

ITALY'S DEMOCRATIC TURN, 1943-1963 WORKSHOP

SAIS EUROPE

11-12 September

A debate that accurately encapsulates the spirit of the workshop held as part of the CCSDD's project "The Birth and Consolidation of Italian Democracy" can be summarized in adjectives. Was Italy's democracy in the post-war period a "forerunner", a "testing ground", dominated by cross-party "cooperation" – or was it, simply, "difficult"?

Scholars from across Europe and the US came together at SAIS Europe to debate the nature of Italian postwar democracy, through a variety of thematic lenses. A total of four sessions were held during the two-day workshop. In each session, two participants briefly presented their papers, which were then commented on by discussants. Afterwards, the floor was opened for a – often very animated – debate. The participants had applied to the event, which was co-organized by Professor Mark Gilbert and Dr. Tommaso Milani, by submitting short papers. The sessions all had a thematic focus, but thanks to the amount of time allocated to debate, many cross-thematic connections and opportunities for future research emerged.

After Professor Sergej Radchenko, and CCSDD Director Professor Justin Frosini welcomed participants to SAIS, session I began on Wednesday afternoon. Dr. Cesare Vagge from the University of Oxford and Dr. Milani, from the ISB at Ruhr-Universität Bochum, presented two papers connected to the democratization of Italy's economy. During the session, questions connected to continuity and change in Italy's technocratic economic institutions were discussed, and a detailed investigation of the role of the cooperative movement took place. Thanks to the scholars' diverse backgrounds, comparative aspects with postwar Europe and the United States emerged organically during every session.

The two topics of session II might, at the first glance, seem less connected. What do Italy's so-called "Eurafrica" movement and the 1958 Brussels World's Fair have to do with each other? The answer is that both topics were intimately connected to postwar Italy's (self-)image. The World Fair exhibition was an opportunity for the newly minted democracy to consciously choose the message it wanted to send to the rest of the world. At the same time, the "Eurafrica" movement touched on questions such as colonial heritage, geopolitical spheres of influence, and discrepancies between the Italian North and the "Mezzogiorno", the South. Lucia Colombari, from the University of Oklahoma, provided a detailed analysis of the Italian pavilion's architecture and its significance, and made interesting comparisons to the architectural styles preferred by Italy's European neighbors. Eileen Ryan, from Temple University, shone a critical light on the "Eurafrica" movement, and explained its particular relevance for southern Italy.

The third session connected to a theme that had already begun to emerge during the first session: institutional (dis-)continuities. Professor Bastian Matteo Scianna from the University of Potsdam focused specifically on the Italian Armed Forces and the Foreign Service. Professor Daniele Pasquinucci's paper, presented by Professor Gilbert, focused on the "third force", referring to the political groupings outside the mass-parties, when the latter had come to dominate the Italian political landscape. This session causes spirited discussions about Italy's embeddedness in the "West", specifically the European Coal and Steel Community and NATO.

In the last session, Professor Gilbert presented a paper on the Italian national elections of 1948 and 1953, focusing on the role of Alcide de Gasperi and the Democrazia Cristiana, and Professor

Corduwener provided a comparative perspective on the Italian center-left in the European context. Professor Gianfranco Pasquino, who joined as an observer, animated the debate with inputs from political science, and his long years of experience in Italian politics. Anti-fascist mass-parties were a key factor in Italy's democratization, and the discussion therefore touched upon many of the topics that had emerged throughout the workshop.

Despite the specialized nature of the papers, the two-day workshop covered many of the most important aspects of Italy's democratization. Interconnections between the topics were identified through the vivid exchange between scholars from different backgrounds. It confirmed once again that, as is stated in the project's description, Italy is a fascinating case study of democratization, and its detailed examination bears many lessons.