, as the big protagonist of the *welfare* project, worked for the universal protection of all citizens and not only of some categories, making sure that standard services were active. More recently, however, the term welfare state has started to designate all the programs of state intervention which provide services for citizens in the Western economies. See Ritter, *Storia Dello Stato Sociale.*, and the Preface by Pombeni, Paolo Pombeni, “Prefazione,” in *Storia Dello Stato Sociale*, by Gerhard A. Ritter (Bari: Laterza, 1996), IX–XVI. Also see the initial part of Matteo Troilo, “Il ‘Modello Emiliano’ Nella Storia d’Italia. Tra Culture Politiche e Pratiche Di Governo Locale,” in *Origini e Sviluppo Del Welfare Emiliano. Un’analisi Comparata Nel Panorama Nazionale*, ed. Carlo De Maria (Bologna: Bradypus, 2014), 159–76., p. 160. There has been a sort of overlap between the new term and *social state*, which preceded it and meant previous programs of state social intervention. On the Italian and German case in a comparative perspective between the 19th and 20th Century, see the work of the political scientist Gustavo Gozzi, who has analyzed the forms of social intervention in the two countries, the way the administrative question had been isolated, and the way the social policies had been implemented. See Gustavo Gozzi, *Modelli Politici e Questione Sociale in Italia e in Germania Fra Otto e Novecento* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1988).

⁹²⁴ Troilo, “Il ‘Modello Emiliano’ Nella Storia d’Italia.”, p. 160.

⁹²⁵ Ivi, p. 161.

⁹²⁶ For Heinz Vortmann, the GDR faced a problem related to pure definitions: the fact that the East German state managed in changing the people's perception towards social policies in the country at the beginning of the 1970s, did not find a correspondence in vocabulary: there simply was no word such as *welfare* in the West. See Heinz Vortmann, “La Sécurité Sociale En RDA,” *Revue d’études Comparatives Est-Ouest* 20, no. 4 (1989): 91–106., p. 92.

eugenic nightmare of “preventive care” or *Vorsorge*, utterly callous of human life». ⁹²⁷ Therefore, although in a distorted and contradictory way, the social question was also a cornerstone of fascisms, in Germany and in Italy. ⁹²⁸

As a result of the rejection of the fascist past and of the competition with the FRG, ⁹²⁹ as Jarausch has again highlighted,

the SED regime refashioned traditions of authoritarianism inherited from Wilhelmine Germany and aspects of social reforms from Weimar into an open dictatorship of the proletariat that would achieve a revolutionary transformation of society. By radicalizing both its methods of rule and its social goals, the GDR also consciously distanced itself from its FRG rival to the West, which had, after much internal struggle, chosen to develop a social market economy and welfare-oriented democracy. ⁹³⁰

In this sense the conception of GDR welfare, which Jarausch inextricably connects with its dictatorial aspects, underscored «the ethical aspirations of socialism not only to help the needy, but to effect a broad transformation of society along egalitarian lines». ⁹³¹

When looking at Italy, in the postwar welfare developed in two different directions, the national, centralized one, and the local one, handled by the municipalities (this last version was still the only one at the beginning of the 20th Century). ⁹³² While at the end of World War II the debate circled around the role of the State, in the 1950s and 1960s, under the pressure of rapid economic changes, it moved towards the municipalities. ⁹³³ This is an essential passage, as it allows to understand why the *red* Italian cities, in constant need for money to realize their services, and longing for political agency, looked abroad to take inspiration for their realizations. On the one hand, they cared about the originality and the uniqueness of their solutions; on the other, they had to refer themselves to other countries which had tried what they were reaching slowly and with a considerable delay before. They could not refer to the Italian central state – for a clear logic of political opposition – and therefore they had to look abroad. In this context, the examples to look at were the Scandinavian countries, the Western social democracies, Great Britain, as the cradle of the welfare state; but also the socialist countries, and especially the GDR “welfare dictatorship”.

On these grounds, what I have tried to highlight with reference to Italian-East German twinnings is the relevance of an alternative version of *socialist-inspired* welfare, despite and beyond

⁹²⁷ Konrad Jarausch, “Care and Coercion: The GDR as Welfare Dictatorship,” in *Dictatorship as Experience. Towards a Socio-Cultural History of the GDR*, ed. Konrad Jarausch (New York-Oxford: Berghahn, 1999), 47–72., p. 59.

⁹²⁸ For an overview: Patrizia Dogliani, *Il Fascismo Degli Italiani: Una Storia Sociale* (Novara: De Agostini, 2014).

⁹²⁹ Interesting suggestions on regime competition and the way it stimulated the expansion of welfare state on both sides of the Iron Curtain come from Herbert Obinger and Carina Schmitt, “Guns and Butter? Regime Competition and the Welfare State during the Cold War,” *World Politics* 63, no. 2 (April 2011): 246–70.

⁹³⁰ Jarausch, “Care and Coercion”, p. 59.

⁹³¹ *Ibidem*.

⁹³² Troilo., p. 162.

⁹³³ Troilo., p. 163.

the differences and asymmetries in the definition of welfare in the East and in the West, and in the conditions and implementing possibilities in the two countries. Local social policies were a practical way to reach the ideal objective of everyone's well-being, citizens and workers. Despite increasing ideological divergences and the degenerations of real socialism, this was what still represented the very essence of socialism and thus what kept the dialogue between these two worlds possible and active in that period.⁹³⁴

⁹³⁴ Vortmann, "La Sécurité Sociale En RDA.", p. 92.

6. Looking at the other

Nach dem Flugplatz von Mailand ist das nun schon die zweite Begrüßung. Im Stadion der Stadt erfolgt die dritte. Mit mehrehren Tausend Bürger Collegnos. Fahnen der DDR und Italiens säumen das weite Rund. Die beiden Nationalhymnen erklingen, von einem Arbeiterorchester gespielt. Kurze Ansprachen beider Bürgermeister.

Dann bricht das südländische Temperament durch. Unsere Delegation wird fast erdrückt von Menschen, darunter vielen, die schön einmal in Neubrandenburg gewesen sind. Jeder wird Heinz Hahn, Hermann Göck, Dieter Müller die Hand drücken. Und jeder möchte etwas sagen. Der eine, dass er während des Faschismus im KZ Buchenwald inhaftiert war und froh ist, mit Genossen aus dem antifaschistischen deutschen Staat sprechen zu können. Der anderen interessiert wie der Aufbau Neubrandenburg vonstattengeht. Ein dritter will seine Anerkennung über die Leistungen unserer Sportler zum Ausdruck bringen. Ein Familienvater bedankt sich schlicht für die gute Aufnahme seines Kindes während der Sommerferien in der DDR. Inzwischen geht das Kinderfest aus Anlass des bevorstehenden neuen Schuljahres weiter. Eine gruppe Schüler singt Lieder, die sie in der DDR gelernt haben...⁹³⁵

This is the way Heinz Hahn, Hermann Göck and Dieter Müller, members of a small political delegation from the municipality of Neubrandenburg, described their arrival in Collegno in 1970. The different “temperaments”, the national symbols, the references to antifascism and war memories: all these elements are at the center of this chapter, which has been called “looking at the other”. The East German report of that visit is one example of the *reciprocal perceptions* between the two worlds, built on the basis of the common belonging to the sphere of international communism but also on the different national traditions, habits and costumes and the shared memories of the past. This dimension is better visible at the *micro* level, by looking at the single trajectories of the people who interacted with each other through translocal connections. Here, I seek to understand how these different stories and episodes had an impact on East-West communication. Methodologically, I will particularly rely on an approach attentive to transnational lives and biographies,⁹³⁶ interpreted against the backdrop of proximity and distance, continuities and discontinuities. In analyzing the memories of these encounters, their crystallization and meaning, I also employ oral testimonies, as well as personal memories and diaries.

6.1 Shadows of the war, antifascism, Resistance

Among the most appreciated recent books on the aftermath of World War II, Italy and Germany is undoubtedly the work by Filippo Focardi.⁹³⁷ The “good Italian” and the “bad German”

⁹³⁵ ASCO, Gemellaggi, b. Neubrandenburg 1974-75, fasc. “Neubrandenburg”, “*Begegnungen in Collegno*”, 16. Oktober 1970.

⁹³⁶ As, for instance, in Desley Deacon, Penny Russell, and Angela Woollacott, eds., *Transnational Lives. Biographies of Global Modernity 1700-Present* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

⁹³⁷ Filippo Focardi, *Il Cattivo Tedesco e Il Bravo Italiano. La Rimozione Delle Colpe Della Seconda Guerra Mondiale* (Bari: Laterza, 2013).; the book has been translated for an international public, in French and most of all in German: see Filippo Focardi, *L'Italie, Alliée Ou Victime de l'Allemagne Nazie?* (Bruxelles: Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles,

are the two categories employed by the author to define the way roles, positions, sides and responsibilities had been photographed in the Italian postwar collective memory, in relation to the Nazi occupation of Italy between 1943 and 1945. On September 8, 1943, Italians signed the armistice with the Allied forces. After that, Nazi troops occupied the Italian territory. The foreign army took complete control over the cities of Northern and Central Italy, since October '43 supporting the creation of a collaborationist state, the *Repubblica sociale italiana* (RSI), which by 1944 ended up being confined only in the North of Italy, beyond the so-called Gothic line.⁹³⁸ Focardi has shown the impact of these episodes, but most of all of the Allied propaganda and its use by the Badoglio government,⁹³⁹ on the country's national memory after 1945. According to the Italian line of thought, the responsibility of the war had to be attributed uniquely to Mussolini and the fascist regime. Both were held accountable for putting the Italian population in the hands of Hitler. Following this conception, Italians did not have any responsibility and were depicted as pacific, antiwar, and of utmost generosity even in times of occupation, whereas Germans were described as violent and repressive invaders, occupiers, and carriers of the exclusive weight of the war and war crimes. Focardi has contributed to deconstructing these stabilized categories and to bring new light on these matters.

In postwar Italian society, these categorizations and images of the “Germans” were deeply rooted. They had also been absorbed by the antifascist front, on which ideals of the new Italian Republic and its Constitution had been based, after twenty years of fascist rule. Therefore, bad sentiments towards the “Germans” did not spare leftists, communists, combatants of the Resistance and intellectuals. Focardi brings as example the communist leader Giancarlo Pajetta. Even he, during his first trip to Germany in 1946, was struck by the fact that the people around him made him deeply suspicious and diffident, and that even the «sight of a red flag did not represent [for him] anything but a glimmer of hope, which eased but did not remove the unease of being in the ‘country of Germans’». These were the shadows of the war, and they were difficult to evict. As Focardi has pointed out,

2014).; and Filippo Focardi, *Falsche Freunde? Italiens Geschichtspolitik Und Die Frage Der Mitschuld Am Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2015).

⁹³⁸ For general works about the RSI, see Mimmo Franzinelli, *RSI: La Repubblica Del Duce 1943-1945*, 2nd ed. (Milano: Mondadori, 2008).; Aldo G. Ricci, ed., “Le Fonti per La Storia Della RSI,” in *Atti Del Convegno Tenutosi a Salò Nel 2003* (Venezia: Marsilio, 2005). Inside this last volume, see in particular the essay by Luigi Ganapini, Aldo G. Ricci and Luigi Ganapini, eds., “Sulla RSI: Percorsi Di Ricerca Particolarmente Accidentati,” in *Le Fonti per La Storia Della RSI* (Venezia: Marsilio, 2005), 27–34. On the specific issue of fascist violence in the RSI, see Toni Rovatti, *Leoni Vegetariani: La Violenza Fascista Durante La RSI* (Bologna: CLUEB, 2011).

⁹³⁹ For a chronicle of the fall of Fascism on July 25, 1943, and about the settlement of the Badoglio government, see for instance Luigi Salvatorelli, *Un Cinquantennio Di Rivolgimenti Mondiali, 1914-1971* (Firenze: Le Monnier, 1972). Respectively about the armistice of September 8, 1943 (which was de facto an unconditioned surrender), and the following events, see Santo Peli, *Storia Della Resistenza in Italia* (Torino: Einaudi, 2006).; and the works by Claudio Pavone, in particular Claudio Pavone, *Una Guerra Civile: Saggio Storico Sulla Moralità Nella Resistenza* (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2006).

Come tutti i grandi conflitti della storia, anche la seconda guerra mondiale ha avuto un effetto “costituente” non solo sull’assetto dell’ordine internazionale e su quello politico dei singoli paesi, ma anche sulle raffigurazioni e autoraffigurazioni nazionali e sulle memorie di guerra che tali raffigurazioni hanno veicolato. Pure in Italia, come nel resto d’Europa, la seconda guerra mondiale ha lasciato un’“eredità perversa”, celata sotto l’aspetto benevolo e autograticificante del “bravo italiano”, messo in risalto dal confronto con le sembianze truci del “cattivo tedesco”. L’entità dei crimini e delle violenze perpetrati dai tedeschi durante la guerra è stata senza dubbio incomparabile rispetto a quelli dell’alleato italiano.⁹⁴⁰

This did not mean the absence of those who tried to bring a more complex image. As highlighted by Enzo Collotti, despite the difficulties in eradicating the bad image of Germans – not least because of fears connected to the (West) German rearmament in the 1950s – many antifascist intellectuals made the effort to establish a distinction between the German population and the Nazi regime.⁹⁴¹ Collotti – and with him Filippo Focardi – seem to refer to an antifascist commitment of a broad political sign, aimed at introducing the culture of Weimar in Italy, and of the “other Germany” intended as the one of democratic culture and of anti-Nazi tradition. However, Focardi concluded, that commitment «did not serve to change the general sensibility and the collective imagery, deeply soaked into Germanophobic moods and stereotypes, stemmed from the war experience», not even later in the Cold War.⁹⁴²

When looking at the national level, I agree with this point without any doubt. However, I would suggest that the twinning contacts between Italy and the GDR could offer new insights on this topic, highlighting a clear propaganda strategy based on a “good image” of the “other” (communist) Germany, which *had* an impact, although limited, and full of ambiguities and contradictions, on the Italian local communist societies at that time.

A first example can be made with reference to the experience of Gina Formiggini, journalist from Modena, close to the PCI and a Jew, who had travelled many times to the GDR to write reportages. As it appears from a letter that she had personally sent to the municipality of Wernigerode in the second half of the 1960s, her personal experience connected to the war and to Germany had been one of deep suffering. Her brother-in-law and other relatives – she stated – had been murdered by Nazi fascists, others had been persecuted, one of her cousins had died in Buchenwald, and her son had been active in the GAP (*Gruppi di Azione Patriottica*, “Groups of Patriotic Action”) as a partisan during the Liberation of Rome. This is why, as she stressed in the letter, when she first arrived in Wernigerode through the twinning with Carpi she had found it difficult to step on German soil, even if that was the territory of the GDR:

⁹⁴⁰ Focardi, *Il Cattivo Tedesco e Il Bravo Italiano.*, p. XVIII.

⁹⁴¹ Collotti’s reflections are recalled in *Ivi.*, p. X.

⁹⁴² *Ivi.*, pp. 174-176.

Ich muss eines zugeben: als ich 1960 das erste Mal nach Deutschland, und zwar in die DDR kam, war ich innerlich sehr ergriffen, denn viele schmerzliche Erinnerungen begleiteten mich dabei. Doch schon nach einigen Tagen merkte ich und die anschließenden Reisen bestätigen das auch, dass Ihre mutige Republik alle Brücken zu den „unseligen Vergangenheit“ abgebrochen hatte, wie es auf einer Inschrift in der Ausstellung zu lesen ist. Mit dem Globke-Prozess, an dem ich teilgenommen habe, hat man den Mut gehabt, auf deutschem Boden Verbrechen zu enthüllen und zu verurteilen, die von Deutschen begangen worden sind. Bei Ihnen verschließt man nicht die Augen vor den von Nazismus begangenen Scheußlichkeiten, sondern Sie berichten ihren Kindern davon, damit sie lernen, sich davor zu fürchten. Alle Ihre Anstrengungen sind darauf gerichtet, wieder an den deutschen Humanismus anzuknüpfen, dessen größte Vertreter Goethe und Schiller gewesen sind.⁹⁴³

However, after her first impression, Formiggini referred to have changed her mind, after seeing that in the GDR a real effort of breaking with the Nazi past was trying to be made. Surely, her perspective had to be in line with the PCI and SED propaganda; we can suppose that Formiggini paid attention to that and followed that task. However, looking at her letter is, in my view, primarily relevant because of her admission about the initial prejudice against Germany.

In Italy, the memory of the war was omnipresent in town twinnings with the GDR, and it was used as a tool to build new relations with the “other” Germany – the antifascist and communist part, which was not identified with the Nazi regime. The emphasis on these aspects was searched for also by the GDR, likewise interested in deconstructing the negative image of the “German” as it had taken shape in Italy. One example of this convergence of interests can be found in the case of Collegno and Neubrandenburg.

From the very beginning, the ideal bond between the two sides was cemented by the figure of Teresio Pochettino, an Italian Alpine who had died in Germany during the war. The commitment of the Neubrandenburg municipality for the search of and the recovery of Pochettino’s corpse was considered as a symbol of true friendship and contributed to defrost the initial diffidence. Since the first real contact between the two communal administrations in Leningrad in 1961, East Germans started to be interested in the cause of Pochettino, both for a heartfelt action, and as a tool to convince Italians to start a town twinning. As a matter of fact, as it had been pointed out in a meeting in Collegno in 1967, the East Germans had made numerous twinning requests already before 1961.⁹⁴⁴

⁹⁴³ StaWe, WR111/1249, *Rede von Gina Formiggini, s. d.* Gina Formiggini was close to the PCI. However, we can detect a similar attitude also in other leftist groups, or close to the CGIL union, such as the Circolo Perini in Milan, a cultural association. Its president Antonio Josa, in a small publication appeared after his travel to the GDR, affirmed: «Nel giugno del 1965, su cortese invito della segreteria provinciale della CGIL, fui invitato, in qualità di presidente del circolo culturale “Carlo Perini”, a partecipare ad un viaggio di studio nella DDR. Tale viaggio, da me accolto con entusiasmo ed interesse, è stato senza dubbio utile al fine di liquidare vecchi pregiudizi psicologici sul popolo germanico e nel contempo anacronistici luoghi comuni su di una nazione comunista». See Antonio Josa, “Viaggio Di Studio Nella Repubblica Democratica Tedesca” (Milano: Circolo culturale Carlo Perini, 1965)., p. 5.

⁹⁴⁴ «Mondon – Ricorda il gemellaggio con Neubrandenburg attuato dopo numerose loro richieste fin dal 1961 in occasione dell’incontro delle città martiri del nazismo e realizzato solo dopo un incontro a Leningrado in occasione del congresso della FMVJ. Ricorda l’interessamento degli amici di Neubrandenburg per il ritorno della salma del caduto Teresio

Other possible explanations for the beginning of the twinning, from Collegno's side, can be identified in the personality of Horst Jonas (see 5.1), and in the fact that he had been in contact with Italians in German lagers; but also in the history of Neubrandenburg itself – which was destroyed by Nazi troops in retreat.⁹⁴⁵

Pochettino's episode, however, appears to have been central. In 1962, during a meeting at the Leipzig fair, the «mayor and the communal secretary of Neubrandenburg told us» – as remembered by Luciano Manzi, mayor of Collegno in 1986 – «that already since a long time they [the administrators of Neubrandenburg] were looking among the various camps of military and civil internees present during the war on the [...] GDR territory, [in order to see] whether there were documents or traces of presence of citizens from Collegno».⁹⁴⁶ In 1964, Collegno was informed that Pochettino had died in 1944 in Greifswald's camp and that his corpse had been buried in the little cemetery close to the local church. From that moment onwards, the twinning started – although not without difficulties, as Manzi reminded: the Prefect and the Foreign Ministry had blocked the bond at the beginning, as «the GDR did not exist as a state, and, [...] anyway, the municipalities were not allowed to establish twinings with it».⁹⁴⁷ However, besides representing a political statement about the active role and the agency of local administrations, the Pochettino episode had a considerable impact on the population of Collegno. The path which had been followed to reach a positive outcome of that issue had not been easy, as it appears from the letter – translated into Italian – that the *Neubrandenburger* Otto Kunze sent to Ruggero Bertotti:

Il consiglio comunale di Stralsund mi ha mandato una lettera dicendo che il decesso di Teresio Pochettino, morto il 22/11/1944, non è iscritto in nessun registro dei cimiteri del comune. A causa della comunicazione telefonica, il nome è stato trasmesso in modo storpiato a Stralsund. [...] Avendo ricevuto questa informazione, mi sono subito recato a Stralsund per fare le ricerche necessarie. Questo non è stato facile, perché sono già passati più di 20 anni. Dopo la consultazione del prete cattolico e dopo l'esame del registro di cimiteri, ho potuto constatare con certezza che il Pochettino fu seppellito al cimitero cattolico. Purtroppo, nei torbidi della fine della guerra, il registro di questo cimitero si è perduto. Una copia non esiste. Ma ricordo che Lei ha avuto uno schizzo della posizione della tomba. Il parroco di Stralsund mi ha dichiarato che nel 1950 un prete italiano da Berlino Ovest fece una inchiesta presso tutte le parrocchie cattoliche nella RDT relativa a tombe di cittadini italiani nella RDT. Questo prete si recò anche a Eberswalde e notificò due tombe con uno schizzo fatto della loro posizione. Presso la parrocchia di Stralsund non si trova più niente a proposito di questo fatto o di una eventuale corrispondenza. Il parroco attuale è arrivato a Stralsund soltanto 5 anni fa. Ma dato che Lei possedeva uno schizzo, ritengo che questa stessa provenga dalla fonte di Berlino Ovest. Le tombe create in quel periodo al luogo indicato non sono state curate, ma invece appianate. Tutto questo rende impossibile la determinazione esatta del luogo senza il suddetto schizzo. Ritengo tuttavia che consideriamo questo

Pochettino». See ASCO, Gemellaggi, b. Neubrandenburg, fasc. «Organizzazione soggiorno delegazione Neubrandenburg a Collegno, 20-27 settembre 1970», *Assemblea consiglio cittadino gemellaggio*, 15.12.1967.

⁹⁴⁵ ASCO, Gemellaggi, b. Neubrandenburg 1970, fasc. «FMVJ», *Consiglio cittadino di gemellaggio*.

⁹⁴⁶ ASCO, Gemellaggi, b. Neubrandenburg 85-86-87, fasc. «Neubrandenburg 1985-86», *Intervento di Luciano Manzi sulla storia del gemellaggio Collegno-Neubrandenburg*.

⁹⁴⁷ *Ibidem*.

affare come confidenziale e che Lei consulti, eventualmente, i membri della delegazione soltanto dopo la mia risposta alla Sua presa di posizione. Faccio questa riserva unicamente per ragioni di pietà e per evitare, se possibili, agitazioni inutili alla madre e alla famiglia. Sperando anticipatamente di incontrare la Sua comprensione ed il Suo accordo, aspetto una Sua risposta.⁹⁴⁸

The strong effect that the effort put in these researches generated, in terms of gratitude and, consequently, of political consent, is detectable in the words sent by Bertotti to Kunze: «I beg you to follow the thing, because – as you know – a positive and rapid effect of the translation of this corpse would have a huge favorable political repercussion on our town».⁹⁴⁹ Eventually, the corpse was returned, in the satisfaction and commotion of Collegno's citizens. To thank Neubrandenburg for the effort, Bertotti offered to take care of its application fee to the *Fédération Mondiale des Villes Jumelées*, so that the town did not need to pay it «in Western currency».⁹⁵⁰ To that gesture, Ilse Schweinberger, *ad interim* mayor of the town in 1968, answered: «I beg you very insistently not to undertake further steps on this issue and most of all in any case to pay the application fee for the town of Neubrandenburg. I will explain the reasons verbally».⁹⁵¹ We do not know exactly which the reasons were; however, we do know that the story of Pochettino, as a fact happened during the war, played a fundamental role in connecting the two populations.

Another interesting discussion connected to World War II and its memory included other political forces together with the communists, and took place in the local council of Carpi, in 1965. At the center of attention was the sending of a delegation to the GDR on May 10, for the celebrations of the “GDR's liberation”. A member of the DC opposition, Vittorino Carra, declared himself contrary to the trip and to the initiation of relations which, in his opinion, «would start with a visit which he does not know what sense it could have for the German Democratic Republic».⁹⁵² In his discourse, reported in a transcript, Carra expressed his doubts about the legitimacy, for the GDR, to celebrate the occasion, suggesting that that represented a contradiction:

Perché se essi vogliono festeggiare l'anniversario della liberazione, non sa da che popolo tedesco sia stato liberato, che contributo esso abbia dato a questa liberazione. Quindi il senso di una manifestazione di questo genere che dovrebbe e potrebbe essere soltanto il senso di soddisfazione per la pace riconquistata nel mondo con la sconfitta del nazismo, non crede meriti di essere commemorato da parte loro in una forma di questo genere, affiancandosi cioè ad una manifestazione che è di esultanza per il

⁹⁴⁸ ASCO, Gemellaggi, b. anni 60, fasc. “Nbg 2”, *Lettera di Otto Kunze, tradotta in italiano, a Ruggero Bertotti, 21 ottobre 1965.*

⁹⁴⁹ ASCO, Gemellaggi, b. anni 60, fasc. “Nbg. 1966”, *Lettera di Ruggero Bertotti a Horst Jonas, s. d.*; also see ASCO, Gemellaggi, b. anni 60, fasc. “Leipzig 1966”, sottofasc. Leipzig 10-14.3.1966, *Comunicazione di Ruggero Bertotti a Otto Kunze.*

⁹⁵⁰ ASCO, Gemellaggi, b. anni 60, fasc. “Neubrandenburg delegazione agosto 1966”, *Lettera di Ruggero Bertotti a Werner Manneberg, s. d.*

⁹⁵¹ ASCO, Gemellaggi, b. anni 60, fasc. “Neubrandenburg delegazione 1968”, Ilse Schweinberger (Ilse Hoewe) a Ruggero Bertotti, 27 febbraio 1968.

⁹⁵² ASCC, Verbali consiglio comunale, 21 aprile 1965 = verbale n. 178/10499.

desiderio ed il sentimento di pace per ognuno di loro, ma che non ha nessun collegamento con la liberazione, così come la si intende nel nostro Paese, scaturita dalla partecipazione gloriosa dei popoli dell'Europa occidentale ed orientale alla lotta per il riscatto della loro patria.⁹⁵³

The communist Onorio Campedelli, future mayor of Carpi (1970-1977), replied to this statement emphasizing that the celebration of that day also meant the celebration of the values of Resistance in all Europe, which had had – «although to a limited extent – in the German population itself important moments».⁹⁵⁴ In this sense, the values of that democratic avantgarde who had fought Nazism during the 1930s and 1940s were present in that festivity. To Campedelli's speech followed the one of the liberal council member Tiziano Ascari, also at the opposition. He agreed with Carra that «the fight against Nazism and Fascism [...] [had] a sense in the extent to which one [tried] to fight a dictatorship in order to establish a democratic regime, and not [...] another dictatorship, which once again negate[d] freedom». «It is well known – he added – that [the GDR] is a communist Republic, with a totalitarian, antidemocratic regime, and denier of freedom».⁹⁵⁵

In the end, the proposal was approved. However, it is worth noting the range of different positions about the weight of war memories and the GDR's propaganda attempts on those contemporary political discussions about municipal bilateral relations. This was a paradoxical effect in relation to the GDR's «earnest attempts to identify a positive past».⁹⁵⁶ While the creation of postwar identities built on antifascism had been a common process in almost all Europe, as highlighted by Peter Monteath, the adoption of that myth by the GDR was exceptional, as it «was a successor state of the Third Reich, albeit one which strove hard to claim a new beginning and deny all elements of continuity».⁹⁵⁷ That foundational discourse was thought in an opposite, anti-Bundesrepublik perspective in Cold War dynamics,⁹⁵⁸ but it was also the *actual* background of the communist political élite of the country. The “myth” of antifascism and Resistance was constitutive also for the PCI and its self-construction as a «national and democratic force, hiding the strong ideological and political bonds with Moscow».⁹⁵⁹ Therefore, the positive representation of the GDR as antifascist was beneficial to both sides.

Further stimuli come, again, from the document written by Gina Formigini, in which she described the exhibition on Italian Resistance organized in Wernigerode in the context of the twinning

⁹⁵³ Ibidem.

⁹⁵⁴ Ibidem.

⁹⁵⁵ Ibidem.

⁹⁵⁶ Peter Monteath, “Narratives of Fascism in the GDR: Buchenwald and the ‘Myth of Antifascism,’” *The European Legacy* 4, no. 1 (1999): 99–112, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10848779908579948>, pp. 109-110.

⁹⁵⁷ Monteath., pp. 109-110.

⁹⁵⁸ Charis Pöthig, *Italien Und Die DDR. Die Politischen, Ökonomischen Und Kulturellen Beziehungen von 1949-1980* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2000), pp. 31-32.

⁹⁵⁹ Focardi, *Il Cattivo Tedesco e Il Bravo Italiano.*, p. XVI.

with Carpi; she was invited to its opening, to inaugurate it.⁹⁶⁰ In the panels, the East German municipality had decided to not only take armed Resistance (1943-45) into account, but also previous periods, and in particular those of the underground antifascist struggle and of the Spanish civil war. As Formiggini noted, the exhibition was centered on many personalities, included some that were not bounded to the PCI, such as the Rosselli brothers, members of a liberal-socialist exile group set up in France *Giustizia e libertà* (“Justice and Freedom”). Both had been murdered by fascists in 1937. Formiggini praised that choice, highlighting the fact that the Rosselli brothers, too had been part of a group which later on, after 1943, had participated to the Resistance together with the communist-led “Garibaldi brigades”. Formiggini showed appreciation towards the celebration of the antifascist “unity of action”, as presented by Wernigerode. She also pointed out some shortcomings, such as the fact that many important names of the Resistance were missing, while some such as Ferruccio Parri, Duccio Galimberti (of the *Partito d’Azione*), and Umberto Terracini (PCI) were mentioned – this last one, however, had been described only as a personality of the Italian Republic and not as a partisan. The shortcomings, however – so wrote the journalist – also had a positive effect: they helped focusing the attention of the visitors not only on the single personalities, but on the whole Italian population, which thus appeared as the main actor of the Resistance movement. In emphasizing this point, Formiggini highlighted the fact that the movement was also labeled, in Italy, as “second *Risorgimento*”.⁹⁶¹ In so doing, she used a term that had become part of the widespread discourse on Resistance in the second postwar, but that actually had liberal-socialist roots. That vision of continuity with the *Risorgimento*, as a matter of fact, was typical of non-communist antifascists.⁹⁶² In particular, it had become part of the ideology of emigrants, thanks to the works of the Italian intellectual Piero Gobetti, who was highly committed to a systematic re-evaluation of the *Risorgimento*, as opposed to the appropriation of that tradition by fascists.⁹⁶³ The expression survived after the end of the Second world war, thanks to associations like ANPI,⁹⁶⁴ which in the 1950s contributed to spreading this idea in public spaces. It was equally used by the centrist governments and the leftists. The term survived until recent times in the official, governmental discourse and in the public opinion, despite many scholars challenging it between the 1980s and 1990s.⁹⁶⁵ With reference to Formiggini’s letter, it is worth highlighting the fact that she, as a journalist close to the PCI, also recalled that expression, and

⁹⁶⁰ StaWe, WRIII/1249, *Rede von Gina Formiggini, s. d.*

⁹⁶¹ StaWe, WRIII/1249, *Rede von Gina Formiggini, s. d.*

⁹⁶² Claudio Pavone, *Alle Origini Della Repubblica. Scritti Su Fascismo, Antifascismo e Continuità Dello Stato* (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 1995), p. 15.

⁹⁶³ Pavone., p. 23.

⁹⁶⁴ Associazione Nazionale Partigiani d’Italia.

⁹⁶⁵ Philip Cooke, “La Resistenza Come Secondo Risorgimento: Un Topos Retorico Senza Fine?” *Passato e Presente*, no. 86 (2012): 62–81., pp. 70-76.

appreciated the GDR's representation of Italian Resistance along the lines of other political colors, too.⁹⁶⁶ This kind of interpretation of the Resistance, as a movement in which the Italian population had had a central role, was supported by the PCI line. It seems that the administration of Wernigerode had embraced it, too, despite it not being fully communist.

Another example of the weight of this representation of the Resistance as enlarged to the whole Italian population can be found in the fact that the workers, technicians and engineers of the lignite factory "Schwarze Pumpe", in the GDR, had decided to entitle their Brigade to the "Cervi brothers", seven siblings originally from the area around Reggio Emilia, members of an antifascist family. On December 28, 1943, they had all been shot as an act of retaliation, as they were accused of plotting the death of a local fascist head. The seven young brothers were killed, while the father, Alcide, was left alive. That tragic story was remembered by the GDR's industrial complex. In his speech for the first anniversary of the brigade in 1966 Guido Zamis, a member of the GDR-Italy society, emphasized that the workers of the "Schwarze Pumpe" «appeared to be the real heirs of the best German traditions, when they decided to express their friendship with Italy by welcoming the name of the "Cervi brothers" as a symbol». ⁹⁶⁷ Through that operation, a link was being established between the workers of the GDR and the Resistance, and thus between the more precisely socialist tradition and a broad antifascist one. This idea is reinforced by the fact that at the celebration one of the sons of the brothers, Mario Cervi, was present, together with the communist MP Luigi Polano, the communist mayor of Parma Enzo Baldassi and Franco Carini, president of the Reggio Emilia ANPI. From the GDR's side, the occasion was likewise important: representative of the SED, of the Foreign Ministry and of Hoyerswerda, the Saxon town which hosted the lignite factory, participated to the celebrations. A description of that moment is stored in the communal archive of Carpi:

I membri della brigata "Fratelli Cervi" hanno accolto gli ospiti sul loro posto di lavoro nella vasta officina-riparazioni di Welzow-Süd. Bandiere della Repubblica Italiana e della Repubblica Democratica Tedesca davano alla piazza fronteggiante l'officina un carattere di festa. Un gruppo di giovani pionieri ha aperto la manifestazione con fanfare e tamburini. Si sono avute parole di saluto e subito dopo il 25-enne Mario Cervi ha preso la parola tra la commozione e le lacrime di simpatia e solidarietà degli astanti. Ha avuto luogo una visita delle officine e gli ospiti hanno avuto modo di intrattenersi a lungo con gli

⁹⁶⁶ When she came back from Wernigerode, Formiggini wrote another letter to mayor Kilian, to know what the impact of the exhibition on Italian Resistance had been: «Vorrei sapere se la mostra della Resistenza italiana ha avuto successo. È molto importante questo tributo che R. D. T. ha voluto rendere alla lotta partigiana del mio paese. Forse avrei dovuto dire solo questo, accettando l'onore che lei mi concede chiedendomi di inaugurarla. Anche in questo caso c'è stata la difficoltà della mia non conoscenza del tedesco e delle abitudini del vostro paese. La prego scusarmi se non sono stata brillante come avrei voluto. E ancora grazie dei magnifici fiori che mi hanno seguito nel viaggio». See StaWe, WRIII/1249, *Gina Formiggini a Martin Kilian, Chianciano, 25 agosto 1966*.

⁹⁶⁷ ASCC, Carteggio Gemellaggio Carpi-Wernigerode, b. anno 1969, fasc. "Città gemelle Congressi Adesioni Proposte", sottofasc. "Corrispondenza Carpi-Wernigerode '62-'79", *Celebrazioni del primo anniversario della Brigata "Fratelli Cervi" nella "Schwarze Pumpe" il più grande complesso della RDT e d'Europa per l'estrazione e per il raffinamento della lignite, s. d.* Also see StAS, SVZ, 25.5.1966.

operai sul loro posto di lavoro. In un grande quadro murale, dedicato alla lotta e al sacrificio dei sette fratelli, il giovane Mario Cervi non ha potuto trattenere le lacrime quando ha visto improvvisamente una grande fotografia di suo padre. Con grande interesse poi gli ospiti hanno visitato le miniere di lignite all'aperto.⁹⁶⁸

The relations had been cemented through «the extension of contacts with Italian workers, the vision of movies, conferences with slides and other common demonstrations», which contributed to making the workers of the “Schwarze Pumpe” aware of the problems and developments of Italy. The members of the “Cervi” brigade who had done the best job in contacts with Italians received a prize.⁹⁶⁹

As we have seen, in front of Italians, antifascism, the Resistance and their symbols, despite the emphasis on the common European experience against right-wing totalitarianisms, were presented as an Italian prerogative, from the GDR's side, probably as a way to please their interlocutors. This could be seen in the descriptions of the twinned cities from the East German side. For instance, Collegno was celebrated as a town with «rich antifascist traditions [, where] 300 citizens of the town had actively fought as partisans». Also,

Ein Ehrenmal, an dem unsere Delegation Kränze niederlegt, gedenkt die 86 In dieser Kampf Gefallenen. Die Stadt ist als Heldenstadt anerkannt und Trägerin der Goldenen Widerstandsmedaille. Traditionen, die konsequent dazu führen, dass alle im Stadtparlament vertretenen Parteien für die Anerkennung des antifaschistischen deutschen Staates der DDR, durch Italien eintreten. Eine entsprechende Petition an dem italienischen Parlament wurde bisher von über 5000 Bürgern unterzeichnet.⁹⁷⁰

The connection between the antifascist traditions in Collegno and their utility for the aim of the GDR's recognition was clear. Probably, also for this reason the references to the Resistance and antifascism were not only confined to communist combatants, or not openly connected to them, but there was also an effort to refer to various political forces, so as to attract the attention of more and more Italian citizens on the issue of recognition, even if always through the PCI. This did not mean that the politicized component was not at all present, from both sides. For instance, in 1966, Bianca Ghiron, an Italian communist woman who permanently lived in East Berlin for some years and taught at the *Humboldt Universität*,⁹⁷¹ replied to a request of the substitute of the mayor of Schwerin in which he asked for some information about the association of *former* Italian partisans. She told him

⁹⁶⁸ ASCC, Carteggio Gemellaggio Carpi-Wernigerode, b. anno 1969, fasc. “Città gemelle Congressi Adesioni Proposte”, sottofasc. “Corrispondenza Carpi-Wernigerode '62-'79”, *Celebrazioni del primo anniversario della Brigata “Fratelli Cervi” nella “Schwarze Pumpe” il più grande complesso della RDT e d'Europa per l'estrazione e per il raffinamento della lignite, s. d.*

⁹⁶⁹ *Ibidem*. On the request of a movie about Togliatti, see StaWe, WRIII/1249, *Kraushaar an Berger, Deutsch-italienische Gesellschaft. Berlin, den 30. August 1965.*

⁹⁷⁰ ASCO, Gemellaggi, b. Neubrandenburg 1974-75, fasc. “Neubrandenburg”, *Ritaglio “Begegnungen in Collegno”, 16. Oktober 1970.*

⁹⁷¹ As Magda Martini has explained, Ghiron lived in the GDR since 1955, and taught at the HU since 1958. See Magda Martini, *La Cultura All'ombra Del Muro. Relazioni Culturali Tra Italia e Ddr (1949-1989)* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2007), p. 176.

that such an association did not exist: there were no *former* combatants, «because the Italian partisans conduct a political battle today, too».⁹⁷² Her strongly politicized view of the Resistance, and thus her communist belonging, emerged from her words, despite the fact that in that very year, 1966, she had had troubles with the SED because of the Havemann case (see 3.3) and had asked the national secretariat of the PCI to help her go back to Italy – something which she eventually managed to do, together with her husband Silvio Buchmann.⁹⁷³

A central aspect in the narrative connected to antifascism were the visits to former concentration camps, which significantly contributed to creating that sense of stronger connection with the “other Germany” in Italians. The bigger former concentration camp present on the territory of the GDR was Buchenwald, located close to Weimar. Buchenwald had been reopened by the Soviet occupying army after 1945 and until 1950, and administrated by it directly, as a detention camp for former Nazis and political opponents. In 1950, one year after the founding of the GDR, the majority of the camp was dismantled. In the following years, between 1954 and 1958, the East German government decided to start the construction of a national memorial, with the aim of celebrating the communist members of German Resistance. As Peter Monteath has written, «more than being merely a site of suffering [...] Buchenwald could be readily incorporated into a history of active, if not heroic, antifascist resistance».⁹⁷⁴ Thus, the official establishment of the GDR’s memory on antifascist bases had started since the mid-1950s. With that, the detentions and the violence which had taken place in the years of Soviet administration seemed to have been forgotten. The former camp and the memorial became of high symbolic importance for the authorities of the GDR, who often brought foreign delegations to visit them, so as to celebrate the socialist regime.⁹⁷⁵ Italian delegations were often there, too, and the (communist) *actors* related to Buchenwald – Horst Jonas, the mayor of Neubrandenburg; or Ernst Thälmann (see 5.1) were taken in high consideration. The Buchenwald “national” memorial, as Monteath has again highlighted, represented «one of the key components of the GDR’s ‘cultural capital’», thus providing the newborn country «with its central foundation myth».⁹⁷⁶ That narrative was constantly included in a tension between the postwar national and international politics (the competition with West Germany) and Marxist ideology. While the latter was guaranteed through the magnification of the communist Resistance, the argument against West

⁹⁷² StaS, R1/896, *Bianca Ghiron an dem stellvertretenden Bürgermeister von Schwerin, Dobratz, Berlin, 18. Juli 1966.*

⁹⁷³ FIG, APCI, Fondo Estero, “Rdt”, 1966, mf 0536, p. 2144, *Lettera di Bianca Ghiron e Silvio Buchmann.*

⁹⁷⁴ Monteath, “Narratives of Fascism in the GDR.”, p. 103.

⁹⁷⁵ Ursula Hartl, *Il Memoriale di Buchenwald*, trans. Valeria Bazzicalupo and Elena Barontini Prey (Fondazione Memoriali di Buchenwald e Mittelbau-Dora, 2011).; Manfred Overesch, *Buchenwald Und Die DDR – Oder Die Suche nach Selbstlegitimation* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995).

⁹⁷⁶ Monteath, “Narratives of Fascism in the GDR.”, p. 100.

Germany was that Nazism was «interpreted not as a distinctively German phenomenon but rather as a product of a set of circumstances liable to arise in a capitalist system».⁹⁷⁷ In this sense, the GDR had eradicated capitalism and therefore also the conditions for Fascism, while the Federal Republic had not.

If Buchenwald was the antifascist symbol *par excellence*, there was also another camp which Italian delegations were led to as a destination – Ravensbrück, situated in the North of Berlin, in Brandenburg, the biggest former concentration camp destined to women. It is interesting to note the Italian line of argument, in the reactions after the visit. The response of a group of children and teachers from Collegno which had travelled to East Germany for twenty days in 1974 was of shock, sadness and pain: «we have felt personally involved in something bigger than us, terrible, that we do understand, but that [, although] with difficulties, we are able to explain».⁹⁷⁸ Despite the emotions raised by the visit, the pupils and their teachers seemed to have fully absorbed the argument about the connection between Fascism and capitalism, so much that they reported in the diary, seemingly with conviction, what they had heard from East Germans, and thus:

Anche se la visita al campo di sterminio impressiona noi vogliamo far vedere ai nostri ospiti ciò che mai e poi mai si dovrà dimenticare affinché non si ripeta. Noi vogliamo che molti vengano da noi a vedere queste cose perché vogliamo che non succedano più, ma sappiamo anche che finché ci sarà il capitalismo il fascismo potrà sempre rinascere. I campi di sterminio ci aiutano a capire come i fascisti fanno politica. Vogliamo educare i cittadini alla pace, ma non saremmo giusti se, parlando della pace, non dicessimo di odiare queste cose che purtroppo non appartengono soltanto al passato perché succedono ancora oggi.⁹⁷⁹

The emotional turmoil generated by the visit to the camps, together with the propaganda about communist resistance and the discrediting of the capitalist system was fundamental for the establishment, or perhaps re-establishment, of the image Italians had of “Germans”. Those representations and narrations had a particular effect on grassroots activists – people who participated directly to the activities of the party and the labor unions, but also “simple” leftist sympathizers.

East Germans also paid their respects to antifascist symbols on the Italian territory, in the rare occasions in which they managed to travel to the country. For instance, in 1973, a delegation from Wernigerode visited the “Monumento al deportato politico e razziale nei campi di sterminio nazisti”, guided by Bruno Losi, at that time provincial assessor, and Augusto De Pietri, in the role of secretary of the Italy-GDR committee. In their report, they wrote down:

⁹⁷⁷ Ivi, p. 99.

⁹⁷⁸ ASCO, Gemellaggi, b. Neubrandenburg 1974-75, fasc. “Neubrandenburg”, *Diario di 20 giorni nella Repubblica democratica tedesca, resoconto della visita estiva dei ragazzi delle scuole medie di Collegno, 8-26 agosto 1974.*

⁹⁷⁹ Ibidem.

Wir brachten zum Ausdruck, dass unser Besuch der Befreiung Italiens vom Faschismus gewidmet ist und wir gemeinsam mit den Werktätigen Italiens die gefallenen Partisanen und Widerstandskämpfer ehren möchten.⁹⁸⁰

When looking at the way that visit has been described, it looks like it was conceived as a purely ceremonial visit, to show the Italian population and the partisans that there was a sensitivity towards the topic. The monument was not the only emblematic place visited by the delegation in the area. The group also visited the Reggio Emilia province, where they reached the antifascist monument to Resistance and the “Cervi house”, which hosted the house, the museum and the graves of the “brothers” killed by fascists. For East Germans, that moment represented a «peak», and they also had the possibility to talk with the widow of one of the siblings. *Frau Cervi* – it was written in the document – «expressed huge faith and sympathy towards the socialist GDR».⁹⁸¹ During the GDR delegation’s presence in the Piazza Martiri in Carpi, the population also appeared to be numerous (3000 people) and welcoming towards the hosts, applauding – so wrote the East Germans – «in recognition of the struggle of the Italian resistance fighters, [of] the liberation acts of the Soviet Union, [and of] the statement that fascism and imperialism in the GDR had been eradicated from the roots».⁹⁸²

6.2 Microsociability and ceremoniality, daily life, generations

Other fundamental elements to please Italian delegations which travelled to the GDR were human relations, interconnections, and sociability. A good welcoming and direct, personal contacts with East Germans generated curiosity and, when bonds were positive, they had an immediate effect on the motivation and will to keep the twinning alive. Most likely due to their not completely structured political identity, the main targets of these grassroots activities were young people. At this level of militance and activism, and in particular among the youth, it is possible to notice a supposedly genuine interest towards what had been realized in the GDR, which represents a bottom-up counterpart to administrative connections (as shown in 5.2). Part of the positive representation of the country was also the demonstration that consumer goods were available, and the quality of life was high, despite the project of socialism-building, which could appear, from outside, as strict and overly regimented. Here, I will highlight the oscillation between the tendency to see the GDR, and the

⁹⁸⁰ Members of the delegation were Hans Joachim Gerlach, substitute of the mayor of Wernigerode; Josef Schmidt, member of the provincial (Kreis) council of Wernigerode; and Hort Rudnik, worker of the *VEB Elektromotorenwerk* Wernigerode. See StaWe, WRIII/1267, *Bericht über den Besuch der Freundschaftsdelegation des Kreises Wernigerode in der Partnerstadt Carpi – Provinz Modena, Republik Italien, vom 21.4-2.5.1975.*

⁹⁸¹ StaWe, WRIII/1267, *Bericht über den Besuch der Freundschaftsdelegation des Kreises Wernigerode in der Partnerstadt Carpi – Provinz Modena, Republik Italien, vom 21.4-2.5.1975.*

⁹⁸² *Ibidem.*

countries of the Eastern bloc, as models, and a non-identification, or the perception of a sometimes very strong diversity in the lifestyles and daily habits. Reciprocal perceptions and receptions from both sides will be shown, as much as the available sources allow it for the GDR. All these elements – microsociability and ceremoniality; everyday life and consumerism; youth and generations – are at the center of this chapter. I have divided them into different topics here, but they will often overlap, as they come together in reports, diaries and interviews. With regards to this, a brief specification is necessary about the oral testimonies. On the one hand, they are fundamental sources when analyzing the sphere of mutual perceptions and imaginations.⁹⁸³ On the other hand, in this case, it is also fundamental to highlight that they determine an imbalance towards the perspective of youth, as the majority of people whom I was able to interrogate were quite young at that time.

Microsociability – which we could define, in this case, as the organized construction of social bonds between those involved in the exchanges, also through leisure time – was central. Common activities, discussions, meetings, lunch and dinners, songs and games for the youngest, some beers at the *Kneipe* for the adults. These were fundamental aspects in the transnational meetings and also fundamental components of the ceremonial nature tied to the twinings. These strong personal bonds represented the basis for a positive repercussion in the imagination and perception of the “other”. A significant example is the one reported at the beginning of this chapter, about the arrival of a delegation from Neubrandenburg in Collegno. The high number of people attending, the ceremony at the stadium, the use of symbols, such as the countries’ flags, and of songs, first and foremost the national hymns – all these elements contributed to a warm atmosphere and thus to a sentiment of friendship.⁹⁸⁴

It is possible to catch a glimpse of social contacts through the documents which describe the itineraries, the impressions and the comments of administrators and militants who travelled from and to both sides of the Iron Curtain. For instance, after having a walk in Carpi with Bruno Losi in 1970, some citizens of Wernigerode noted that «at the cinema [the] entrance [costed] 700-800 Lire. The owner of the cinema is capitalist, he owns many cinemas, but [he has] a good acquaintance with Losi». ⁹⁸⁵ Similarly, the students of Collegno who had been to Neubrandenburg in the summer of 1974 concentrated their attention on everyday aspects of the new environment they were in contact with. Many of them, they wrote in the diary, could not help but focus on the food and the timetables, thus

⁹⁸³ As it was highlighted early in 1979 by Alessandro Portelli, as at that time a strong statement in contrast with the critics of the use of oral interviews in historical research: see Alessandro Portelli, “What Makes Oral History Different,” in *The Oral History Reader*, ed. Alistair Thomson and Rob Perks (New York: Routledge, 2006), 63–74.

⁹⁸⁴ ASCO, Gemellaggi, b. Neubrandenburg 1974-75, fasc. “Neubrandenburg”, “*Begegnungen in Collegno*”, 16. Oktober 1970.

⁹⁸⁵ StaWe, WR111/1253, *Reisebericht des Aufenthaltes in der Partisanenstadt Carpi vom 18.10-27.10.1970*.

«revealing a scarce spirit of adaptability». The East Germans had set up a special menu for the Italian hosts in the camping where they were being hosted, with a «classic *spaghettata*, fontina cheese, wafers and wine». ⁹⁸⁶ A partially “Italianized” menu had also been prepared on another occasion, for the visit of a delegation from Carpi to Wernigerode: in that case, it included «Spaghetti Napolitaine, *Klare Suppe mit Einlage, Rinderschnitten, Mischegemüse, Grünersalat*, Pommes Frites, *Vino Chianti*, Mixed Fruit». ⁹⁸⁷

For the younger, a space for playing was also often provided, as a joint activity which did not require particular language skills, putting children together without much effort, with the simple use of gestures. Again, in the case of the 1974 visit in Neubrandenburg, outside games were organized, together with some dances and singing, but since nobody wanted to sing, «the number of the songs [was] reduced to three and precisely *La pastora, Bella ciao, L'internazionale*». ⁹⁸⁸ However, the discussion made them understand that «[they] were not only [there] to eat or for pure amusement, but also to know and deepen the aspects of a society which [was] so different from [theirs]». The teachers noted down, again: «we have to confront ourselves with the others. To avoid the fact that these meetings are dispersive, we fix some topics that raise our interest: school, family, work, sport». ⁹⁸⁹ At this level, it is possible to note a genuine interest towards the way lifestyle was conducted, on topics that were of general interest – just as local administrators cared about diplomatic recognition, agency of the municipalities, conception of the town and of the social services (see 5.2).

As far as the school was concerned, the students noticed that the teachers of the GDR were not obliged to accompany the pupils on vacation, but had the duty, during the 2 months of free time, either to organize something for them in the city, or to follow update courses. The life of young East Germans was strictly organized, between clubs and work ateliers. Moreover, everyone was strongly encouraged to play sports – a fundamental cornerstone of the East German society – play music ⁹⁹⁰ and spend time in nature. In the context of a controlled “socialist education” (see 5.2), young girls and boys were almost never left to their own initiative; even outside school, they were encouraged to follow extracurricular activities. Italians were highly impressed by what they saw as a socialist conception of sports: «The sport activities here do not favor stardom, as the equipment needs to be at

⁹⁸⁶ ASCO, Gemellaggi, b. Neubrandenburg 1974-75, fasc. “Neubrandenburg”, *Diario di 20 giorni nella Repubblica democratica tedesca, resoconto della visita estiva dei ragazzi delle scuole medie di Collegno*, 8-26 agosto 1974.

⁹⁸⁷ Italics mine. StaWe, WRIII/1249, *Was gibt es heute – Menu FDGB-Ferienheim „Roten Stern“*, 15.8.65.

⁹⁸⁸ ASCO, Gemellaggi, b. Neubrandenburg 1974-75, fasc. “Neubrandenburg”, *Diario di 20 giorni nella Repubblica democratica tedesca, resoconto della visita estiva dei ragazzi delle scuole medie di Collegno*, 8-26 agosto 1974.

⁹⁸⁹ Ibidem.

⁹⁹⁰ Dan Wilton, “The ‘Societalization’ of the State: Sport for the Masses and Popular Music in the GDR,” in *Producing the ‘Socialist Personality’? Socialisation, Education, and the Emergence of New Patterns of Behaviour*, ed. Mary Fulbrook (New York: Berghahn, 2009), 102–29.

everyone's disposition. Sport is not only conceived to form champions, but mostly for health». Again, Italians wrote: «All the young Germans can swim, because at school the swimming is compulsory (every comment is superfluous). Of course, sport services are completely for free».⁹⁹¹ The commitment of the GDR state and society in the sphere of sports was highly appreciated by the Italian side, as shown from a letter that “Marino”, from Carpi, sent to Martin Kilian, who was a sportsman himself:

ricordando sempre la sua infinita gentilezza, e dopo aver ammirato la sua grande passione ed il suo impegno allo sport, mi rivolgo a lei per esprimere i più vivi rallegramenti per le stupende e numerose vittorie che gli olimpionici tedeschi hanno riportato a Monaco. Le confesso inoltre che molti erano in Carpi coloro che facevano il tifo per la DDR e che riempivano il cuore di lacrime nel vedere la vostra bella bandiera. Tanti auguri alla carissima Lena chi sempre vi ricorda Marino.⁹⁹²

Kilian himself had written to Onorio Campedelli in 1976, on the occasion of a concert of the youth choir of Wernigerode in Reggio Emilia, telling him about the Olympic games, and saying that «unluckily the Italian athletes [had] lost, but [that they had] consoled them».⁹⁹³

The appreciation was very high also towards sport *structures*. Renato Spagnotto, for instance, has highlighted that to that regard «they were absolutely advanced». In one of his (three) visits to the GDR, he has recalled the fact that they had to help building the new swimming pool of Neubrandenburg, «because the population had to build the swimming pool, and then Bertotti, you know how he was [here, during the interview, Spagnotto looks at his friend Drappella], Bertotti at 6am asked to play *Bella ciao*, and without saying anything [in advance], he told us: “you have to do a working day for the German comrades” [Spagnotto laughs]».⁹⁹⁴

Sport issues, however, could also become matters of principle: in 1969, the fact that the country was still not recognized diplomatically had direct repercussions on the organization of an event of Greek-Roman fight (*Campionati europei di lotta*) in Modena. Rubes Triva, mayor of Modena at that time, sent a harsh letter to the president of the international federation of the discipline, who had stopped the participation of the country, regularly invited by the Modenese leftist local administration. Triva stressed the «unease and protest of the population of Modena [for the] unjustified discrimination», concluding that the event, which was important for the story and the reputation of the organizers (the Modenese sports society “La Panaro”) could not find the best

⁹⁹¹ ASCO, Gemellaggi, b. Neubrandenburg 1974-75, fasc. “Neubrandenburg”, *Diario di 20 giorni nella Repubblica democratica tedesca, resoconto della visita estiva dei ragazzi delle scuole medie di Collegno, 8-26 agosto 1974*.

⁹⁹² StaWe, WR111/1255, *Lettera di Marino [?] a Martin Kilian, s. d.*

⁹⁹³ See ASCC, Carteggio gemellaggio Carpi-Wernigerode, b. Corrispondenza gemellaggio CP-Wernigerode anni 70 II, fasc. “Coro di Wernigerode 2 maggio 1976”, *Kilian an Campedelli, 22.3.1976, traduzione in italiano*.

⁹⁹⁴ Interview to Maurizio Drappella and Renato Spagnotto.

conclusion «that the administration hoped for, in the interest and for the affirmation of the ideal values that the sport should represent».⁹⁹⁵

Looking at the education system in general, Italians noted again that school books needed to be bought, but at a very low price, and they were for free for families with three or more children. The programs (see 5.2, *Education*) were the same in all the GDR. Young people were also helped in their professional path after school, and the education system was strictly connected to the world of the factory. Boys and girls could follow the workers as a part of the school program, for some days each week. After seeing socialist politics towards youth, teachers and students from Collegno concluded – so they wrote – that there, in GDR, «no marginalization exist[ed], [while it was] so frequent among us at home».⁹⁹⁶ What they seemed to bring with them was the sensation that the person was assisted in every phase of his/her life. «Maybe the faith of young Germans in socialism, which some of us have found, is due to the noteworthy realizations in the social field, that everyone can see and of which everyone benefits from, besides the political education that the young receive at school». It is not obvious, I think, to find such opinions in a document from 1974. That education – they continued in the diary – «is directed towards the respect of the “things belonging to everyone” and [...] has led, with a process which lasted years, to a real participation to the life of the community». That participation took place in «collectives of programming and realization of works (all of us have noticed, in the parks of the town [Neubrandenburg], entire families which cleaned and cured the green areas: the green is a public good and therefore needs to be taken care of by everyone)».⁹⁹⁷ Further comments were made about the conception of the public sphere by East Germans. Some delegation participants from Collegno noticed that «when they speak, the Germans continuously use the adjective “our” to indicate the State, the port of Rostock, the Palace of Culture, the adjective “our” is premised to every name indicating public affairs».⁹⁹⁸ This was, most likely, an argument that had been decided together with the GDR authorities, as in an East German document very similar concepts, with similar formulations, appeared. In describing the reactions of a little girl to what she had seen, the Germans noted down those which had supposedly been her words:

Una bimbetta con la testa piena di ricci neri esplode: “Ho notato che parlano tutti sempre della “nostra” casa, della “nostra” scuola, è tutto sempre “nostro”. Mentre noi diciamo “la scuola”, “la casa”, ma “nostro” si può solo forse dire quando tutto è così bello e quando appartiene davvero a tutti”. Non ci vuole tanto per comprendere che questa bimba intelligente sta parlando di uno dei nostri principi del

⁹⁹⁵ ASCMO, Segreteria generale, 1969, fasc. “Alla Cgil – Modena”, *Lettera del sindaco Rubes Triva al Presidente della Federazione internazionale “Lotta greco-romana” di Roma, Modena 9 giugno 1969.*

⁹⁹⁶ ASCO, Gemellaggi, b. Neubrandenburg 1974-75, fasc. “Neubrandenburg”, *Diario di 20 giorni nella Repubblica democratica tedesca, resoconto della visita estiva dei ragazzi delle scuole medie di Collegno, 8-26 agosto 1974.*

⁹⁹⁷ *Ibidem.*

⁹⁹⁸ *Ibidem.*

socialismo.⁹⁹⁹

However, it seems to me that the Italian interest was not only induced, but definitely had genuine aspects. In a way, the socialist system could also be presented as an educational model and tool towards the young ones who were participating to the trip. For example, in the diary, the participants noted down that «the people produce[d] the object and use[d] it, therefore I, single individual who I am using the object in this moment, have to respect it, as my task now is to keep it in the best possible way, as much as the task of the worker was [once] to produce it». It is not difficult to recognize in this description a praise for “real socialism” and the way it had been implemented in East Germany, at least on this social level, in the realizations directed right to the people, in their education, in their conception; while there were no real references to the dogmatic aspects.

Special attention, again, was raised by the system of *traineeship*, which was guaranteed for every young boy or girl in the GDR, together with other benefits and a fixed place for at least one year after that. Incentives and scholarships were foreseen for those who wanted to study and work simultaneously. In the diary – therefore, in the words used by the Italians – the factory environment was described as a place where a hierarchical structure was still present, but apparently decision mechanisms were collective:

Il direttore, ogni sei mesi, deve elaborare con i suoi collaboratori un piano di lavoro che stabilisca: la produzione, l'incremento della produzione, che preveda: quanti soldi investire nella fabbrica, quanto materiale occorre. Il piano viene quindi analizzato e discusso in ogni collettivo dello stabilimento. Tutto quello che in queste riunioni viene detto è annotato. Il personale della fabbrica fa quindi le sue osservazioni e richieste di modifica e il direttore deve far sì che tutto ciò non rimanga sulla carta e che le decisioni che saranno prese tengano conto delle richieste.

Quando il piano è stato messo a punto viene spedito alla Provincia e di lì al Ministero. Da tutti gli stabilimenti giungono i piani al Ministero che ha così una chiara visione di quale è la situazione produttiva di tutta la Repubblica.¹⁰⁰⁰

Despite the awareness of the strong centralization of the system, Italians noted down: «[it] is clear that the spring of the whole mechanism is not profit but the ideas, the realizations for the collective and individual well-being».¹⁰⁰¹

Work was a sphere of interest and reciprocal observation, as it was part of the life of everyone. However, in other cases, divergences or at least different conceptions of work appeared. Some of these have emerged from the interview that I have conducted with the former labor unionist Carlo Bruzzi. Bruzzi had been in the GDR for the first time when he was less than 20 years old, with a

⁹⁹⁹ ASCO, Gemellaggi, b. Neubrandenburg 1974-75, fasc. “Neubrandenburg”, s. l., s. d.

¹⁰⁰⁰ ASCO, Gemellaggi, b. Neubrandenburg 1974-75, fasc. “Neubrandenburg”, *Diario di 20 giorni nella Repubblica democratica tedesca, resoconto della visita estiva dei ragazzi delle scuole medie di Collegno, 8-26 agosto 1974.*

¹⁰⁰¹ Ibidem.

superficial idea of that system, by his own admission. He had the impression that the conditions of the workers were generally good there, but he perceived some fundamental differences:

per molti di noi in qualche modo le lavorazioni eran riconoscibili, perché comunque i tratti comuni, i tratti della industria metalmeccanica in molte parti erano comuni, il taglio delle lamiere è il taglio delle lamiere, le macchine utensili sono macchine utensili anche se eran diverse, però... e quindi in un qualche modo mi era leggermente familiare, il luogo, i luoghi della lavorazione, a parte ripeto le dimensioni che rispetto alla fabbrica dove lavoravo io dove eravamo in centodieci operai, eran gigantesche; ma rimasi, questo me lo ricordo bene, io insieme ad alcuni altri, nonostante eravamo molto giovani, rimasi colpito dal bassissimo ritmo di lavoro e da, praticamente, bassissimi livelli di conseguenza di produttività. Nel senso che ogni tanto mentre giravamo io e alcuni altri ci veniva spontaneo chiederci: beh, ma quello lì cosa fa? Nel senso che, cioè, noi non riuscivamo a capire bene... inseriti in un contesto lavorativo, non, perlomeno io, non avevamo la catena di montaggio, producevamo degli impianti di automazione, quindi è un lavoro comunque specializzato, fatto in piccoli gruppi, non con la catena, non col cottimo eccetera, però il senso dell'organizzazione del lavoro, non avere tempi morti [...] nonostante eravamo dei sindacalisti ce l'avevamo, eh. E ricordo benissimo questo particolare che io e alcuni altri che eravamo in metalmeccanica mentre percorrevamo dicevamo: qui stan bene, però [...] ci sembra che lavorino poco...¹⁰⁰²

A comment about the perception of a different organization of work also came from Vanni Bulgarelli, who was not a labor unionist, but likewise remembers a visit to the *Elektromotorenwerk* and a similar feeling that the tasks were divided to a point, that every worker did not have to take care of a lot of things, partly because they had technology in the factories, and partly because the rhythms and the objectives were different. In Italy, for Bulgarelli, there was «another idea [...] there [were] impressively high times and rhythms, productions, the fundamental point [was] productivity». Apparently, the East Germans were also perceived as *quick*. However, continued Bulgarelli, when «going to the construction site, there was not that mess that [we had] in our construction sites, at that time especially, [as] we still had the wooden scaffolding, just to give an idea. There, instead, [they had] the crane that lifted [those] pieces, [those] blocks...». ¹⁰⁰³

The curiosity towards a different system, however, was not one-sided. As Bulgarelli has explained in his interview, the young people there, «they could not go out [...] [to the West], they had this myth of the West which was very deeply rooted. And they were thirsty for information, they asked us things and of course we, who were *engagés* – we explained that it was not exactly like this». Bulgarelli has narrated that «they established confrontations»:

“quanto prendi tu di stipendio, prendi un sacco di soldi di stipendio”, e noi dicevamo “no, guarda che noi facciamo le battaglie salariali, perché venivamo dall'autunno caldo”. “Ma come, tu quanto paghi di affitto? Tu quanto paghi di luce, quanto paghi di riscaldamento, quanto paghi di scuola?” “La scuola è gratis”. “Bene, sai quanto pago io di libri?” E allora lì si ribaltava tutto... “ma come? di sanità quanto pagate?” Non c'era ancora il servizio nazionale. Quindi questo confronto, allora a questo punto loro

¹⁰⁰² Interview to Carlo Bruzzi, Castelnuovo Rangone (Modena), February 19, 2018.

¹⁰⁰³ Interview to Vanni Bulgarelli.

rimanevano spiazzati, nel conoscere un lato che non era il lato così edulcorato dell'Occidente, consumistico [...]

noi cercavamo di spiegare, che certo, da noi c'era gente che si era fatta una strada, che viveva bene, agiatamente, che si permetteva tanti lussi, ma c'erano anche tantissime persone che facevano lavori molto molto duri, stiamo parlando ancora dei primi anni 70 quando [...] alla Fiat, c'erano i reparti di pomiciatura e verniciatura, a Mirafiori c'erano 120-130.000 operai, adesso saranno poche migliaia, e cercavamo di raccontare un po' queste realtà, quindi questo era lo scambio dal punto di vista culturale, siamo andati anche su un isoletta dove c'era un piccolo giardino zoologico, la carne alla brace e la prima mezz'ora era così e dopo ci si sbracava sui prati.¹⁰⁰⁴

I think that these conversations, these descriptions of those daily contacts between people, need to be interpreted as much more than just chats or superficial exchanges, as those were the means through which exchange was at that time actually possible, in a non-completely communicating Cold War Europe. Those meetings, and the memories of them, are important, as they allow to enter the discussion about the sphere of idealization of the “other” system, from both sides, the sphere of the experience of those systems, especially from the Italian side, the meaning of the encounter and of the exchange, and the continuity or discontinuity between the “before” and the “after” the reciprocal knowledge. These documents and memories allow to gain insight about the impact of bottom-up mutual communication in the broader East-West dynamics. Not always the communication was positive, and despite a general designation of Eastern bloc regimes as reference points, and role models in their implementation of the “good side of socialism”, young people from Italy did not entirely embrace that lifestyle.¹⁰⁰⁵

Another element that emerged from these confrontations was the one of consumerism, consumer goods and quality of life, besides the problems related to work, education, and social necessities. Again, Bulgarelli's interview allows to get an insight into the exchange about this issue. Young Italians seemed to have a positive idea of the GDR, of «well-being», «a decent quality of life, spaces, let us say, of individual liberty, so one went out dancing, the young ones went out, there were the limitations about not getting out of the curtain, obviously, that was... the possibility, through these twinnings, to also meet the West a little bit».¹⁰⁰⁶ Those exchanges also generated internal discussions also among different political persuasions within the Italian delegation. Some of the participants pointed out the poverty and the low quality of life in the GDR, while others – Bulgarelli, and the other communists, supposedly – emphasized the shortcomings in Italy, and instead the positive elements of “real socialism in Prussian sauce”. «That was the game [inside the delegation]», has told Bulgarelli,

¹⁰⁰⁴ Ibidem.

¹⁰⁰⁵ As highlighted, for the case of Greek youth organizations travelling to the East, by Papadogiannis in Nikolaos Papadogiannis, “Political Travel across the ‘Iron Curtain’ and Communist Youth Identities in West Germany and Greece in the 1970s and 1980s,” *European Review of History: Revue Européenne d'histoire* 23, no. 3 (2016): 526–53, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13507486.2015.1113935>., p. 531.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Interview to Vanni Bulgarelli.

«the discussion happened on this level». Anyway, it was evident – he continued – that the GDR «had to be able to demonstrate to West Germany to be at the same level, both on the industrial level, and on the one of the way of life».¹⁰⁰⁷

The improvements made by East Germany in the quality of life – a process which started in the 1960s – were well described by those who travelled there often and by the communist press, too. One example of that is an article – stored in the communal archive of Bologna – published on the magazine “Paese sera”, close to the PCI, in 1972. It described a visit to Leipzig. «Without a shadow of zeal or exaggeration, we can affirm that [in this communist Germany] one lives decidedly well, that the atmosphere has become more distended [...] [and that] the economic expansion is constant».¹⁰⁰⁸ Well-being appeared to be spread, pointed out the journalist. «The shops’ windows are full of every kind of product, and if the clothing is of a high cost, the subsistence goods are cheap, the restaurants and the tea rooms highly attended». In describing this image, the author of the article indulged on the people, of every age, who attended these places, in Berlin especially: «besides the old ladies with a very cared clothing, if not elegant along our “Western” standards, [there were] the young, more “disheveled” and casual».¹⁰⁰⁹

Vanni Bulgarelli has narrated that «the discussion was always the same: here there are no clothes, there is no freedom, [...] they said ‘yes, it is true, the families, here we feel good, we do not miss anything in the sense that the health system [...], etc.’». However, they highlighted, «‘we cannot move, there is no freedom, we cannot buy what we want, the clothes, the things that young guys of 18, 19, 20 years old would want’, for girls it was the same».¹⁰¹⁰ The feelings towards the “other” thus seemed to be ambivalent, from both sides. Bulgarelli has told that, on the one hand, the young people in the GDR understood «the effort that they [the state, the authorities] made to guarantee an education, and so on, but at the same time they were not able to understand that deep limitation of their freedom». On the other hand, he has pointed out, «we very much appreciated their conditions compared to ours, anyway in Modena, we were privileged in Carpi, but I mean we made references to the Italian average conditions which surely were not elevated standards».¹⁰¹¹

Cars seemed to be a fundamental point of discussion for both sides and, predictably, mostly for the almost entirely male-oriented local political hierarchies and representatives. The typical car,

¹⁰⁰⁷ Ibidem.

¹⁰⁰⁸ ASCBO, Fondo Ufficio Esteri, b. 2 “Lipsia 1973-1986”, fasc. 8, “Lipsia – 1972-'73; Documentazione mostra e scambio delegazioni con relativa corrispondenza”, *Lipsia è fatta a misura d'uomo*, in *Paese sera*, 21 dicembre 1972.

¹⁰⁰⁹ ASCBO, Fondo Ufficio Esteri, b. “Lipsia 1973-1986”, fasc. “Lipsia – 1972-'73; Documentazione mostra e scambio delegazioni con relativa corrispondenza”, *Lipsia è fatta a misura d'uomo*, in *Paese sera*, 21 dicembre 1972.

¹⁰¹⁰ Interview to Vanni Bulgarelli.

¹⁰¹¹ Ibidem.

in the GDR, was the *Trabant*, which has now become the symbol of what would have later been called *Ostalgie*.¹⁰¹² The administrators, too seemed to be interested in an exchange of materials on that topic. For instance, when Hahn, Müller and Göck from Neubrandenburg visited Collegno in September 1970, they asked in advance to Ruggero Bertotti if he could act as a link so as to make it possible to receive official materials on FIAT, but they also expressed the *desire* to visit the factory.¹⁰¹³ When I have interviewed him, and asked him what was the point of interest of Neubrandenburg in Collegno, the very first aspect that Heinz Hahn has touched upon was actually the automobile industry:

Ich war in Turin, bei dem Oberbürgermeister, ich war bei der Landesregierung mit Bertotti zusammen, Betriebsbesichtigung, das war sehr beeindruckend, der für uns, weil die Autoindustrie bei uns relativ schwach war.¹⁰¹⁴

To this regard, it is interesting to read a short story appeared on the newspaper of Neubrandenburg on the arrival of the German delegation in Collegno via Milan, which well depicts the impression that the high speed of Italian cars generated:

Wenn auch die Flugtickets nur bis Mailand gelten, der „Flug“ geht weiter. In zwei Autos, Marke „Alfa Romeo“ (190 km/h). Dann stoppen ein Polizeiauto und uniformierte Motorradfahrer die Kolonne. Aber es ist keine Geschwindigkeitskontrolle, sondern die Ehreneskorte der Stadtpolizei von Collegno.¹⁰¹⁵

Apart from cars, consumerism and living conditions, since the 1960s, had significantly increased in the GDR.¹⁰¹⁶ This fact was recognized not only by communists or sympathizers of the PCI, but also by people who were politically very far from the East German model of “real socialism”. As shown by a document stored in the communal archive of Collegno, for instance, Riccardo Formica – a high-rank element of the Rotary Club Ivrea, a liberal, reported the following impression about the GDR, after visiting it in 1967. In his description of the experience, he started right from car density, pointing out that the entrance in East Germany had almost been a «choc», as the «automobilist density [was] equal to the 10%» in comparison with the West German part. However, he continued, «all this must

¹⁰¹² On *Ostalgie* in reunified Germany, see Paolo Capuzzo, “‘Good Bye Lenin’. La Nostalgia Del Comunismo Nella Germania Riunificata,” *Studi Culturali* 1 (2004): 151–65.

¹⁰¹³ ASCO, Gemellaggi, b. Neubrandenburg 1970, fasc. “Corrispondenza varia”, *Lettera di Ruggero Bertotti alla direzione stampa e pubblicità FIAT*, 11.9.1970; ASCO, Gemellaggi, b. Neubrandenburg 1970, fasc. “Corrispondenza varia”, *Lettera di Ruggero Bertotti alla direzione FIAT*, 21.9.1970.

¹⁰¹⁴ Interview to Heinz Hahn.

¹⁰¹⁵ ASCO, Gemellaggi, b. Neubrandenburg 1974-75, fasc. “Neubrandenburg”, *Ritaglio “Begegnungen in Collegno”*, 16. Oktober 1970.

¹⁰¹⁶ For an overview on consumerism in postwar Italy, faced in multiple perspectives, and with an essay on the PCI, television and the consumer society by Riccardo Brizzi, see Stefano Cavazza, ed., *Consumi e Politica Nell’Italia Repubblicana* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2013). Also see Emanuela Scarpellini, *L’Italia Dei Consumi. Dalla Belle Époque Al Nuovo Millennio* (Bari-Roma: Laterza, 2018). On the history of consumerism, see in particular the chapter on workers’ consumerism in Paolo Capuzzo, *Culture Del Consumo* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2006), pp. 205-262.

not induce to think that life conditions of the East German population are of modest level. The level of life, as a matter of fact, in particular of the working class, is not substantially dissimilar from the Italian one»:

Le retribuzioni sono relativamente elevate, la capacità di acquisto abbastanza buona e gli alloggi decorosi. Queste constatazioni hanno costituito la smentita della quale il relatore accennava all'inizio, in quanto si è un po' abituati a considerare estremamente misere le condizioni di vita dei paesi oltrecortina. Il relatore ritiene peraltro, pur non avendo avuto modo di visitare altri paesi al di là della cortina, che la situazione della Germania orientale costituisca un "quid unicum" rispetto alla situazione degli altri paesi.¹⁰¹⁷

Up until this point, I have tried to show the connections between microsociability, ceremoniality, and the observations and reciprocal views on everyday life, school, work – all topics that interested citizens and activists as they represented the object of their daily experiences. All these contacts contributed to creating long-lasting bonds over time, especially in small centers, where stable connections with a foreign country, especially of the East, represented a reason for prestige. Some of the Italian militants had been to the GDR when they were very young and had then maintained those connections. It is the case with Deanna Bulgarelli, from Carpi. In the communal archive of Wernigerode, it has been possible to find a letter of her father Alfredo, a communist, who in 1965 thanked the mayor Kilian for hosting her and allowing her to get to know a new and stimulating reality: she and the other young participants «will do everything – together with us – to make this reality known to the others».¹⁰¹⁸ The daughter would have become the head of the delegation years later, on the occasion of a new visit. In the letter to Kilian, Bruno Losi pointed out that «she was a comrade that [had their] confidence at that [...] [would have done] her best to fulfill her task in the best way».¹⁰¹⁹ In 1971, Deanna Bulgarelli would invite the "friends" from the GDR to her wedding.¹⁰²⁰ We cannot understand from the documents if that really happened – it is unlikely, due to the travel restrictions before the diplomatic recognition – but it is nevertheless relevant to see that she considered the East German comrades to be that close, at least during that period.

As we could see in many parts of this dissertation, for older individuals, both administrators and militants, the most important factors were to be found in the common antifascist roots; in the political move to turn the attention towards the "good side" of Germany, in connection to the memory of war; in the spirit of peace, that represented the basis of town twinning practices. Young participants of delegations, instead, were oftentimes oriented towards a lighter form of political tourism. They

¹⁰¹⁷ ASCO, Gemellaggi, b. anni 60, fasc. "Neubrandenburg delegazione agosto 1966", *Rotary International, bollettino n. 295 dell'11 ottobre 1967*.

¹⁰¹⁸ StaWe, WRIII/1249, *Alfredo Bulgarelli an Martin Kilian, Carpi, 3.9.1965*.

¹⁰¹⁹ StaWe, WRIII/1249, *Onorio Campedelli an Martin Kilian, s. d.*

¹⁰²⁰ StaWe, WRIII/1253, *Partecipazione di matrimonio di Tiziano Bellelli e Deanna Bulgarelli*.

made friends, got in contact with their same-age peers, participated to sport and leisure activities, and not rarely – fell in love with German boys and girls. This last aspect has regularly emerged both from archival sources and interviews.

From the side of administrators, a certain concern emerged to educate the youth through these twinnings, especially in the late 1970s. For instance, Luciano Manzi, when he was mayor of Collegno, in 1977, wrote to Heinz Hahn by saying that – in the light of the international movements of the end of the 1970s in Europe, and the frequent discussions probably about dissent in the East – it was their desire, «since often quick judgments» had been pronounced, that the young boys and girls of Collegno «could get to know the social reality of the GDR in order to fully evaluate the reached conquests, the results obtained through years of work and programming and the climate of popular democracy that exists in your country».¹⁰²¹ Manzi's words expressed the worry that young generations were no longer connected to that sphere that was not only represented by the antifascist struggle, but also by a very specific socialist way of being antifascist and approaching politics, which was apparently getting lost.

Very interesting in this sense are oral testimonies, as they allow to gain insight on this generational issue and its connections with the political orientation. Gianni Marzi, from Carpi, has told me about his experience in the GDR in 1976 as a young member of the *Federazione Giovani Comunisti Italiani* (FGCI).¹⁰²² He has explained that the attempt was always to build a composite delegation, with sons of DC and PSI council members or militants, too, beyond the communists. However, he has soon turned the attention towards the communist components, saying that

noi forse eravamo tutti della FGCI, noi quelli legati [al PCI]. Io mi sono iscritto volontariamente a 14 anni alla FGCI, ho voluto proprio prendere la tessera, allora erano altri periodi insomma, però era un orgoglio per me una cosa del genere, quindi. Mio padre non so neanche se allora fosse legato al PCI, però bazzicava nell'area, e io ero proprio convinto, più di mio padre, forse.¹⁰²³

Marzi remembered that all the members of the group which were connected to the PCI, or sons of communists, were members of the FGCI, him included. He said that he had adhered with conviction to that organization when he was 14 years old, for reasons of pride which were not – he said – necessarily connected to his father, although his family in general was «clearly leftist», and in his house they had always «talked a lot about politics». «My sister – said Marzi – ha[d] *done* the '68, she used to call at home many friends which were '68ers, so when I was 8 or 10 years old I continuously heard talking about revolution, and similar things».¹⁰²⁴ At that point, I asked him why

¹⁰²¹ NeuSta, AE 2.00, *Luciano Manzi a Heinz Hahn, Collegno, 9 novembre 1977*.

¹⁰²² See ASCC, Carteggio Gemellaggio Carpi-Wernigerode, b. Corrispondenza gemellaggio CP-Wernigerode anni 70 II, fasc. «Delegazioni in Rdt (Wernigerode) 68-75», *Campedelli a Kilian, s. d.*

¹⁰²³ Interview to Gianni Marzi, Carpi, September 18, 2017.

¹⁰²⁴ *Ibidem*. Italics mine. «mia sorella ha fatto il '68», she had participated to the '68 movement.

he was close to the FGCI and not to other movements, and he answered: «actually, it is true, you are right, as a matter of fact I did not last much anyway. I remember that after 18, 19 years old I left and, actually, I approached more leftist movements».¹⁰²⁵ This is also relevant with respect to the GDR, because throughout the whole interview Marzi has told me about his experience and it appeared clear that he went there (although very young) as he just «knew that that was the ideal world [laughs] that that was the one of socialism, and that therefore one had to hope for or aim to that».¹⁰²⁶ Apart from that, however, he did not know anything else about the country before going there, and the impression he obtained was of a very regimented place, «maybe one of the most rigid situations together with that of the Soviet Union, you know, they were really afraid, they had the West right there».¹⁰²⁷ That was the impression and not much time later Marzi appeared to be fascinated by other models of socialism, which he naturally perceived as different, as more soft and communicative towards his needs and ideals than the dogmatic one of the GDR (see 6.4). This is representative of a tendency that was very common among young militants in the 1970s – they did not completely share the interest of their fathers towards the Soviet model, but had been influenced by many stimuli and were almost naturally inclined to follow new models of what they still, however, believed to be the best system – the socialist one (these aspects, in relation to the memory of the GDR and indoctrination, will be deepened in the next section on memory and subjectivity).

Slightly older was Vanni Bulgarelli when he travelled to the GDR, in the early 1970s. In that case, it is however also possible to perceive a “heretic” attitude towards the PCI, strongly determined, it seems, by the conditions around him. Bulgarelli has described his family as communist, with a grandfather that was among the founders of the PCI and had lived the underground movement, a «history along the tradition», in his own words (a communist tradition).¹⁰²⁸ In '68-'69 he had a period in which he was attracted by anarchists and other movements, then – he narrated – «in 1972 I got my acts together and tried to understand if there was something useful to be done. And since I was among the ones who could read and write, I was the editor-in-chief of the magazine of the Carpi FGCI». So Bulgarelli, too was in the FGCI, but he did not perceive himself as «particularly dogmatic», as he «attended different environments». Also, he identified as a young alternative student and militant – being, for instance, attentive towards the music scene, a big fan of David Gilmour and Pink Floyd, and naturally oriented towards «rupture», «freedom», contestation. In that sense, he has remembered an exchange on the level of “reciprocal views” with the young boys and girls of the GDR. He has

¹⁰²⁵ Ibidem.

¹⁰²⁶ Ibidem. «Io sapevo che quello era il mondo ideale [ride], [...] che quello del socialismo, e quindi bisognava sperare o mirare a quello [...]».

¹⁰²⁷ Ibidem.

¹⁰²⁸ Interview to Vanni Bulgarelli.

explained that he felt they all «found the same drive [...] in terms of opening, I remember that one of the first things they asked for... you know, they were thirsty to know how the West was, and there was this thing about blue-jeans – for them the symbol of freedom and of the West were the jeans». When, one year later, Bulgarelli got back to the GDR not with an official delegation but with a group of friends, with the car, they brought with them «a certain quantity of [...] blue-jeans, bought to be exchanged or given as a gift to the friends that we had met before. For them they were a very precious thing, an [...] explicit [curiosity]». However, the exchange regarded the meaning of those blue jeans: Bulgarelli and his friends tried to explain that jeans for them were «contestation, not the rule, the rule [were] trousers of vicuna wool, jeans are alternative. In the jeans there was the West, and so there was already this idea [from their side]». A story about jeans also came from Gianni Marzi, who said that, when they went to clubs in the GDR, « you could not enter with jeans, as a matter of fact I remember that we [...] Italians, in order to enter, we had to corrupt some people». Jeans were seen as the capitalistic symbol, but (also for that reason) generated fascination in the East German youth.

This is a further example of the way the mutual exchange of experiences and views and lifestyles could go on among the young. Clearly, the forms and the topics that were faced and the center of the attention were significantly distant from the ones of those who belonged to previous political generations, and this had an impact on the meaning itself of the twinings, on their utility, and – since the late 1970s especially, which is another reason why I have not focused on that period – on the strength of the common symbols, experiences and references to a socialist antifascism.

6.3 “Living” symbols: Togliatti, the wall

As we have seen with those related to war, especially regarding antifascism and Resistance (concentration camps, memorials, etc.), *symbols* were a central element in the construction of translocal contacts during the Cold War. The explicit effort was to build a relation through elements that could be shared by the population of both sides, because they created an immediate sense of identification. However, they were not only related to the past, but were also thought anew with reference to the postwar and more recent years. Those “living” symbols were related to codes and cyphers that were representative of East German and Italian communism in specific. Here, I am referring in particular to the personality of the PCI secretary Palmiro Togliatti and the celebratory discourse around him after his death, and to the Berlin Wall and its propagandistic narration.¹⁰²⁹

¹⁰²⁹ Many are the biographies and the historiographical works with Palmiro Togliatti at their center, starting from communist historiography: Ernesto Ragionieri, *Palmiro Togliatti. Per Una Biografia Politica e Intellettuale* (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1976).; the fifth volume on the postwar by Paolo Spriano on the history of PCI is centered around the role of Togliatti as a protagonist, Paolo Spriano, *Storia Del Partito Comunista Italiano, V, La Resistenza. Togliatti e Il Partito*

As far as Togliatti is concerned, in 1965, the local administration of Wernigerode decided to celebrate him in many ways.¹⁰³⁰ In January that year, the communist MP Luigi Polano wrote to Bruno Losi, after his reconfirmation as mayor of Carpi, in order to make him aware of the initiatives of Wernigerode. The local council (*Stadtrat*) of the East German town had decided, in October 1964, to name one of the squares in honor of Togliatti, in the name of the twinning with Carpi and in celebration of the PCI's secretary. The ceremony would take place in August, on the occasion of the first anniversary of the death, and Polano expressed the will that a certain delegation was present – namely, members of the communist party and/or of the majority in the local council of Carpi, communists and socialists. The workers of the foundry of Wernigerode would cast a bustle of Togliatti to be put under the plate with his name in the square; and the ceremony would take place with a demonstration thought and organized by the local administration of the GDR town. First, the mayor Kilian would talk about the life and personality of Togliatti and their meaning for the international communist movement; after that, the workers and representatives of the local factories and institutions would intervene, and finally it would be the turn of the Italian delegation – the communists from Carpi, some Italians living in the GDR, and one member of the Central Committee of the PCI. As we can see, the organization and the meaning of the ceremony was thought to be specifically communist, beyond the general references to peace that could apply to all political forces. The personality of Togliatti was highly valued, for his life and experience as a member of the underground antifascist movement and as a first-rank representative of the Italian party in Moscow during exile in the 1930s.¹⁰³¹ Extracts of his life were narrated as anecdotes, and a movie about his funerals was brought from Italy and shown, for two days in a row, at the cinema of Wernigerode's house of culture.¹⁰³² On that occasion, the «friends from Wernigerode» also wanted to inaugurate an exhibition about the Carpi municipality, so they begged the representatives of Carpi to prepare

Nuovo (Torino: Einaudi, 1975). Again, Aldo Agosti has written a comprehensive biography, Aldo Agosti, *Palmiro Togliatti* (Torino: UTET, 1996). Also see, focused on Togliatti and Italy, Pietro Di Loreto, *Togliatti e La "Doppiezza". Il PCI Tra Democrazia e Insurrezione (1944-1949)* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1991)., and Donald Sassoon, *Togliatti e La via Italiana Al Socialismo. Il Pci Dal 1944 Al 1964* (Torino: Einaudi, 1980)., while on international relations see: Carlo Spagnolo, *Sul Memoriale Di Yalta. Togliatti e La Crisi Del Movimento Comunista Internazionale (1956-1964)* (Roma: Carocci, 2007).; Elena Aga-Rossi and Victor Zavlavsky, *Togliatti e Stalin. Il PCI e La Politica Estera Staliniana Negli Archivi Di Mosca* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1997).; Marco Galeazzi, *Togliatti e Tito. Tra Identità Nazionale e Internazionalismo* (Roma: Carocci, 2005). On the interrelations between international and national politics in Togliatti, see Galeazzi. For a recent interpretative work focused on his role in 20th Century communism, see the recent collection of essays Alexander Höbel and Salvatore Tinè, eds., *Palmiro Togliatti e Il Comunismo Del Novecento* (Roma: Carocci, 2016). Among the recently published books is also: Gianluca Fiocco, *Togliatti, il Realismo della Politica: Una Biografia* (Roma: Carocci, 2018).

¹⁰³⁰ StaWe, WR111/1249, *Rede von Gina Formiggini, s. d.*

¹⁰³¹ See Höbel and Tinè, *Palmiro Togliatti e Il Comunismo Del Novecento*.

¹⁰³² ASCC, Carteggio gemellaggio Carpi-Wernigerode, b. Corrispondenza gemellaggio CP-Wernigerode, fasc. “anni 62-79”, *Luigi Polano a Bruno Losi, Roma 27 gennaio 1965*.

materials about the «history, development, industry, agriculture, realizations in the municipality, etc.». In this perspective, the celebration of Togliatti was an instrument for an intensification of the twinning contacts, but not only in the perspective of peace-keeping and general friendship among peoples: it had an extremely specific, communist meaning that Polano did not save himself from highlighting to Losi, saying that there were «irons in the fire», that needed to be «roasted» (used) «properly»:

Ecco, caro Losi, le notizie che ti dovevo dare. Come vedi c'è un po' di carne al fuoco, da arrostire bene. Sono certo che tu studierai con attenzione queste proposte, sottoponendole anche al Comitato del Partito che – mi pare – deve ora esser avvertito ed assumere le sue responsabilità sugli sviluppi del gemellaggio e dei legami di amicizia Carpi-Wernigerode. *Mi pare che ora il Partito dovrebbe provvedere a far sorgere – a fianco del gemellaggio tra le due amministrazioni – un Comitato locale di amicizia, come esiste già a Wernigerode. Questa è un'occasione per dare un concreto obiettivo a quei concetti di solidarietà internazionale e di internazionalismo proletario che devono esser sempre presenti nei militanti comunisti, e portati fuori negli ambienti che il Partito influenza – non ti pare?*¹⁰³³

In Polano's words, the idea of the role of the PCI in influencing society, and of its position in relation to «international solidarity» and «proletarian internationalism» were clear. Togliatti was a symbol of all that, and the fact that East Germans had decided to establish all those initiatives had to be profited of in that direction. In the end, Togliatti gave the name to the “house of culture” in Wernigerode.¹⁰³⁴

¹⁰³³ ASCC, Carteggio gemellaggio Carpi-Wernigerode, b. Corrispondenza gemellaggio CP-Wernigerode, fasc. “anni 62-79”, *Luigi Polano a Bruno Losi, Roma 27 gennaio 1965*.

¹⁰³⁴ At the inauguration were present representatives of the «ZK des KPI, der Öberbürgermeister nebst Gattin der Patenstadt Carpi, der Genosse Bruno Losi, Vertreter des ZK der SED, des Ministerium für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten und Vertreter aller Parteien und Massenorganisationen des Kreises und der Rat Wernigerode [...]». See StaWe, WR III 1249, *Martin Kilian an die Stadt Carpi, 12.8.65*.



ASCC, Carteggio gemellaggio Carpi-Wernigerode, b. Corrisp gemellaggio CP-Wernigerode anni 70 II, fasc. "Delegazioni in Rdt (Wernigerode) 68-75", foto di gruppo di fronte alla Kulturhaus "Palmiro Togliatti", Wernigerode, 1965.

At the moment of the house's inauguration, Bruno Losi gave a speech, through which he expressed deep satisfaction for the initiative, as it «represent[ed] a recognition of the international character of the work and the action of Togliatti».¹⁰³⁵ He proceeded by stating the value of the secretary in the international socialist movement,¹⁰³⁶ but at the same time in the Italian context, as he had contributed to the new democratic settlement, though never betraying, always coherent with the «internationalist spirit»:

Egli è stato uno degli uomini che, con il pensiero e l'azione, con la chiarezza dell'analisi e con l'audacia dell'iniziativa politica, ha dato vita, slancio e vigore irresistibile al grande movimento di unità antifascista, alla collaborazione di popoli e di Nazioni che sbarrò la strada alla tirannide e condusse alla vittoria le forze della pace, dell'indipendenza nazionale e della democrazia. La sua vita è indissolubilmente intrecciata alla recente storia del nostro Paese e questo suo legame fu pienamente coerente con lo spirito internazionalista e con la coscienza mondiale dei problemi che fecero di Lui un dirigente di primo piano dell'Internazionale comunista dal 1924 fino al suo scioglimento, ricoprendone anche la carica di segretario. Legame che ha fatto di Lui uno dei massimi esponenti della battaglia in

¹⁰³⁵ ASCC, Carteggio gemellaggio Carpi-Wernigerode, b. Corrisp gemellaggio CP-Wernigerode anni 70 II, fasc. "varie", *Discorso di Bruno Losi a Wernigerode*, 23 agosto 1965.

¹⁰³⁶ On this, see Aldo Agosti, "Una Solidarietà Internazionale Infrangibile": Togliatti e Il Movimento Comunista Mondiale," in *Palmiro Togliatti e Il Comunismo Del Novecento*, ed. Alexander Höbel and Salvatore Tinè (Roma: Carocci, 2016), 15–34.; and Alexander Höbel, "Togliatti e Il Movimento Comunista Nel Mondo Bipolare," in *Palmiro Togliatti e Il Comunismo Del Novecento*, ed. Alexander Höbel and Salvatore Tinè (Roma: Carocci, 2016), 94–130.

difesa della Repubblica spagnola, un costruttore e un difensore ed amico del primo Paese socialista del mondo. Così Togliatti si colloca tra gli uomini di questo secolo che non solo hanno saputo comprendere la svolta storica rappresentata dalla Rivoluzione d'Ottobre e dalla nascita di un mondo socialista, ma hanno cercato nuove strade per l'avanzata del progresso umano, per giungere ad una società di liberi e di eguali.¹⁰³⁷

Losi recalled the glorious past of Togliatti and his strong bonds with the country of the revolution, the Soviet Union. Furthermore, he reminded the public of his active role as a leader and combatant in the Spanish Civil War, against the fascist front, and as a testing ground, after years of totalitarian power and repression, of a new kind of democracy that could emerge from the international union of all the antifascist forces.¹⁰³⁸

Anche il suo ultimo scritto, il promemoria di Yalta – che costituisce indubbiamente un documento di elevato valore storico e politico – si richiama alle questioni del movimento operaio internazionale e alla sua unità.¹⁰³⁹

The heritage of the Yalta memorial has been confronted in numerous historiographical works. On the one hand, as Aldo Agosti has highlighted, it represented not only a change in the tones of his formulations, but a proper enrichment of Togliatti's previously expressed ideas on the topic of the "unity in diversity" of the PCI and of the necessity of keeping the communist international movement together. Agosti emphasizes that the memorial, published by Longo after Togliatti's death, quite explicitly criticized the way the «splinter activity of the Chinese communists», in the secretary's words, had been handled, and called for the unity of Western, Eastern and Third world communist parties, from which the Chinese could not be excluded.¹⁰⁴⁰ In the light of these positions, after his death, he was celebrated in Italy as an absolute guide of the communist movement. As Italo Calvino has written, thus pointing out his centrality in a generational discourse, «when we were young, the idea of revolution was linked to his argued style, to his wisdom, his balanced force, to his belonging to a vast and antique cultural tradition».¹⁰⁴¹

With specific reference to the GDR, Carlo Spagnolo has emphasized the old frictions about the elaboration of an "Italian way" between the two sides – PCI and SED – since the XX Congress of the Soviet Communist Party and until 1961. The strictly dogmatic, Soviet-friendly SED was in open dissent with the PCI on that topic, with the «theoretical divergences» having long-term roots. For Spagnolo, the research of a «national socialism [*socialismo nazionale*] through class

¹⁰³⁷ ASCC, Carteggio gemellaggio Carpi-Wernigerode, b. Corrisp gemellaggio CP-Wernigerode anni 70 II, fasc. "varie", *Discorso di Bruno Losi a Wernigerode, 23 agosto 1965*.

¹⁰³⁸ Agosti, *Palmiro Togliatti*., pp. 225-230.

¹⁰³⁹ ASCC, Carteggio gemellaggio Carpi-Wernigerode, b. Corrisp gemellaggio CP - Wernigerode anni 70 II, fasc. "varie", *Discorso di Bruno Losi a Wernigerode, 23 agosto 1965*.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Agosti, *Palmiro Togliatti*., p. 553.

¹⁰⁴¹ My translation. The sentence by Calvino is quoted in Agosti., p. 556.

compromises sent the ruling group of the SED back to the Austrian-German interwar debate, to the polemics between German communists and social democrats and the failure of Weimar». In that context, he argued, «the dissent between [Walter] Ulbricht and Togliatti on [those] topics had already showed up in 1929 at the X enlarged executive of the Communist International, when the Germans accused Italians of appeasement to “social fascism”». ¹⁰⁴² Was the dissent between East Germany and the PCI still evident in 1964-65, after Togliatti’s death, and after the diffusion of the strong opinions contained in the memorial? How are the celebrations in Wernigerode to be read, against the backdrop of all these elements?

It is reasonable to believe that the dedication of the *Kulturhaus* to Togliatti responded “simply” to the propagandistic purpose of building a better image of the GDR, in the functional way of the perspective of an increased awareness towards the country’s diplomatic recognition. Perhaps also for this reason the celebrations were not national, but had been rather organized locally, in a small town of the Harz region. I was not able to find, in the archives, the discourse of Wernigerode’s mayor Kilian, to exactly determine the points on which his official speech relied, also in relation to Yalta. However, on this point, Losi’s speech indicated the stress on generic issues about «the international working-class movement and its unity», ¹⁰⁴³ without addressing the Italian position in the communist world in detail. Losi’s speech pointed towards a general plea to international unity and friendship – coherently with the spirit of twinnings – and closed his intervention by recalling Togliatti’s last words told to pioneers of many nationalities, in the Artek camp, in the Soviet Union:

Le nostre lingue sono diverse, ma identici sono i nostri cuori. Nel vostro cuore e nel mio ci sono gli stessi pensieri e gli stessi ideali. Per noi non esistono differenze, perché noi lottiamo per gli stessi ideali. Noi e voi ci battiamo per gli stessi fini, noi e voi assieme lottiamo per la pace, lottiamo per la felicità dei popoli, per la fratellanza dei popoli, per il progresso, per il socialismo. In questa nostra unità sta la garanzia della nostra vittoria. ¹⁰⁴⁴

Those words, concluded Losi, were particularly meaningful, as they were directed towards the youth, and were thus representative of a very specific commitment within their work – to refer to the young ones, in the direction of a common future, of the happiness of and the friendship between the populations, of progress and of socialism. ¹⁰⁴⁵ The words of the rest of the delegation from Italy – composed by the MPs Colombi and Polano, Rosa Spina from the Thomas Mann Center, Augusto De Pietri, Angela Mora and Amos Giovanardi – went in a similar direction, although with a slightly

¹⁰⁴² Spagnolo, *Sul Memoriale Di Yalta.*, p. 173.

¹⁰⁴³ ASCC, Carteggio gemellaggio Carpi-Wernigerode, b. Corrisp gemellaggio CP - Wernigerode anni 70 II, fasc. “varie”, *Discorso di Bruno Losi a Wernigerode, 23 agosto 1965.*

¹⁰⁴⁴ ASCC, Carteggio gemellaggio Carpi-Wernigerode, b. Corrisp gemellaggio CP-Wernigerode anni 70 II, fasc. “varie”, *Discorso di Bruno Losi a Wernigerode, 23 agosto 1965.*

¹⁰⁴⁵ *Ibidem.*

stronger focus on the role of Togliatti in putting together «the interests of the Italian population» and the «principles of proletarian internationalism».¹⁰⁴⁶

Palmiro Togliatti was thus an absolute reference point for Italian communists of all ages, and for the local administrators, who celebrated his gestures and actions as a member of the international communist movement but also as a wise leader supporter of an “Italian way”. At the international level, for Italians he had long represented a guide and a living *trait d’union* with the experiences of socialism, communism, antifascism and exile in the 1920s and 1930s, in the years in which the international solidarity was particularly strong and felt and the bond with the Soviet Union was felt as indissoluble.

This kind of communist-specific propaganda was fundamental: the objective of changing the perception towards the GDR in Italians was *not only* pursued through the overturning of the general image of the “German” as it had been crystallized in the war experience, but also through the upsetting of the image of the communist GDR as repressive country. The “little cult” of Togliatti was beneficial in this sense, as it contributed to emphasize an image of East Germans as kind communists, sensitive towards the death and the work of the *ultimate* secretary of the PCI. The effects of this operation are visible and tangible in the correspondence and they reached the aims of both the GDR and the Italians. For instance, Gianni Guerzoni, a young boy from Carpi, wrote to Kilian in March 1965:

Il soggiorno di Wernigerode mi rimarrà molto impresso per tutta la vita, e non potrò mai dimenticare la vostra ospitalità e la vostra gentilezza. Questo soggiorno, lo posso garantire, ha fatto schiarire molti dubbi e molte idee, in noi ragazzi che prima di partire pensavamo, specialmente io, che la vostra Repubblica fosse il regno della persecuzione e del viver male. Ora il compito mio e quello dei miei amici, sarà quello di fare una propaganda positiva; nei vostri confronti, e di dar luce alla verità, sul conto del vostro paese: su questo lei, Kilian, Berger e tutti gli altri potete contarci. Ora vi saluto cordialmente. Il vostro amico e compagno, Giony (Guerzoni). Saluti anche a Zimmermann Alfredo e Berger. [Guerzoni Gianni]»¹⁰⁴⁷

On the other side, Italians were engaged in transmitting a positive representation of the Berlin Wall in their country and towns, by substantially reintroducing the propagandistic line of the GDR.¹⁰⁴⁸ Once again, the propaganda was more easily spread through youth: children and young boys were an essential piece of the strategy. The children and teachers from Collegno who went to the GDR in

¹⁰⁴⁶ I report here a piece of the German translation of the official speech of the Italian delegation, as it appears in the documents of the communal archive of Wernigerode: «Nach 15 Jahren setzten wir die das geistige Erbe Togliattis, seine Ideen in die Tat um. Palmiro Togliatti lebt in den Herzen vieler werktätiger Menschen weiter, da seine Hauptziele waren: Frieden, Freiheit und Unabhängigkeit für alle Voelker, Sicherung eines hohen Wohlstandes für alle Werktätigen und Durchsetzung der bestimmenden Rolle der Werktätigen in der Gesellschaft; Beseitigung der Ausbeutung und wirkliche soziale Gleichheit; Garantien für demokratische Rechte und Freiheiten der Entwicklung der Persönlichkeit». See StaWe, WR111/1249, *ohne Titel*.

¹⁰⁴⁷ StaWe, WR111/1249, *Gianni Guerzoni a Martin Kilian, Carpi 1-3-65*.

¹⁰⁴⁸ For a narrative about the human consequences of the Berlin Wall in a microhistorical perspective, see Pertti Ahonen, *Death at the Berlin Wall* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

1974 complied to the East German version, even in a celebratory way. The first impression, when visiting East Berlin, was the one of a big structure «which appears and disappears, marking a tormenting and tormented border».¹⁰⁴⁹ «The Western propaganda defines it as the “wall of shame”, in the GDR it is called “the wall of peace”» – pointed out the members of the school delegation in their diary. «The wall and the city of Berlin got us discussing much, livening up the following debate with some Germans». Apparently – even though this does not appear in the diary – Italians had posed skeptical or at least doubtful questions about the wall: «sure, the fact of having seen it has already cleared our ideas and freed us from prejudices, but the question raises spontaneously, anyway. Why building this wall?». To these questions, the young delegation members and their guides seemed to end up adopting the East German explanation without many hesitations:

La risposta è molto semplice; è stato necessario costruirlo per favorire lo sviluppo della DDR. Infatti un’apertura indiscriminata ad Ovest favoriva l’esodo di tecnici, liberi professionisti, operai specializzati, attratti dai lauti guadagni e dalla luccicante facciata piena di promesse dietro cui si nasconde la realtà ben diversa del sistema capitalistico in cui la classe operaia viene sfruttata con ritmo frenetico speculando su tutte le sue energie fisiche e morali.¹⁰⁵⁰

The adopted line was the same as the official East German one: the wall had been built to favor industrial development and prevent the escape of professionals to the West. The reason of that escape that had taken place before ‘61 was individuated in the scarcity of consumer goods, which was admitted, but explained with the finger-pointing at the West Germans that, «fort of an overly evaluated currency [...] could buy in the shops of the East [staple] products sold at a political price».¹⁰⁵¹ The reason why today, they wrote, «the GDR is a highly industrialized country, and with a high and spread well-being», is also to be found in the «closure with the West in 1961». Other than the economic reasons, there were the political ones, which Italians in delegations seemed to embrace without any doubts and wobbles:

Berlino Ovest era un covo di sovversione e continue erano le infiltrazioni di agenti provocatori che cercavano tensioni all’interno di un paese in fase di ricostruzione economica e sociale. Le provocazioni non cessarono immediatamente: furono costruiti tunnel attraverso i quali si cercò di continuare le azioni che prima avvenivano liberamente. Vi furono anche dei morti. Terminati questi tentativi si incominciò ad ammettere l’esistenza delle due Germanie e ormai oggi, si parla di una Germania orientale libero stato indipendente.¹⁰⁵²

The discussion was then directed towards elements that could have an immediate impact on the youth.

¹⁰⁴⁹ ASCO, Gemellaggi, b. Neubrandenburg 1974-75, fasc. “Neubrandenburg”, *Diario di 20 giorni nella Repubblica democratica tedesca, resoconto della visita estiva dei ragazzi delle scuole medie di Collegno, 8-26 agosto 1974.*

¹⁰⁵⁰ Ibidem.

¹⁰⁵¹ Ibidem.

¹⁰⁵² Ibidem.

East Germans explained – and the same version was proposed by Italians in the diary – that the only ones who could have the passport for the West were retired people: they «always came back, because in the West there is no place for them anymore, they are no longer workers to exploit». The young ones, instead, could easily be convinced «by the façade of well-being of the West and by the capitalist propaganda». This is why they could not travel, and they were subject to a strict socialist education, so that one day, «with the[ir] progress and maturation [...] the frontiers will be completely open».¹⁰⁵³ Another description of the wall was published on the insert of “L’Unità” dedicated to pioneers in 1965. Although it is perhaps not surprising, and partially predictable, to see that the GDR’s line was followed by the official newspaper of the PCI, only four years after the building of the wall, it is nevertheless significant to stress that the discourse was not so different from the one of Collegno, with a distance of more or less ten years, and that, once again, the article had been written by a young boy, in this case Mauro Cavaletti from Carpi. «I am neither a writer, nor a poet, but I beg you to publish this letter of mine, to let many Italian young people know how false and shameful the propaganda towards Berlin is» – he wrote – «I have been in the Eastern sector and really I imagined it very different». Cavaletti – a 15-year-old – proposed the same version that we have seen for Collegno. He narrated that, after being in East Berlin, «he did not expect such a beautiful city and such a... low wall», despite the fact that the propaganda in Italy said that the population continuously tried to cross it, and that the city itself was poor and miserable. Furthermore, he started from the concept of “wall of shame” and referred having asked about the reasons for the construction. Again, the responsibilities were attributed to West Berlin. The young boy from Carpi concluded the letter by stating: «I want to say one last thing: since August 1961, 70.000 people came back to the East sector, but this is not mentioned by the Italian tv!!».¹⁰⁵⁴

6.4 Memory and subjectivity

E anche l'esperienza che feci in Germania est due anni prima [...] mi ricordo che ci eravamo trovati anche con un'altra delegazione della Cecoslovacchia, quindi insomma c'era, si respirava aria di quello che allora si chiamava internazionalismo rivoluzionario, insomma, quindi siamo cresciuti così, a pane e internazionalismo. [laughs] Adesso [...] non esiste neanche più il termine internazionalismo, ma allora era così l'atmosfera...¹⁰⁵⁵

This is the way Gianni Marzi, from Carpi, described his experience in the GDR. This extract brings with it many elements that will be essential in this section. Firstly, the centrality of subjectivity

¹⁰⁵³ Ibidem.

¹⁰⁵⁴ ASCC, Carteggio gemellaggio Carpi-Wernigerode, b. Gemellaggio Carpi-Wernigerode (RDT) '62-'79 I°, “Il pioniere de L’Unità”, anno III, 14 ottobre 1965.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Interview to Gianni Marzi.

and of a personal point of view. Secondly, the personal memory of the militance or the activism in the communist party or its organization. Thirdly, the way the GDR has been read differently throughout the decades and how those differences play an important role in personal interpretations.

Where possible, I will firstly try to differentiate these elements in the interview and then try to make them dialogue, so they can tell something about all the mentioned broader dimensions/topics, and namely, in a nutshell, (1) the meaning of the subjectivity in the history of (communist) militance and thus in the history of the PCI; plus (2) the interpretation of the relations between Italy and the GDR through the lenses of this subjectivity connected to militance. To this latter extent, it is interesting to note the way re-elaboration has worked over time. Sometimes, interviews still reflect a feeling of proximity to that world and that tradition, although most of the times their words carry a sense of discrepancy, of distancing, sometimes even of rejection, at least towards the repressive system of the GDR – its coercive side, to recall Konrad Jarausch's concept. In between those experiences and the gathering of the oral testimonies a lot has happened: the USSR does not exist anymore; the communist experience in Italy has ended; the people who belonged to those experiences have taken different directions and they almost all are now confronting a loss of political belonging and commitment in a world that they perceive to be as post-political, with a loss of ideological meaningfulness.

I will not go into too much detail in analyzing the lives of my interviewees – short biographies can be found at the end of the dissertation. What I aim to do here is to focus on the subjective memory only, and not on elements that serve to me to integrate archival information. While I have made this use of interviews in chapter 5, trying to pierce the veil of memory to achieve specific pieces of information on this or that aspect related to technical-administrative exchange, here I will concentrate *especially* on that veil, and on the horizons of meaning that it can open in a general evaluation of Italy-GDR connections during the Cold War. I will proceed with an analysis of testimonies to then, in the end, list and summarize the main attitudes towards the GDR today; those which in my view represent the reasons for those attitudes; and, against that backdrop, the memory that has remained of them.

When looking at those visits in the 1960s-1970s from today's perspective, it is very common to think about them as a form of courtesy, rather than one of political affinity. The mental process of taking distance from Soviet communism is spread especially among the (numerous) militants, who have first embraced the mutation of the Italian communist party and its increased sensitivity towards civil rights since the mid-1970s, and then, after 1991, have followed various directions, including the

progressive building of the Center-left in Italy, up until the Democratic Party today.¹⁰⁵⁶ This distancing is not in contradiction with the faithfulness towards the PCI, the FGCI, or other related organizations of that time.

After all, this tendency had already, and early, been noted by Marco Fincardi. The latter, in talking about the interviews he had conducted for his book in the early 1990s, noted that the «processes to the past» of that period had strongly involved his interviewees, «with noteworthy inhibitory effects on their alive memory, which lost or directly removed many of the fundamental reference points [which served as an orientation] in [the narration] of [their] personal experience, [thus] lightening it from the presence of Soviet symbols».¹⁰⁵⁷ «The suggestion of the *lighthouse* of socialism, which for decades had forged in an apparently indelible way consciences and destinies – wrote Fincardi – had become the thorniest problem to evoke for the old leftist militants». The memory of the USSR had been reduced to the minimum, even though its presence, in 1950s Reggio Emilia, was tangible in many aspects – private memories, travels, commerce, names, monuments, commemorating plaques, also twinnings.¹⁰⁵⁸

Furthermore, in that case Fincardi had noted that there was an evident discrepancy between the documents of the time, be they archival documents or private memories (which he calls “historical memory”), and the collective (oral) memory. If the research had been based only on the historical documents, probably the memory of the militants would have appeared as more stable, but a fundamental element would have been forgotten, and thus the inclination of the militants «to disqualify the past, focusing everything on the *today* and on the future, instrumentally making the past [become] an appendix of the *today*, or of an imagined *tomorrow*».¹⁰⁵⁹

I suggest that these elements highlighted by Fincardi can be found in the interviews I have conducted regarding the memory of Italian-East German twinnings, too, among leftist militants. I have gathered the memory of those who have been direct protagonists of the twinnings, as administrators (Heinz Hahn, the only German interviewee). Furthermore, among the testimonies it is possible to find those by labor unionists (Carlo Bruzzi, Paola Savigni); assessors and technicians-experts-professionals (Miriam Ridolfi, Antonio Zambonelli, Vanni Bulgarelli); communist-oriented political activists (Gianni Marzi, Maurizio Drappella, Renato Spagnotto); socialists (as Massimo

¹⁰⁵⁶ See, on this, Valerio Marinelli, *Il Partito: Organizzazione, Mutamenti e Scissioni Della Sinistra Maggioritaria Italiana (PCI-PDS-DS-PD)* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2017).; Dario De Lucia, *Dal Pci Al Pd* (Reggio Emilia: Imprimatur, 2017). Enrico Morando, *Riformisti o Comunisti? Dal Pci Al Pd. I Miglioristi Nella Politica Italiana* (Roma: Donzelli, 2010).;

¹⁰⁵⁷ Marco Fincardi, *C'era Una Volta Il Mondo Nuovo. La Metafora Sovietica Nello Sviluppo Emiliano* (Roma: Carocci, 2007)., p. 19.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Ivi., pp. 19-20.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Ivi., p. 25. Italics mine.

Bianchi) and independents, or only partially close to the PCI (Arnaldo Losi). For each and every one of these personalities the memory is different and is built upon numerous variables: (1) the period in which they went to the GDR; (2) their age; (3) their family's political tradition; (4) the school, intellectual and professional education; but also (5) the elaboration of their political culture and of the belonging to a group against the backdrop of the current historical juncture. It seems to me that the *ex post* evaluations of Italians who travelled to the GDR depended on these paths.

The disbelief towards *politics* today has emerged in many moments during the interviews. Heinz Hahn himself, whom I would describe as a GDR nostalgic, talked about the mayor of Neubrandenburg, in my perception, almost skeptically, pointing out his being *parteilos* – something that evidently is far away both from his personal story and also the way he has saved the memory of that story. Beyond the collaboration and good communication they seem to have, Hahn did not appear to identify at all with the *parteilos* tendency and kept remembering and claim the achievements of the Neubrandenburg council during GDR times (such as the social housing blocks in which he himself proudly still lives).¹⁰⁶⁰ As far as Italy is concerned, many of the interviewees still have some kind of an active public role. Just to make a few examples, some of them are still involved in party politics, such as Vanni Bulgarelli and Maurizio Drappella; Miriam Ridolfi, former assessor to decentralization in Bologna in the 1980s, is still active in the territorial administration, and in particular in the daily defense of the neighborhood libraries. Carlo Bruzzi has been, until recent times, mayor of

¹⁰⁶⁰ This is an example of his pride about the realization in Neubrandenburg at the time of his mayorship:

«wir haben 30.000 Wohnungen gebaut; 94 Prozent unserer Frauen waren berufstätig; damit war verbunden die Frage wo bringen die Kinder runter? Also müssen wir Kindergärten und Kinderkrippenplätze schaffen. Das haben wir eine gute Gemeinsamkeit mit den Betrieben; das war neu für die Italiener, mit den Betrieben zusammen, dass alles in Harmonie war. Also das war schon Anlaufpunkte die gerne verfolgt wurden und sehr gründliche in Fragenstellung. Was müssen die Kinder bezahlen? Und so weiter und sofort. Die Familien die über drei Kinder hatten. Wir hatten ein System mit Betreuern, das interessierte auch: wie macht man das?». See Interview to Heinz Hahn.

For a positive evaluation of those realization at the time of his mayorship, probably around 1975, which were substantially re-proposed, although in milder terms, during the interview, see the communal archive of Collegno:

«Gli operai e i lavoratori tutti della nostra città hanno contribuito quest'anno – l'ultimo del piano quinquennale 1971-1975 – con i loro sforzi comuni di compiere i compiti stabiliti dall'VIII congresso del partito SED, per il bene e nell'interesse degli operai, dei contadini organizzati dei membri dell'intelligenza e di tutti i lavoratori. Così, anche la nostra città può vantarsi di alcuni ottimi successi. Nei passati cinque anni sono stati costruiti a Neubrandenburg 7600 nuovi alloggi, sono stati creati 2153 nuovi posti nei giardini di infanzia e 1062 nei nidi; 232 nuove aule sono disponibili in 9 scuole superiori. Il numero dei nostri cittadini è salito da 47.000 quasi 64.000. I programmi per l'assistenza alle famiglie numerosi e quella riguardanti i nostri anziani cittadini bisognosi di aiuto sono aumentati moltissimo. Sono pure stati istituiti 43 nuovi ambulatori medici.

Di questi risultati i nostri concittadini vanno giustamente fieri, perché essi hanno compreso che il benessere personale e sociale dipende dall'impegno di ogni singolo. Per mezzo di prestazioni volontari supplementari, sono nell'anno passato sono stati realizzati oltre 8 milioni di marchi per il miglioramento delle condizioni della vita e per ulteriori abbellimenti della città. Anche il piano per il 1976 richiede grandi sforzi che ci servono da guida per un sicuro cammino nella via intrapresa. Alcuni dei traguardi per l'anno in corso sono 1493 nuovi alloggi, 2 scuole, 458 Asili e nidi, nuovi posti di lavoro per medici, nuovi locali per mangiare e nuovi impianti per vendite. Perciò ci avviamo pieni di ottimismo e di fiducia verso il 1976, nella speranza che la causa del socialismo, della pace e dell'amicizia successo». See ASCO, Gemellaggi, b. anni 70 80, *Lettera di Heinz Hahn a Luciano Manzi, s. d.*

Castelnuovo Rangone, in the province of Modena. Massimo Bianchi is a (declared) first-rank exponent of the Livornese Masonry, and busy in the recovery and reorganization of the PSI archive of his city.

Keeping these elements in mind, I would like to start the discourse on the memory of Italy-GDR twinnings by picking up, again, an extract of the testimony of Gianni Marzi. When looking at the quote at the beginning of this section, I think it is interesting to note that the internationalism he mentioned (see the quote at the beginning of this section) was intended in a wide sense, and not uniquely confined to the Eastern bloc or the GDR. At a certain point, after narrating about his GDR experience in 1976, Marzi has told me that when he was around 17 years old he really fell in love with Cuba, so much that, when he turned 18, he decided to go there alone, directed to the World Festival of Youth in 1978. Of that experience, he talked as follows:

E mi ricordo che venni a casa che ero fuori di testa per Cuba, anche per l'atmosfera che c'era in quegli anni, 18 anni, conosci gente di tutto il mondo, parli, non so, di rivoluzione, le gigantografie per L'Havana di Che Guevara, no, e quindi sono venuto a casa completamente esaltato, insomma, e il PCI allora mi ricordo che aveva un atteggiamento un po' critico verso Cuba, a dei livelli che mi avevano dato un po' da fare. E quindi ho cominciato a staccarmi perché io ero profondamente filo-cubano [laughs], con il senno del poi ti viene da ridere, insomma, a pensarci...¹⁰⁶¹

In 2018, year in which the interview was gathered, he laughed about that “infatuation” for Cuban communism, but at that time his commitment was serious. What was the meaning of this piece of information, in a context in which I was asking for memories of the GDR? Marzi was really young at the moment of his trip to East Germany, and he participated to these journeys to socialist countries late in the 1970s, already during Berlinguer’s times. It is reasonable to assume that his young age, and the period in which he was active in politics, made him be fascinated towards other models, different than the dogmatic GDR. Surely, Cuba was a more revolutionary-oriented and fascinating socialist country than the rigid East Germany, especially for young people. However, the official PCI line was «a bit critical», to use Marzi’s words, towards Cuba. If we bring it to a historiographical perspective, we can say that the PCI was constantly oscillating between the faith towards the Soviet bloc and an increasingly independent position, and this was reflected in international relations and its attitude towards Cuba, too. In relation to Che Guevara, the PCI, as highlighted by Onofrio Pappagallo, kept swinging between a network of solidarity and close relations but also divergences with the country, trying, as the author underlined, to support the *reformist* tendencies while simultaneously partially criticizing the revolutionary impulses, without ever completely denying them.¹⁰⁶² The

¹⁰⁶¹ Interview to Gianni Marzi.

¹⁰⁶² See Onofrio Pappagallo, *Verso Il Nuovo Mondo. Il PCI e l'America Latina (1945-1973)* (Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2017). On a previous period, but more specific on the Cuban case, see, from the same author: Onofrio Pappagallo, *Il PCI*

relationship with Cuba was also a way to define a specific, independent line, but still steadily on the side of Soviet-like socialism. As far as Marzi is concerned, his way of talking about the GDR by turning the conversation into Cuba most likely signals that East Germany was not so appealing for him.

However, this rejecting attitude towards the GDR was not just present among very young people. The GDR, in the interviews, is described as far away from a certain Italian way of conceiving socialism, in its broadest sense, by people of different generations and experiences. I will first go through these rejection memories, before analyzing the possible reasons behind them. A common criticism has been related to the power system in the country. It is the case, for instance, with Antonio Zambonelli. «I discovered that they pretended that it was a *multi-party regime*: there was the National Partei Deutschlands, there was the party of the farmers, etc.... in short, there were 5 or 6 parties and I found it pretty hilarious».¹⁰⁶³ In the interview, Zambonelli also recalled the attitude that he perceived in East Germany towards the problem of *consent* during Nazism, as he was involved in a leading role in the activities of the Historical Institute of Resistance (*Istituto storico della Resistenza*) in Reggio Emilia and, in Italy, that was a recurrent discussion.

allora chiedevo: ma voi vi siete posti – l'interprete traduceva bene – il problema di capire perché ci fu un'adesione di massa al nazismo; e oggi sopravvivono, ci sono problemi ancora di... noi in Italia la chiamiamo nostalgia del regime precedente? La risposta era sempre: "il Comitato Centrale del SED nella sua ultima riunione ha stabilito che". Io ero allibito. E poi giù con delle robe che non c'entravano niente.¹⁰⁶⁴

Very critical towards political pluralism has also been Massimo Bianchi, even if this could be more expectable, due to his belonging to the socialist party – and thus to the internal competition within the Italian left between PSI and PCI, which had developed over the decades, with a peak in the 1980s, during Craxi's time. «They explained to us» – said Bianchi – that there were «the ex-Nazis, then the party of farmers, then the Christian democrats, but they were all built up by the SED which controlled everything, to declare that there was a political pluralism that actually did not exist».¹⁰⁶⁵ There was also a strong perception of dogmatism and repression: as Bianchi has described, «you had the impression of being inside a barrack».¹⁰⁶⁶ Zambonelli, again, has recalled an episode connected to their interpreter, «who was a cultured person and he must have been 30 years old». Apparently – he

e La Rivoluzione Cubana. La via Latino-Americana Al Socialismo Tra Mosca e Pechino (1959-1965) (Roma: Carocci, 2009).

¹⁰⁶³ «Io scoprivo che loro facevano finta [di credere] che fosse un regime pluripartitico: c'era il *National Partei Deutschlands*, c'era partito dei contadini, ecc.... insomma ce n'erano 5 o 6 di partiti e a me [faceva abbastanza sorridere]». Italics mine. See: Interview to Antonio Zambonelli.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Ibidem.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Interview to Massimo Bianchi.

¹⁰⁶⁶ Interview to Massimo Bianchi.

did not remember his name – he was an East German, but into Italian studies, so he was a subscriber of the PCI-oriented magazine “Rinascita”, that was, in Zambonelli’s words, «beautiful, rich, full of *stuff*, philosophical debates...». ¹⁰⁶⁷ However – he continued – this interpreter sometimes did not receive the magazine, and got a notification from the censorship «that it had been blocked, it had not been delivered to him as they considered it dangerous. He, a graduate, a 30-year-old, he had to read only what the censorship had established, I mean, these things were really miserable», concluded Zambonelli. ¹⁰⁶⁸

The attacks towards the GDR, however, were not always so direct. In the interview, the tendency to minimize, belittle those twinnings, reduce them to a manifestation of pure ceremoniality often emerged. In my view, this could be seen as just another way to mark a distance. In this direction, probably, is to be seen the testimony by Carlo Bruzzi, who, within the labor union sphere, has talked about those relations as scarcely fruitful ones. There was an «enormous diversity», for Bruzzi, but «mostly there was a cultural and political legacy, which passed also through the youth of the communist area, where they substantially were those who had everything as they had conquered the power and governed the country and we were [...] [those] who had to fight and play small games to *hardly* enhance *some* rights». ¹⁰⁶⁹ Against the backdrop of that diversity, he remember bonds that were based more «on brotherhood, on friendship, on solidarity, rather than on real exchanges». However, what does “real exchange” signify? The delusion about not having some *real* connection could be interpreted as the result of high expectations towards an *ideally possible* fruitful discussion, as, in the end, both sides were assimilable to the same, socialist world. Instead, has highlighted Bruzzi, the Italian CGIL labor unionists came from years of battles and important conquests:

Noi eravamo inseriti in questo contesto che forse esaltavamo anche di più del necessario, ma che per noi era, ci sembrava di essere incamminati su una strada inarrestabile e ti incontravi con questi giovanotti tedeschi comunisti i quali ti ascoltavano e non ti ascoltavano, ti guardavano e non ti guardavano, ed

¹⁰⁶⁷ Interview to Antonio Zambonelli.

¹⁰⁶⁸ «AZ: E poi il nostro interprete, che era una persona colta e avrà avuto trent’anni...

TM: Ed era un tedesco dell’est?

AZ: Tedesco dell’est, sì sì, tedesco dell’est; lui siccome era un italianista [...] e lui era *italianisant* ed era abbonato a *Rinascita*, che allora era una settimanale molto bello, ricco, pieno di robe, dibattiti filosofici, c’era il giovane [...] come si chiama, il filosofo che appare sempre in televisione che urla che non è contento di nulla, l’ex sindaco di Venezia...

TM: Cacciari!

AZ: Cacciari, che già si poneva il problema anche del razionalismo, perché la ragione non sempre..., problematiche varie, di vario genere, c’erano gli ortodossi. Lui [l’interprete, ndA] era abbonato, e diceva che ogni tanto gli arrivava a casa l’avviso della censura che gliel’aveva bloccato, non glielo consegnava perché lo consideravano *pericoloso*. Lui, laureato, trentenne, doveva leggere solo quello che stabiliva la censura, cioè anche queste cose erano veramente miserevoli [...]». Italics mine. See Ibidem.

¹⁰⁶⁹ «la situazione era di una diversità enorme, ma soprattutto c’era un retaggio culturale e politico, che anche, che passava anche attraverso i giovani della Germania comunista, dove sostanzialmente loro erano quelli che sapevano tutto perché avevano conquistato il potere e governavano il paese e noi eravamo [quelli] che dovevano lottare e fare dei giochini per conquistare quattro diritti in croce». Italics mine. See Interview to Carlo Bruzzi.

erano molto più ammirati dal fatto che fossimo italiani che non, il mito dell'italiano, vestito bene, ed effettivamente era così, eccetera. E quindi da questo punto di vista non ho un ricordo di un'elaborazione di scambi proficui dal punto di vista sindacale.

Bruzzi proceeded in the narration by saying that, in his opinion, the GDR was strongly orthodox. Being very attentive in his use of the words and his memory, he highlighted that «in hindsight, I think I can say that diverse elements played [with each other]»; also the fact that the Soviet party treated the GDR «differently from the others [the other countries of the Eastern bloc], [in] this logic of division of the country, of continuous mirror»¹⁰⁷⁰[...] «they felt, in my opinion, really as a border place». Bruzzi also made a huge effort in distinguishing between the way he saw things at that time and the way he had re-elaborated them in the interview. He remembered that when he went there first at 18 years old, he felt that he was entering another dimension, «completely different, to which, however, I, young 18-year-old, did not assign a nature of political order, I did not have the instruments for that, I gave a spontaneous interpretation of that».¹⁰⁷¹ In that perspective, the young Bruzzi, in his first visit – he would have come back years later with a political delegation and more political awareness – had very immediate reactions:

Subito i primi giorni, il mio approccio era, li guardavo con l'occhio invidioso, perché [...] un sistema [...] quindi prevalentemente avevo questa idea, questa immagine, questa sensazione. Poi, man mano che passavano i giorni e che cominciavo a conoscerli, soprattutto, ripeto, la cosa che mi lasciava un po' così era questa loro non reattività, non reattività alle tematiche, ai problemi, alle questioni che noi vivevamo quotidianamente e che secondo noi erano [...] di tutti i paesi europei, di tutto il mondo occidentale. Quindi dopo col passare dei giorni io perlomeno cominciavo a guardare loro, questi ragazzi, con degli occhi un po' diversi, cioè come figli di un sistema, quindi che non avevano molta voglia o molta possibilità [...] quindi che si atteggiavano più ad una relazione di gioventù che non...¹⁰⁷²

Bianchi, Bruzzi, Zambonelli: in all these three cases, it is perhaps possible to explain this feeling of detachment from that reality by looking at their political and personal stories. Bianchi was a socialist: despite his proximity to a broadly intended sphere of socialism, the Italian PSI, after 1956, was more connected to the European social democrats than to the Soviet world. We have already talked about the ambiguity of the PSI in this sense and also of the complexity of the many positions and internal streams (see chapter 2). Bianchi was aware of and had experienced some of that Soviet-friendly tradition, continuously being in contact with it since his subscription to the PSI in 1961, but had never

¹⁰⁷⁰ Ibidem: «prevalsa sicuramente una linea politica ortodossa, [...] al PCUS, cioè questo si leggeva ovunque, ovunque. Con il senno di poi mi sembra di poter dire che giocassero diversi elementi, [...] giocava anche il fatto che molta gente il PCUS trattava la DDR in modo diverso dagli altri, con questa logica di divisione del paese, di specchio continuo».

¹⁰⁷¹ Ibidem. «Infatti se devo essere sincero, quando a 18 anni andai là [...], il primo shock che ebbi è quando siamo passati dall'ovest all'est [...] che eravamo entrati, si vedeva visivamente da tutti punti di vista che eravamo entrati in un'altra dimensione. Dimensione completamente diversa a cui però io giovane diciottenne non davo una natura di ordine politico, non ne avevo gli strumenti, ne davo una lettura a pelle [...].

¹⁰⁷² Ibidem.

fully embraced it, thus being able to keep a more detached point of view also from the GDR. In Bruzzi's case, we can probably explain his memories and attitude with his later belonging to the sphere of Emilian reformist communism, also as a mayor, but we can also identify a strong attempt to distinguish the two phases of his life. A similar discourse could also be done, probably, with Zambonelli, who never actually committed to the Soviet cause. By his own admission: «I have subscribed to the Italian Communist Party in 1959, as before I was recalcitrant. And I said to the secretary of the FGCI that I did not agree with Hungary, etc.... therefore, I postponed».¹⁰⁷³ Probably there was a rejection from his side towards that repressive communism. We cannot know exactly to what extent his memory coincides with his attitude in that period, but we can suppose that he perceived himself, over time, in feeling more comfortable with a narrative of “mild”, reformist communism Emilian-style, along the tradition of his family and of the territory he had grown up in:

Anche la mia famiglia era una famiglia di comunisti operai, lavoratori, avevo la nonna paterna, nonna Ida, che portava un ciondolino al collo, con Prampolini¹⁰⁷⁴, invece di avere la madonnina aveva quella roba lì. La nonna materna, [negli anni del fascismo], aveva la foto di Matteotti nascosta nel cassetto della biancheria, una tradizione molto diffusa da noi.¹⁰⁷⁵

The experience of Paola Savigni, labor unionist from Bologna, can to a certain extent be related to the same horizon of meaning that Zambonelli's interview has opened. She came from Castenaso, close to Bologna, entered the young pioneers of the PCI when she was 9 years old, and started working at the local party cell at a very young age. At the very beginning of an interview conducted with her through the Gramsci Foundation Emilia-Romagna, when asked about her early life, she has narrated an anecdote about 1956 and Prague's invasion by the Soviet tanks. She told us that her father said that they [the Soviet troops] were right, while she did not agree, and she decided to go with some friends and paint the sentence *Fuori i carri armati da Praga* (“Out the tanks from Prague) on a wall in Castenaso. She said, laughing, that she spent the night at the Carabinieri barrack and her father, as a punishment, refused to pick her up.¹⁰⁷⁶ She did not seem to remind much about the GDR and the twinning with Suhl, and it is difficult to explain exactly why. However, my idea is that she also somehow identified in a political position that was coherent with the one of Bolognese reformist communism, as she had tried to highlight immediately at the beginning, with the episode

¹⁰⁷³ «Mi sono iscritto al Partito comunista italiano nel 1959, perché prima ero recalcitrante. E dicevo al segretario della FGCI che non ero d'accordo sull'Ungheria eccetera... quindi ritardavo». See Interview to Antonio Zambonelli.

¹⁰⁷⁴ On Camillo Prampolini and his experience of socialist reformism in Reggio Emilia, see Alberto Ferraboschi, “Comunità Locali e Protagonismo Istituzionale. Pratiche Dell'innovazione Sociale a Reggio Emilia (1888-1978),” in *Il “Modello Emiliano” Nella Storia d'Italia: Tra Culture Politiche e Pratiche Di Governo Locale*, ed. Carlo De Maria (Bologna: Bradypus, 2014).

¹⁰⁷⁵ Interview to Antonio Zambonelli.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Interview to Paola Savigni, Bologna, March 21, 2017. Registered by Matilde Altichieri and Teresa Malice, and stored in “Raccolta di videointerviste della Fondazione Gramsci Emilia-Romagna”.

related to the Soviet intervention in 1956. In such a perspective and political and personal positioning, East Germany did not appear to be so appealing to her. Nevertheless, she had been there as a labor unionist, although in the 1980s, and once also slightly before the fall of the Berlin Wall. Of those trips, she reminded almost uniquely the aspects connected to rigidity: «ah, you know, they had a welcoming, it was sufficient that we were leaders [of the labor union], [and] they made you a big welcoming, they were very curious about the things we did [...]».¹⁰⁷⁷ However, when asked about the GDR, she talked more about the twinings they had with Yugoslavia, with Czechoslovakia, or with Chile,¹⁰⁷⁸ that she described and reminded as more close to her sensibility and that of the Bolognese unionists.

A similar profile to Savigni's, in this context, could be the one of Miriam Ridolfi, who was not a labor unionist, but a communal assessor; however, she had traveled to the GDR (Suhl) through the Bologna labor union in the 1980s, too. Unluckily, she does not remember much about that trip, so she could not recall any specific memories. Nevertheless, she said she has the general memory of a positive tie, «not only a representative one». «The thing was – she told me – maybe not to learn, but to exchange for sure, to exchange experiences». At the beginning, she continued,

Io mi ricordo che mi sembrava tutto un po' rigido come impostazione. Però, dopo che si rompeva il ghiaccio, c'era questa possibilità di scambio, c'era la voglia di intrecciarsi e non erano così come potevano sembrare da stereotipo, così inquadriati, così sicuri...¹⁰⁷⁹

Both in the cases of Savigni and Ridolfi, although in different ways and intensities, the feeling of a substantial rigidity was present, which was not impossible to overcome, but was still present and did not help them, probably, in keeping pleasant memories about those experiences. Another common element between the two is, besides the gender, the provenience: they both came from Bologna and – as already highlighted in chapter 5 – they felt what could most likely *actually* be identified as the policy of the town towards the GDR: not to expand the twinning too much at a societal level, keeping it restricted to the “bosses”, to not attract too much international attention.

Surely, that social level, the one of activists, is the one which can provide better insights into the issue of subjectivity and memory of the GDR.¹⁰⁸⁰ Some of the interviewees have admitted a

¹⁰⁷⁷ Ibidem.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Not casually the twinings of the Bolognese CGIL with Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia were also active at the communal level, as it has been shown in chapter 3. The twinning with Chile had been established after the golpe of 1973, in the frame of a general welcoming of Chilean political refugees to Italy and Emilia-Romagna. For a recent contribution on this topic, centered on the oral testimonies of Chilean political refugees, see Alfredo Mignini, “Dalla Moneda a Modena. Per Una Storia Orale Dell’esilio Cileno e Dell’accoglienza in Emilia-Romagna,” *E-Review* 6 (2018), <https://doi.org/10.12977/ereview256>.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Interview to Miriam Ridolfi, Bologna, March 27, 2017.

¹⁰⁸⁰ It is worth signaling, here, the recent work on communist militant subjectivities published by a group of French scholars, with both microhistorical and sociological suggestion, in an attempt to give birth to what has been described as

certain kind of *indoctrination* and *self-censorship* that they applied to themselves at that time, which they related to a generational issue, too – to their young age.¹⁰⁸¹ Maurizio Drappella, for instance, has remembered an anecdote that can tell much about those aspects. On August 21, 1968, the day in which Prague was invaded – so he remembered – he was in the GDR, as a 14-year-old. Extremely interesting is to follow the conversation between Drappella and his friend Spagnotto about the elaboration of that episode, during the interview:

Maurizio Drappella: «[...] stavamo andando ad una gita, adesso non ricordo dove, eravamo in pullman, noi anche con i ragazzi tedeschi, così; forse andavamo a Berlino... sì, a Berlino. Ed a un certo punto si para di fronte al pullman in questa stradina un carro armato, era un carro armato sovietico, carro armato sovietico, e poi sono venuti, ci ha fermato; sono venuti sopra dei militari sovietici, sì, sovietici, parlando con l'autista lì, gli accompagnatori, hanno chiesto i nostri documenti, hanno chiesto i nostri documenti e poi ci han lasciato andare; Noi eravamo anche così [...] come dire... [...] un po' gasati, [...] i russi... e comunque poi era trapelata questa roba qua e han detto "sì, c'è stata una controrivoluzione in Cecoslovacchia" [...]. E noi: "beh meno male, sono intervenuti...". [...] Per dirti cosa c'era all'interno del PCI. Io ero convintamente nel PCI. Al ritorno dall'Unione sovietica io mi ero presa una settimana di ferie per andare a fare servizio alla festa nazionale dell'Unità che si teneva a Torino, a "Italia 61". Eravamo quindi una settimana fuori dal lavoro, e lì. Eravamo in un momento di pausa nel nostro stand, e arrivò un giornalista che inizia a farci delle domande sulla Polonia, l'81 [...] e ci ha fatto alcune domande, e io, non noi, io, alla domanda "secondo lei ci vuole democrazia, Solidarnosc anche se non le piace, [...] però lei dice ci vuole democrazia, quindi libere elezioni?", e io su quello... io non so cosa ho risposto, ma mi ricordo il mio imbarazzo alla domanda di Gianpaolo Pansa, perché era lui il giornalista. Che fece un articolo intero sulla pagina e disse di questo incontro con questi, con questi militanti che non erano poi così aperti insomma, e aveva ragione. Cioè io che contestavo a volte mio padre, anche negli ultimi tempi, su quello che era avvenuto, sui paesi dell'Est, sul comunismo. Però, però alla fine... io comunque dopo aver visto, essere andato, dopo aver avuto un mio giudizio, dopo tutte le cose che son successe, dopo aver visto i film che comunque han detto delle cose, dopo tutto quello che si è detto, io quando sento l'inno della Germania Est... io in montagna a casa mia, in montagna, c'ho il gagliardetto della Germania Est ancora, il gagliardetto della Freie Deutsche Jugend... [...].»

Renato Spagnotto: «[...] ma eravamo tutti un po' indottrinati così, eh...»¹⁰⁸²

a "sociobiography" by the same authors: see Claude Pannetier and Bernard Pudal, eds., *Le Sujet Communiste. Identités Militantes et Laboratoires Du «moi»* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2014).

¹⁰⁸¹ This is a topic that has also found space in GDR research. Interesting commentaries on the value of oral testimonies, written autobiographies and other narrations, also in an optic of self-criticism, provide interesting insights on the way memory, guilt, and the level of collaboration with the GDR regime could be crystallized in the memories of militants and functionaries. See Papadogiannis, "Political Travel in West Germany and Greece.", p. 536.

¹⁰⁸² Interview to Maurizio Drappella and Renato Spagnotto.

The "alignment" of Spagnotto could be detectable from an East German document – even though it is always difficult to say to which extent the description of the encounter was emphasized in an excessively positive way by the side of the GDR. The document is related to Spagnotto's visit to Neubrandenburg with a sport delegation in 1974:

«Der 28. Und 29. 7.1974 verliefen programmgemäß. Während der Begrüßung im Hotel „Vier Tore“ äußerten sich die Gäste anerkennend über die freundliche Aufnahme in der DDR. Wie Renato Spagnotto später erzählte, beeindruckte die Jugendlichen besonders das Mitspracherecht bei der Leitung des Staates und der Wirtschaft, dass die Jugend der DDR besitzt.

In Collegno wurde durch Sportlerinitiative kürzlich der erste Sportplatz dieser Art in Italien gebaut. Viel Kampf kostete schon die Bereitstellung eines ehemaligen Ackergeländes. Die materiellen Leistungen wurden ausnahmslos durch die Sportler selbst erbracht. Nach Beendigung der Arbeiten stellte die Kirche das Ansinnen, ausgerechnet hier ein Kirchengebäude errichten zu wollen.

Diese Auseinandersetzung stellten die Gäste der planmäßigen Entwicklung der materiellen Grundlagen für den Sport in Neubrandenburg gegenüber und waren beeindruckt.

Both activists from Collegno were quite open in admitting their juvenile fascination for the GDR, and the partially nostalgic memory of it, even in recent times. Furthermore, they added – Drappella in particular – «there was this self-censorship», which he explained by saying that when he got back from East Germany, and from the Soviet Union, nobody (in the party) told him not to fully express himself; but nevertheless, he stopped himself to a certain extent. «When I came back from Germany, from the trips to the Soviet Union, etcetera – he remembered – [...] I convinced myself about the fact that it did not work, that I could not be like that [...]» (probably meaning that that could not really be “socialism”, or *the way he had imagined socialism to be*); «for years I had endorsed these ones, I came back and [...] there was always this way of reasoning, more critical, but without exaggerating, without admitting [the things] that, I mean, did not work at all».¹⁰⁸³

About this point, about indoctrination, it is worth picking up, again, the reflections by Marco Fincardi for the Emilian case. He has argued that, in order to understand «the memories inside these politicized environments», it is necessary to keep in mind the extent to which «the historical narrations of the organization of affiliation worked as identity cement [...]», also in an optic of opposition to other political forces.¹⁰⁸⁴ To a milder extent, since he was not so involved in the communist circles until the 1980s, indoctrination mechanisms could have also played a role in the case of Arnaldo Losi. In the interview, he was quite sure in his substantially negative political judgment of the country, despite the good memories related to one of the first trips of his life. However, looking at the diary he wrote just after his journey in 1965, and that he kindly made available for me, he referred to the GDR in a different way. However, probably, that was the result of his young age and also of his frequent talks with Augusto De Pietri together with his friends, as he writes: «we have talked with De Pietri about life behavior in the GDR. The most important thing, in my opinion, is that no exploitation form of man on man exists, and that only this way it is possible to talk about freedom».¹⁰⁸⁵ Actually, during the interview, Losi himself has admitted that there was a certain «propagandistic way» of talking from «our administrations», because «there was still this

In persönlichen Gesprächen, bzw. Unterhaltungen, die die Dolmetscherin hörte, wurde folgende Meinungen geäußert:

„In der DDR steht wirklich der Mensch im Mittelpunkt“

„Sogar für die Toten wird im Sozialismus viel getan“ (Ehrenmal)

„Solch einen Volkspark könnten wir in Collegno auch gut einrichten, wenn wir einen Baron aus seinem Sitz verjagen“ (Kulturpark)

„In Italien spricht man nur von ‚Germania‘, aber wir sehen hier was heißt ‚DDR‘». See NeuSta, AE 2.00, Nr. 4952, *Information Nr. 1 zur Sportlerdelegation Collegno*.

¹⁰⁸³ «Quando tornavo mi convincevo del fatto che non andava bene, che non poteva essere quello, che eccetera... che per anni nel mio piccolo ho sostenuto questi qui, tornavo e [...] c’era sempre questo ragionamento... più critico ma senza esagerare, senza ammettere quello che insomma non andava proprio». See Interview to Maurizio Drappella and Renato Spagnotto.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Fincardi, *C’era Una Volta Il Mondo Nuovo*, p. 27.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Arnaldo Losi, “Diario della gita in Germania Est”, luglio 1965. I thank Losi for kindly putting his written pages at my disposal for this dissertation.

idea...» [probably of socialism]. He referred to have understood «how [things] were»¹⁰⁸⁶ only later, when the wall came down, and after seeing, for instance, the movie *Das Leben der anderen* –¹⁰⁸⁷ something that also came up in Drappella's narration. Losi, again, told me that the awareness about the functioning of that system «arrived later, because it is not that one thought about it every day, we had other problems...».¹⁰⁸⁸ At some point, his wife intervened in the conversation referring to her parents, who were communists and had been to Soviet Russia in the 1980s, and about the fact that, even at that point, «[they did not note] the climate of repression, also because their setting, the vision was that in Russia they had realized what they wanted to realize, as they, too [belonged to the] PCI, [to] a certain environment, and it is difficult to realize [the repression] with a trip, especially of a week».¹⁰⁸⁹ «If one comes from a party environment – she added – it is difficult to admit certain things also because it means to make a world of ideals that one had fall, it is horrible when you realize it, the dictatorship...».¹⁰⁹⁰

A similar concept has been proposed by Carlo Bruzzi. «Contextualizing – he said – I do not think that it is possible to say that we had a deep critic or of contrast to the system, to the [Soviet] bloc, to the country, etc., as we also came from a strongly communist setting, although young we had an education». He proceeded by saying that, of course, the sensation to be in contact with a different reality was present, and also probably the disappointment to touch a «situation that they had imagined as very different».¹⁰⁹¹ Just to quickly recall some points that I have already touched upon in this section – he also pointed out that at least in the Modena area there was this conception, also on the workers' side, to work so that the factory could function and produce well. There was a certain responsibility in relation to the owner, and this was connected, for Bruzzi, to the prevalence of a *reformist* component in the labor union and in the factories.

A last element that needs to be taken into account is the one of the setup, the *mise-en-scène* of which I have written about in chapter 1 as a warning in reading the documents and the interviews related to these twinnings. This emerges from the oral testimonies. For instance, Antonio Zambonelli has remembered that while *they* came to Reggio and could walk easily and freely, see the *piazza del Duomo*, and have a deep contact with their reality, «*there, instead*, it seemed to be in a glass bubble, there was nobody in the streets who dared talking to us, saying something. *They* brought you to nice

¹⁰⁸⁶ Interview to Arnaldo Losi, Modena, September 18. 2017.

¹⁰⁸⁷ „Das Leben der Anderen“, von Florian Henckel, 2006. It came out in Italian under the title “Le vite degli altri”, in 2007.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Interview to Arnaldo Losi.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Ibidem.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Ibidem.

¹⁰⁹¹ Interview to Carlo Bruzzi.

restaurants, but it seemed fake». ¹⁰⁹² Similar memories come from Losi, who has remembered that «the nice thing was that when you entered some bar *they* clapped at you, because the delegation was arriving, it seemed as if they were happy to see us [...]». In the ballrooms, in the youth hostels and houses where the Carpi delegation was hosted, «as soon as we arrived – continued Losi – *they* clapped at us, and so we clapped, too». ¹⁰⁹³ Gianni Marzi also said that it seemed to him that «everyone had an agreement, they made us meet people who belonged to these organization, they made us see the model factory, I mean, all the people whom one had something to do with, the impression was that everyone was happy». ¹⁰⁹⁴ Drappella also mentioned the fact that the meetings were always with people which were part of the apparatus, and there was no real freedom to walk around. ¹⁰⁹⁵

These are the aspects which emerge from an analysis of the gathered oral testimonies and that help building a more complex image of bilateral relations between Italy and the GDR. In the case of *memory* – with all the limits connected to the quantity and quality of the available sources – it is perhaps possible to affirm that the negations, or the minimizations of an involvement and active participation to those experiences in the 1960s and 1970s, can represent a fundamental aspect in the understanding of the nature of those trips and connections, signaling a bond – based on socialism – that was still present and alive.

Overall, the dimensions of sociability, symbols, memories of the past and visions of the future emerged in this chapter; the strategic dimension to twinnings (chapter 3); the economic and technical-administrative exchange and the imagination of local societies (chapter 5) – all these elements contribute, in my understanding, to highlighting the persistence of a *common language of a broadly intended transnational socialism* between East and West, still in the 1960s and 1970s. In the specific case of Italy, that language was well present in the postwar generations of mayors and administrators who had contributed to build and develop international relations of red municipalities with the East, and also in the militants, who were nourished with those concepts.

Conclusively, I suggest that these relations need to be interpreted in the name of that international socialism, and that that common language was particularly visible at the micro level. There, on the local ground, the bonds between the Italian communists and the GDR – the state of “red Prussians” – kept evoking shared imaginations of a better world. In the 1960s and 1970s socialism was a concrete, ongoing process on the East German territory. In Italy, those conditions were not present – but the horizon of socialism remained a persisting, ideal objective even in the late Cold

¹⁰⁹² Italics mine. Interview to Antonio Zambonelli.

¹⁰⁹³ Interview to Arnaldo Losi.

¹⁰⁹⁴ Interview to Gianni Marzi.

¹⁰⁹⁵ Interview to Maurizio Drappella and Renato Spagnotto.

War; and even in the mutations that were investing the PCI at that time, among contradictions, shortcomings, complexities and ambiguities of a party which was trying to find an independent way but could not yet sever the umbilical cord with the Soviet world.

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- Interview to Heinz Hahn, Neubrandenburg, May 16, 2017.
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- Interview to Arnaldo Losi, Modena, September 18, 2017.
- Interview to Gianni Marzi, Carpi, September 18, 2017.
- Interview to Massimo Bianchi, Livorno, September 19, 2017.
- Interview to Vanni Bulgarelli, Modena, December 27, 2017.
- Interview to Antonio Zambonelli, Codemondo (Reggio Emilia), January 2, 2018.
- Interview to Carlo Bruzzi, Castelnuovo Rangone (Modena), February 19, 2018.

Biographical notes

Bianchi, Massimo

Contacted through Catia Sonetti, historian and director of the *Istituto Storico della Resistenza e della Società Contemporanea di Livorno*. Bianchi was born in 1944 in Montecatini (Pistoia, Tuscany). Having a professional past as a journalist of “L’Avanti”, the newspaper of the PSI, he became a member of the same party in 1961. In 1964, he became secretary of the PSI’s youth federation, and in the same year he was accepted in the Masonry of Livorno. In 1970, he was elected provincial secretary of the PSI in Livorno and entered the local council of the town, where he stayed until 1975, and then between 1980 and 1985. Between 1980 and 1984, and 1990 and 1994, he has been vice mayor of Livorno. He has been President of the *Oriente* (Masonry) of Livorno, before being elected as vice *Gran Maestro aggiunto*. In 2014, he received the honorific title of *Gran Maestro Onorario* in the *Grande Oriente d’Italia*. He was in the GDR in 1976, through the twinning between Livorno and Rostock.

Bruzzi, Carlo

Contacted through Giuseppe Bertoni, archivist of the *Archivio Storico Comunale di Modena*. Bruzzi was born in 1952 in Castelnuovo Rangone (Modena). He interrupted his studies in 1969, year in which he started working as a steel worker. In 1973, he became a full-time labor union leader, until 1977. Between 1977 and 1983 he has been a member of the provincial secretariat of the PCI. Between

1984 and 2010 he has worked in, and owned, an advertising agency. In 2011, he became assessor to urban planning and private housing in Castelnuovo Rangone, and in 2012, after retiring, he was elected as a mayor in the same little town. He has been to the GDR twice, through the twinning between the CGIL of Modena and the FDGB of Potsdam: the first time in 1970, with a youth delegation; the second time in 1974, with a smaller political delegation.

Bulgarelli, Vanni

Contacted through Giuseppe Bertoni, archivist of the *Archivio Storico Comunale di Modena*. Born in Carpi, in 1952. After attending the high school in Modena, in 1985 he graduated in pedagogy in Bologna. He has worked in and for the Carpi municipality in many professional positions. After serving as press office of the municipality in the early 1970s, in 1978 he entered the local council, where he remained until 1980. Between the 1970s and 1980s, he has taken up leading positions in the PCI-related organizations ARCI (*Associazione Ricreativa Culturale Italiana*) and UISP (*Unione Italiana Sport Per tutti*). Between 1988 and 1990, he has become member of the provincial council of Modena, and between 1990 and 1995 of the communal council. He has been consultant, president, coordinator and/or member of scientific committees of various institutions in the Modena province. In the last years, he has dedicated his work to the topic of urban planning in its relations with environmental problems, also for the Emilia-Romagna Region as an institution. He has published articles and scientific essays about cities, architecture, and right about urban planning and environment. He was in the GDR twice, in 1972 and 1974, as a young member of the communist youth organization FGCI.

Hahn, Heinz

Contacted through Andrea Kietzmann, archivist of the *Stadtarchiv Neubrandenburg*. Hahn was born in 1929 in Brandenburg. He attended the professional, popular school, and then studied and worked as a salesman in Neustrelitz. In 1945, he was active in the RAD, *Reichsarbeitsdienst*, auxiliary force of the *Wehrmacht*. After working, in the 1940s and 1950s, in consumer cooperatives, he entered the SED in 1956. He studied at the SED *Parteihochschule*. In 1968, he became mayor of Neubrandenburg, as the successor of Ilse Schweinberger. He kept that role until 1990. He came to Italy (Collegno) only once, in 1970, with a small political delegation from Neubrandenburg, but he has followed the whole twinning process until the reunification of Germany.

Losi, Arnaldo

Contacted personally, through Facebook, after seeing his personal website, www.losiarnaldo.com. On the website, Losi had written some stories and uploaded pictures about his trip to Wernigerode.

He was born in 1950 in the province of Modena. He went to the GDR once, in 1965, as a young substitute of the secretary of the FGCI of Carpi, who could not participate. At that time, he was not inside the PCI or its related organizations – he would have become a member of the party only many years later, in the 1980s. He has long worked as a high school teacher, and currently lives in Modena.

Marzi, Gianni

Contacted through Eleonora Zanasi, archivist at the *Archivio storico comunale di Carpi*. Marzi was born in 1959. He went to Wernigerode through the twinning with Carpi, as a young member of the FGCI, in 1976, when he was not yet 17 years old. Marzi works at the *Teatro Comunale* of Carpi, where we have met for the interview.

Ridolfi, Miriam

Contacted through the *Fondazione Gramsci Emilia-Romagna*.¹⁰⁹⁶ She had already been interviewed, previously, in the frame of the project “Raccolta di videointerviste della Fondazione Gramsci Emilia-Romagna”, aimed at a gathering of interviews to former members and militants of the PCI in Bologna between the 1960 and 1980s, to build an oral history archive. Ridolfi has been long high school teacher and then principal of a high-school in Bologna. She has been assessor to decentralization in Bologna in the early 1980s, and in particular during August 2, 1980, when a bomb exploded in the central station of the town, provoking a slaughter. Today, she is active in the civil society and committed to the fight about the preservation of the presence of public libraries in the neighborhoods of Bologna – a project of which she once was main promoter. She has been to the GDR in the 1980s via the twinning Bologna-Suhl, together with Andrea Amaro, at that time head of the Bologna labor union.

Savigni, Paola

Contacted and interviewed through the *Fondazione Gramsci Emilia-Romagna*, in the frame of the project “Raccolta di videointerviste della Fondazione Gramsci Emilia-Romagna”. Savigni was born in 1939 in Castenaso (Bologna). After finishing school, she started working in a factory. She soon became labor unionist for the CGIL and kept that role for decades, in various positions and areas. She has long worked in the *Federconsumatori Emilia-Romagna*, while in more recent years she has acted as a counsellor for the Chamber of Commerce in Bologna. She has been to the GDR (Oberhof), via the twinning between the CGIL of Bologna and the FDGB of Suhl, in the 1980s.

Spagnotto, Renato and Drappella, Maurizio

¹⁰⁹⁶ Thanks, in particular, to Siriana Suprani, Matilde Altichieri and Maria Chiara Sbiroli.

Renato Spagnotto was contacted first through Michele Implicito and then through Carla Giacone, responsible of the secretariat of the mayor, external and international relations of the municipality of Collegno. The interview was arranged directly with Spagnotto; we met in the municipality building. Together with him, was also his close friend Maurizio Drappella, as they had both been to the GDR many times. Spagnotto is older than Drappella of more or less ten years. Drappella was born in Gaiba (Rovigo, Veneto) in 1954, but when he was only 3 years old, he moved to Collegno, where he still lives today. He has worked, in various positions, for the municipality of Collegno, and so has Spagnotto. Both have long been and still are active in the social and cultural life of Collegno. Spagnotto has been three times to the GDR: once with a political delegation, once for the World Youth Festival in East Berlin in 1973, and once with a football delegation in 1974. Drappella has been there twice, once as an adolescent in 1968, in Neubrandenburg; and once, too, at the World Youth Festival. Drappella has also an online blog in which he has narrated his first experience in the GDR: www.mauriviet.wordpress.com.

Zambonelli, Antonio

Contacted through the *Archivio storico comunale di Reggio Emilia*, thanks to Massimo Storchi. Zambonelli was born in 1937 in Reggio Emilia. He has studied at the University of Bologna, while simultaneously working as an elementary school teacher. As such, in 1972, he was appointed at the Historical Institute for Resistance in Reggio Emilia, where he has worked for 25 years, until his retirement. He has published various essays and books about local history in the area of Reggio Emilia and has been member of the town local council. Right in this position, in December 1973, he went to Schwerin with a delegation of the Reggio Emilia municipality, in the frame of the twinning between the two towns.

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List of abbreviations

ANCI Associazione Nazionale Comuni Italiani

CDU Christlich Demokratische Union

CGIL Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro

CISL Confederazione Italiana Sindacati Lavoratori

CTM Centro Thomas Mann

DC Democrazia Cristiana

DGB Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund

DSG Deutsche Städte- und Gemeindetag

FDGB Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund

FMVJ Fédération Mondiale des Villes Jumelées (sometimes also: WFTT, World Federation of Twinned Towns)

FRG Federal Republic of Germany

ICE Istituto Italiano per il Commercio Estero

IUAV Istituto Universitario di Architettura

KfA Kammer für Außenhandel

KPD Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands

GDR German Democratic Republic (in some cases, also: DDR, Deutsche Demokratische Republik; RDT, Repubblica Democratica Tedesca)

PCF Parti Communiste Français

PCI Partito Comunista Italiano

PSI Partito Socialista Italiano

PSIUP Partito Socialista Italiano di Unità Proletaria

PSU Partito Socialista Unificato

PSDI Partito Socialdemocratico Italiano

SED Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands

SMA Soviet Military Administration

SPD Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands

UIL Unione Italiana del Lavoro

UPI Unione delle Province d'Italia

WFTU World Federation of Trade Unions (in some cases, also: FSM, Fédération Syndicale Mondiale/Federazione Sindacale Mondiale)

Abstracts

English

This dissertation is conceived as a history of relations between Italy and the German Democratic Republic (GDR) through town twinning practices between the 1960s and 1970s. At the center of the study are the bonds which set seven Italian communist-oriented municipalities and local articulations of labor unions, located in Emilia-Romagna, Tuscany and Piedmont, in contact with their correspondents in East Germany. Methodologically, my research is grounded on the concept of *translocality* and on the adoption of a bottom-up, *micro* perspective on international relations during the late Cold War (chapter 1). Through the analysis of archival documents in both Italy and Germany, diaries, travel reports and also oral testimonies, it has been possible to explore the political meaning of these twinings, their organization, strategic dimension and collocation in the national and international networks (chapters 2 and 3). In particular, their specificities in terms of communist-led local administrations and their ideal conception have been researched (chapter 4). At this level, besides defining the actors and protagonists of the twinings, I have investigated two main aspects. On the one hand, the concrete repercussions that twinings had on territorial economies and technical-administrative realizations, mostly in Italy. Particular attention has been given to local welfare and social assistance (chapter 5). On the other hand, the sphere of microsociability and grassroots connections, with a focus on the shared memories of antifascism, war and Resistance, on the (communist) symbols of the past and the present and their strategic use, on reciprocal perceptions of the respective daily lives, as well as – through oral interviews – on the memories of the twinning experiences (chapter 6).

In the 1960s and 1970s, due to the many ongoing changes within the communist world, one would probably expect that the connections between the independent, Western- and Europe-oriented Italian Communist Party (PCI) and the dogmatic, strictly Soviet-friendly Socialist Unity Party of the GDR were substantially ceremonial. In point of fact, the twinings show that those contacts were more than alive. With this research, I seek to highlight, firstly, the active role, the impact and the agency of cities, and in particular communist cities, in East-West international relations. Secondly, and mostly, I have tried to emphasize the complexities and ambiguities that surround the transitional position of the PCI in those decades through the prism of the relations with the GDR. On the one hand, the party pushed towards an independent position in Western Europe (since 1976, through Eurocommunism) and interpreted itself, especially at the local level, as substantially reformist. On the other hand, it never really broke the still strong, constitutive bond with Soviet Russia and the

Soviet bloc. Against this backdrop, what has emerged from my research is the presence of a common language with the GDR, at least until the mid-1970s, beyond which I do not venture. Such a language could be defined in the terms of a broadly intended transnational socialism, as ultimate answer to the contradiction of capitalism. That shared code persisted in the *imaginations of the cities*, and in the *imaginations of the “other”*.

Italiano

Questa tesi è concepita come una storia delle relazioni tra l'Italia e la Repubblica Democratica Tedesca (RDT) attraverso le pratiche di gemellaggio tra città, tra anni Sessanta e Settanta. Al centro dello studio sono posti i legami tra sette amministrazioni comunali e provinciali “rosse” italiane e articolazioni locali dei sindacati – in Emilia-Romagna, Toscana e Piemonte – e i loro corrispettivi nella Germania orientale. Dal punto di vista metodologico la mia ricerca si fonda sul concetto di *translocalità* e sull'adozione di una prospettiva “dal basso”, *micro*, sulle relazioni internazionali durante la tarda Guerra fredda (capitolo 1). Attraverso l'analisi di documenti archivistici sia in Italia che in Germania, diari, resoconti di viaggio e anche testimonianze orali, è stato possibile esplorare il significato politico di questi gemellaggi, le loro organizzazione, dimensione strategica e collocazione nelle reti nazionali e internazionali (capitoli 2 e 3); ma soprattutto le loro specificità in relazione alle amministrazioni locali di orientamento comunista e la loro concezione ideale (capitolo 4). Su questo livello, oltre a definire gli attori e i protagonisti dei gemellaggi, ho investigato due aspetti principali. Da un lato, le concrete ripercussioni che i gemellaggi ebbero sulle economie territoriali e le realizzazioni tecnico-amministrative soprattutto in Italia. Particolare attenzione è stata accordata al welfare locale e all'assistenza sociale (capitolo 5). Dall'altro lato, la sfera della microsociabilità e delle connessioni a livello degli attivisti di base, con un focus sulle memorie condivise di antifascismo, guerra, e Resistenza, sui simboli (comunisti) del passato e del presente e il loro uso strategico, sulle reciproche percezioni delle rispettive vite quotidiane, nonché – attraverso le interviste orali – sulle memorie delle esperienze di gemellaggio (capitolo 6).

Negli anni Sessanta e Settanta, alla luce dei molti cambiamenti in corso all'interno del mondo comunista, ci si aspetterebbe, probabilmente, che le connessioni tra il Partito Comunista Italiano (PCI), orientato verso una posizione indipendente in Europa e in Occidente, e il Partito Socialista Unitario tedesco-orientale, dogmatico e strettamente filosovietico, non si spingessero oltre gli aspetti cerimoniali. In realtà, i gemellaggi mostrano che quei contatti erano più che vivi. Con questa ricerca mi ripropongo di sottolineare, in primo luogo, il ruolo attivo, l'impatto e la capacità di azione (*agency*) delle città, e in particolare delle città comuniste, sulle relazioni internazionali Est-Ovest. In secondo

luogo, ho provato a enfatizzare le complessità e le ambiguità che circondano la posizione di transizione del PCI in quei decenni, attraverso il prisma delle relazioni con la RDT. Da un lato, il partito spingeva per una posizione indipendente nell'Europa dell'Ovest (a partire dal 1976, attraverso l'Eurocomunismo) e si autointerpretava, soprattutto a livello locale, come sostanzialmente riformista. Dall'altro, non ruppe mai del tutto il legame forte, costitutivo, con la Russia e il blocco sovietico. Alla luce di questi aspetti, ciò che è emerso dalla mia ricerca è la presenza di un linguaggio comune con la RDT, almeno fino alla metà degli anni Settanta, oltre la quale non mi spingo. Tale linguaggio potrebbe essere definito nei termini di un socialismo transnazionale latamente inteso, come risposta ultima alle contraddizioni del capitalismo. Quel codice condiviso persistette nelle *immaginazioni delle città*, e nelle *immaginazioni dell'“altro”*.

Deutsch

Die Dissertation untersucht die Geschichte der Beziehungen zwischen Italien und der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (DDR) anhand der Praxis der Städtepartnerschaften in den 1960er und 1970er Jahren. Im Zentrum der Studie stehen die Verbindungen, die sieben italienische, kommunistisch geprägte Stadtverwaltungen und lokale Gewerkschaftssektionen, in der Emilia-Romagna, Toskana und dem Piemont gelegen, mit ihren ostdeutschen Gegenstücken unterhielten. Methodisch fußt meine Dissertation auf dem Konzept der *Translokalität* und der Wahl einer „bottom-up“ Mikroperspektive der internationalen Beziehungen zur Zeit des späten Kalten Krieges (Kapitel 1). Mittels der Analyse von Archivdokumenten sowohl in Italien als auch in Deutschland, Tagebüchern, Reiseberichten und auch mündlicher Aussagen, ist es möglich gewesen, die politische Bedeutung dieser Städtepartnerschaften zu untersuchen und ebenso ihre Organisation, strategische Dimension und Platz in nationalen und internationalen Netzwerken zu erforschen (Kapitel 2 und 3). Vor allem die Besonderheiten in Bezug auf die kommunistisch-geführten Lokaladministrationen und ihre ideale Vorstellung stehen im weiteren Fokus der Untersuchung (Kapitel 4). Dabei habe ich, zusätzlich zur präzisen Bestimmung der Akteure und Protagonisten, zwei Aspekte genauer untersucht. Auf der einen Seite handelt es sich hierbei um die konkreten Auswirkungen, die Städtepartnerschaften auf die territorialen Ökonomien und technisch-administrativen Umsetzungen vor allem in Italien hatten. Insbesondere die lokale Wohlfahrt bzw. Sozialhilfe waren im Fokus meines Interesses (Kapitel 5). Auf der anderen Seite handelt es sich um die Sphäre der Mikrosozialität und der Verbindungen auf der Ebene der Basismitglieder, mit einem Fokus auf den geteilten Erinnerungen an den Antifaschismus, Krieg und Widerstand (*Resistenza*). Gleichsam standen hierbei die (kommunistischen) Symbole der Vergangenheit und Gegenwart und ihr

strategischer Gebrauch, die wechselseitigen Wahrnehmungen des jeweiligen Alltages, sowie – durch mündliche Befragungen ermittelt – die allgemeinen Erinnerungen an die Städtepartnerschaften im Fokus (Kapitel 6).

In den 1960er und 1970er Jahren würde man vermutlich erwarten, nicht zuletzt aufgrund der zahlreichen Veränderungen in der kommunistischen Welt, dass die Beziehungen zwischen der unabhängigen, westlich- und Europa-orientierten Kommunistischen Partei Italiens (PCI) und der dogmatischen, streng Sowjet-freundlichen Sozialistischen Einheitspartei Deutschlands (SED) grundsätzlich nur zeremoniell waren. Ein Blick auf Städtepartnerschaften kann jedoch tatsächlich zeigen, dass die Kontakte äußerst lebendig waren. Demnach möchte ich mich mit dieser Studie zunächst die aktive Rolle, den Einfluss und die Handlungsfähigkeit (*agency*) von Städten in den Ost-West Beziehungen hervorheben. Zweitens habe ich hierbei die Komplexitäten und Mehrdeutigkeiten betont, die die transnationale Verortung des PCI in diesen Dekaden, durch das Prisma der Verbindungen zur DDR, kennzeichnete. Einerseits strebte die Partei nach einer unabhängigen Rolle in Westeuropa (seit 1976 mit dem Eurokommunismus) und verstand sich selbst, vor allem auf der lokalen Ebene, als im Wesentlichen reformorientiert. Andererseits gab es aber auch nie die starke, konstitutive Bindung an die Sowjetunion bzw. den Ostblock im Ganzen auf. Vor diesem Hintergrund konnte ich anhand meiner Untersuchung herausarbeiten, dass bis zur Mitte der 1970er Jahre eine gemeinsame Sprache mit der DDR existierte. Eine solche Sprache kann im Sinne eines weit begriffenen transnationalen Sozialismus verstanden werden, als äußerste Antwort auf die Widersprüche des Kapitalismus. Dieser geteilte Code bestand in der *Vorstellung der Städte* und in der *Vorstellung des „anderen“*.