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Rosario Forlenza seeks to do a number of things in this article. His primary goal is to add a layer to the narrative of Italy during the Cold War. Going beyond the dichotomy of Italy being torn between the international alternatives of America and material plenty, and Russia and the ideal of an equitable society, Forlenza desires to write more from the ground up, as opposed to the top down, and to give greater emphasis to the Italian home front. As the Italian Communist Party (PCI) was the largest such party in Western Europe, an important part of the Italian Resistance in World War II that had worked with various non-Communist parties to defeat Fascism and Nazism, and then collaborated with these partners thereafter to set up the Italian Republic and its new constitution, one cannot ignore this domestic component in the story of Italy and the Cold War. Another of Forlenza's goals is to shift "attention away from governments and diplomacy toward society and culture as agents of historical change" (96). To that end, he focuses on a variety of visual sources to depict how the Cold War played out in Italy, as each side sought to win the "hearts and minds" of the Italians.

Most importantly, the goal of Forlenza's methodological approach is to reposition the understanding of Italy in the Cold War as a struggle for domestic stability. As he notes, this article "downplays—without neglecting—Cold War international dichotomies and instead places the primary focus on the battle between Italian Communists and anti-Communists as an indigenous struggle for the redefinition of national, political, and individual identity..." (97). Both the Communists and the various anti-Communists in Italy drew on familiar tropes to put forward their particular visions for the future of Italy, and thus Italy's Cold War trajectory can only make sense if one understands these cultural markers and how the PCI used them to portray themselves, and how their enemies used them to depict the threat of the revolutionary left. To that end, the article lays out how the Communists were depicted, and depicted themselves, in Italian culture, including the 'Communist as Enemy,' the 'Communist as Resister,' the 'Communist as Friend,' and the 'Communist Next Door.'

In the initial section, Forlenza seeks to show that in the first critical moment of the Cold War in Italy, in which the PCI was feared to be on the verge of winning the 1948 national elections by both the United States and the Christian Democratic Party (DC), as well as the Vatican, it was not so much the activities of the United States that made the difference in blunting the PCI's electoral chances at victory, but the local actors, with their familiarity of the local context, who made the most convincing argument against a Communist victory. The DC and the Civic Committees, an extensive grassroots Catholic network, framed the election as one "between civilization and barbarism, good and evil, Christianity and atheism, dictatorship and democracy, clericalism and anti-clericalism, East and West, truth and falsehood, patriotic feeling and 'alien' ideology" (101). As Pope Pius XII had declared in 1946, it was a matter of being "either with or against Christ" (101). Catholicism and anti-Communism became synonymous, and the predominant attack against the PCI was that it was an attack on Italian tradition, specifically on the Italian family—a critical point as many Italians identified with their family and local communities, and not with the nation-state. This had always been a problem in modern Italian history since unification, but had become more so with the destruction of Fascism and its hyper-nationalism. To that end, anti-Communist posters used familiar images from the Renaissance to depict the struggle, with Communists as snakes and

dragons threatening families, and being vanquished by modern Christian warriors. More modern and familiar tropes depicted the Communists as Russian beasts from the East, descendants of the Mongols who ravaged the Roman Empire, and thus to the “Red Menace” was added the “Yellow Menace.”

To respond to their being portrayed as the enemy, Communists countered with depicting themselves as part of another Italian tradition, that of the Risorgimento, which had led to the unification of modern Italy in 1860. Specifically, Forlenza shows how the PCI encouraged the narrative of their efforts in the Resistance as a second Risorgimento, or a second founding of the nation. Such was clearly the goal in Roberto Rossellini’s film *Rome Open City* (1945), where the Communist is a member of the Resistance and is brutally tortured, and dies as a martyr, never revealing his secrets. But beyond this connection, the Communists were tapping into a much older tradition of redemption and renewal that is integral to Christian narrative. “The renewal of Italy,” Forlenza writes, “required the blood of reconciliation: the experience of sacrifice and martyrdom purified individuals and the community, removed violence and evil (Nazis and Fascists), providing the generative principle for social cohesion and for restoration of (a new) order” (113). Once the war was over, and collaboration with the Catholics ended, the Communists now depicted themselves as fighting the new Fascism: Christian Democrats, the Vatican, and Western capitalism.

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Another image that the Communists used to good effect was the portrayal of the international union of Communists, bonding Italy to Russia, and how they had collectively worked together to defeat Fascism, but also how Russia had helped Italy in its time of need after the war. For instance, the Russians provided material support for Italians after the flood of 1951—a point made in the documentary work of Gillo Pontecorvo, who is better known for his *Battle of Algiers* (1966). To combat this depiction, the anti-Communists reproduced familiar images of Communism that had been used by the Fascist regime, with Soviet citizens depicted as repulsive, and filthy, and, again, as beasts—nothing Italians could, or should, relate to. Such was the depiction of the Russian soldier in the painting “Requisition” (1942) by Ezio Castellucci.

Finally, the Communists used the depiction of the ‘Communist Next Door’ to show that the Communists, though adhering to an ideology whose leadership was rooted in Moscow, were in fact Italians, and of the people. Carlo Lizzani, for instance, in his film *Modena, una città dell’Emilia Rossa* (1950) depicts the city of Modena, under the governance of the PCI, as rooted in Italian history, with ties going back to the Roman Empire, the city-states of the Renaissance, the glories of the Risorgimento, and the anti-Fascist Resistance. To counter this depiction, the anti-Communists could not solely rely on portrayals of Communists as beasts, and as somehow foreign to Italy. As Forlenza points out, most Communists in Italy were opponents of the Vatican’s financial and political power, but were themselves deeply imbued with Catholic culture, and, for instance, would baptize their children. As such, the strategy employed by anti-Communists was to present their foes as “fast-talking demagogues bent on manipulating the ‘credulous’ masses” (125), swapping in the Communists for the Fascists in a familiar attack, and Palmiro Togliatti (head of the PCI) for Mussolini. Such was the image that one found in the cartoons of Giovanni Guareschi, and even the satirical work of the legendary Federico Fellini, the future director of *Otto e mezzo* (1963) and *La dolce vita* (1960). As Forlenza succinctly puts it, “In contrast to the United States, where domestic Communism could be cast as wholly alien and un-American, the Italian situation was very different. In a country in which as many as one-third of the electorate—more than 8 million Italians in 1948—had cast their votes with the Popular Front, a thorough demonization was untenable” (128). Ridicule and humor, he adds, allowed the anti-Communists to “dismiss Communists politically, while still recognizing their humanity” (128).

In his conclusion, Forlenza reminds us that Italy was the only country west of the Balkans that erupted into civil war during World War II, with Fascists and Nazis holding on to the North and doing battle with the Italian Resistance. To the south, the king and the government of Pietro Badoglio that replaced Mussolini, fled Rome and virtually abandoned its governing duties as the Nazis occupied the North right down to the capital city. “Torn by these pressures,” Forlenza writes, “the legal framework of the nation evaporated. Civilian life became a frontline experience, destroying patterns of trust and social consensus and undermining faith in elites and political authority” (130). What Italians wanted was stability after the war. As such, “For Communists and anti-Communists alike, images of Communism armed an anxious population with symbols and markers of certainty” (130). Communists saw themselves as self-sacrificing militants who would eventually prevail; anti-Communists saw themselves as patriots battling the barbarous Communists. The propaganda war between these two

“employed a visual grammar deeply rooted in Italians’ cultural memory and expressed through centuries in folk and religious art. At a time when the old markers of certainty had dissolved and the durability of the Italian polity seemed tenuous, images of Communism—a synthesis of old and new—provided reassurance” (131).

Forlenza has written an eminently readable piece that provides exactly what he promised to deliver: a bottom-up approach to the Cold War in Italy that privileges the social and cultural determinants of that story over the international diplomatic factors which have often been the primary filter when recounting this narrative. A perusal of his footnotes reveals that the article is well grounded in the literature of the Cold War, both traditional and ‘revisionist,’¹ and that Forlenza is familiar with social and cultural studies of the Cold War beyond Italy and how their lessons can be applied to Italy.² Most importantly, this article traces the continuity of Italian themes in the nation’s history, before and after World War II, without which the story of Italy in the Cold War is incomplete.

The role of the Catholic Church in the Cold War, even to theoretically atheistic Communists, in a country where the seat of Catholic power is housed, is a critical part of this narrative. As Forlenza writes, the Church had been locked in battle with socialism since the nineteenth-century. The post-World War II anti-Communist activism of the Church, and the use of Christian symbols representing the anti-Communist struggle, should be seen as part of this longer history. While the article touches on the role of anti-Semitism in Catholic anti-Communism, I would have liked to have read a more detailed discussion of the fact that the Church’s struggle against international Communism cannot be completely divorced from the official anti-Semitism put into place by the Fascist regime in 1938, wherein the trope of the international Communist conspiracy and the international Jewish conspiracy were bound (120). The latest scholarship on the Holocaust in Italy reveals that long-standing anti-Judaism in the Church up to Vatican II laid the groundwork for the persecutory anti-Semitism of Mussolini’s regime.³ Additionally, Forlenza forcefully points out that the Vatican’s and Christian Democrats’ depiction of the PCI and Communists in general borrowed from tropes the Fascists used during World War II (120).

The centrality of the Catholic Church in the lives of Italians, of all political stripes, cannot be ignored in any aspect of Italian history—not just at home, but abroad. Marcella Bencivenni’s seminal work on Italian-American radicalism, *Italian Immigrant Radical Culture: The Idealism of the Sovversivi in the United States, 1890-1940*, similarly explores how the centrality of the Catholic experience could not be escaped even by the socialist, anarchist, and Communist Italian-

¹ Antonio Varsori, “Cold War History in Italy,” *Cold War History* 8:2 (May 2008): 157-187; Odd Arne Westad, ed., *Reviewing the Cold War: Approaches, Interpretations, Theory* (London: Frank Cass, 2000); Odd Arne Westad, “The Cold War and the International History of the Twentieth Century,” in Melvin P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, eds., *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, Vol 1, *Origins* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010): 1-19; Christopher Duggan and Christopher Wagstaff, eds., *Italy in the Cold War* (Oxford: Berg, 1995); David Forgacs and Stephen Gundle, *Mass Culture and Italian Society from Fascism to the Cold War* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007).

² Patrick Major and Rana Mitter, “East is East and West is West? Towards a Comparative Socio-Cultural History of the Cold War,” *Cold War History* 4:1 (October 2003): 1-22; Patrick Major and Rana Mitter, “Culture,” in Saki Dockrill and Geraint Hughes, eds., *Palgrave Advances in Cold War History* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006): 240-262; Walter L. Hixson, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997); Giles Scott-Smith and Hans Krabbendam, eds., *The Cultural Cold War in Western Europe, 1945-1960* (London: Frank Cass, 2003); Robert Ventresca, *From Fascism to Democracy: Culture and Politics in the Italian Elections of 1948* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004); Edorardo Novelli, *Le elezioni del Quarantotto: Sotria, strategia e immagini della prima campagna elettorale repubblicana* (Rome: Donzelli, 2008); Angelo Ventrone, *Il nemico interno: Immagini e simboli della lotta politica nell’Italia nel Novecento* (Rome: Donzelli, 2005).

³ See, for instance, David I. Kertzer, *The Popes Against the Jews: The Vatican’s Role in the Rise of Modern Anti-Semitism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001).

Americans.⁴ She shows that the notions of Christian sacrifice and redemption, and Jesus as defender of the working poor, were an integral part of the radicals' propaganda in attracting the support of their co-nationals. In a similar vein, but closer to home and on the opposite side of the political spectrum, Emilio Gentile in his ground-breaking *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy* convincingly shows that the totalitarian, all-encompassing ideal of Italian Fascism, with its paramount leader, its rituals, vestments, sacred days, martyr culture, and emphasis on struggle, death, and redemption in the creation of a new world, was modeled on the centrality of the Catholic Church in the everyday lives of all Italians, regardless of the intensity of their religious practice.⁵

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Thus, in the end, Forlenza could have broadened his stated goal in this article. Yes, Italians sought order after the collapse of the twenty-year Fascist regime in Italy, and the depiction of Communism, either pro- or anti-, in the Cold War era, using familiar tropes, produced the stability the Italians were craving. But it would seem that if the anti-Communists were rooted in the longer-term struggle of the Church against atheistic materialism, and the Church and its allies availed themselves of religious images and themes of epic struggles of good vs. evil, and the Communists similarly availed themselves of the Catholic culture of martyrs in the service of a new world through heroic sacrifice, then maybe this article is about more than the depiction of Communism in the Italian Cold War. It is ultimately about the enduring role of the Catholic Church in Italian history, and thus Forlenza places his study not simply within the broader historiography of the international Cold War, but squarely within one of the central themes of modern Italian history: the Church's battle against the forces of modernism. To that end, Forlenza succeeds in his task of bringing Italy and the Italians themselves back into the story of the Italian Cold War, and relays how the Italians engaged in this struggle with tools that had the most immediate local resonance.

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⁴ Marcella Bencivenni, *Italian Immigrant Radical Culture: The Idealism of the Sovversivi in the United States, 1890-1940* (New York: NYU Press, 2014).

⁵ Emilio Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996).