



# The United States and the European Trade Union Movement, 1944-1951

Federico Romero

TRANSLATED BY HARVEY FERGUSSON II

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*To Dorothea Barrett*

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## PREFACE

This book originated primarily in my curiosity about all aspects of the international role of the United States at the end of World War II. During the reconstruction of Western Europe, America was not only the strategically dominant power, the giver of aid, and the political model that led many nations toward an Atlantic alignment, it was also the suggestive image of a rich and democratic society, an ideal for many to emulate, but a negative one for others, the source of a culture that was widely diffused in myriad ways, both spiritual and material. America was a force both of powerful attraction and of repulsion for many classes of European society.

As has recently been elucidated by the most current historical writing on "Americanization," the United States, in addition to being a world power with which European governments interacted, was also a social, cultural, and anthropological presence, a "new world" which the old societies, rebuilding their rules, actors, and concepts, had to confront. How much of United States predominance in the postwar period was due not only to American troops and economic aid, but to the projection of the totality of American society as an image and model for the future?

The interminable debate of the 1970s on the origins of the Cold War and the nature of American foreign policy suggests that the economic and social aspects constituted not just the background, but rather a crucial factor in United States influence on postwar Europe. Scholars in Italy and especially in Germany have brought to light important events in which the United States played a crucial role in the political reconstruction of those two countries. Research on the Marshall Plan and the continent's economic recovery extended the perceived reach of American influence from trade and financial flows to ideological propaganda, to the diffusion of the acquisitive and consumer-oriented values of the American way of life, to systems of social organization and models of industrial relations. The multifaceted origin of the ideas that inspired the Truman administration's policies, as well as the bureaucracies that implemented them in Europe, showed the degree to which the institutions of American civil society, from industry to unions and

from ethnic representation to mass media, were an active part of United States activities in the international arena. They enriched and articulated those activities with the resources, ideas, and solutions that had grown up during the nation's historical development.

The protagonists of these policies were well aware of this, and historians have begun to concentrate in this direction. With the formula of "the politics of productivity" (which all subsequent historical literature has had to consider), Charles S. Maier tied the hegemony of the United States in the reconstruction of Europe to its capacity to project abroad the model of growth and social integration that had developed in the New Deal and wartime mobilization. The conflict over the Marshall Plan that raged in the political and trade union arenas was connected both to Cold War strategies and to the economic assumptions of American foreign policy. Faced with a range of American activities characterized chiefly by pronounced social complexity, many historians began by investigating, on the one hand, the process of the Marshall Plan's formation and, on the other, its implementation and results. What led the main organized social interests to join in the Marshall Plan and in the political and economic initiatives of the Truman administration in general? What was the origin of the extraordinary international activism of the American unions, which was progressively coordinated with Washington's foreign policy? What contribution did this multiplicity of institutional and social organizations, committed to offering a proposal of reconstruction to Europe, make to American international policy? Most important of all, what was their impact on the character of the Cold War, and what were the consequences for the reconstruction efforts adopted by their European partners?

My research derived from these questions, and this book is an attempt to answer them. Its primary topic is American intervention in postwar European trade union affairs. The field of investigation is the political, cultural, and institutional processes that led typically domestic organizations to take an active part in American foreign policy, to become actors in the Cold War, and to attempt to export to Europe their own models of organization and negotiation. From the final phase of the war to the conclusion of the Marshall Plan, the book covers the increasing interaction with which the government and union bureaucracies drew up and applied a policy for Europe that needed to be most successfully applied in the labor field. The European trade union movement in fact was a crucial crossroads between the issues of economic

stabilization, the anti-Communist political conflict, a search for consensus, and the modernization of social processes. For this reason it was the object of conspicuous political attention from the American side, to the point that it became one of the decisive "fronts" of the Cold War.

Finally, with an interpretation of the various consequences of this American policy, and with an evaluation of its successes and failures, the book proceeds to reexamine critically some of the bases of American postwar international policy. By comparing the political goals with the development of reconstruction in Western Europe, it attempts to describe the effective meaning of the "Americanization" phenomenon. The book closes with a discussion of some themes I believe are at the center of a comparative historical analysis, which is possible by now and which has been developed on the trade union models adopted by various Western countries in the postwar period and, more extensively, on the basic outlines of modernization in the West.

American foreign policy thinking, on union issues as on many others, looked on Europe as a united whole, as a continental area more than a group of countries. Its economic objectives included overcoming nationalistic policies in favor of supranational integration. The strategic imperative of the United States was to win the battle for international hegemony in the most industrialized regions of the continent. The historical and conceptual roots of the policy came from solutions to development problems reached in the large American market. They were now proposed again as plans for postwar economic policy in Europe. The historical importance of the Marshall Plan is based largely on this universal and unitary aspect. It is therefore in this light and in the light of its continental ambition though it was soon limited to the western half of Europe that American activities are reconstructed and analyzed here.

Europe, however, is composed of nations, and even American policy had to descend from a general and common outlook and extend itself in specific and sometimes different situations. It was especially in the context of individual nations, with their differing economic and political realities, that the implementation of American policy encountered its successes and failures, its accomplishments and frustrations. The individual characteristics and traditions of each nation had not been nullified by the war, and they could not be overcome by the intellectual coherence of a universal program for the regeneration of Europe. This contrast was of fundamental importance. It often brought out the basic abstraction that was built into American planning. It is a contradiction that often faces the historian: the impact of American activities can be studied only in the context of individual nations. Therefore this context cannot be avoided in an interpretation of American policy that is meant to

consider results as well as intentions.

For this reason, the description of the European context of American policy, especially the Marshall Plan and the struggle to line up the unions with the West, is accompanied and completed by the analysis of a specific national case that of

Italy. In addition to the author's personal interest, which is not insignificant, the Italian scene has a variety of general and specific characteristics that are both typical and unique and make Italy an enlightening test case for the whole range of American policy, although it is by no means exhaustive. From the United States's perspective it was Italy, after Germany and France, whose political stabilization was the most urgent and also the most difficult to achieve. Both in the immediate postwar period and at the height of the Cold War, Italy was one of the main countries where American activities achieved clear-cut successes and at the same time encountered stiff resistance, testing in this way both the effectiveness of its power and the impossibility of some of its plans.

Italy was the first country where the American government came face to face with the issues of reconstruction and the political and economic problems that were to characterize the reconstruction of the trade union movement in postwar Europe. Furthermore, the nature of the political confrontation and the presence of a strong Communist party put Italy on the frontier of the Cold War, where one of the symbolic battles of the greatest conflict between East and West was fought, especially between 1947 and 1949. Then, during the Marshall Plan period, Italy provided one of the most extreme examples of the contrasts implicit in American activities between desire for reform and modernization, on the one hand, and the strategic priority of anti-Communist stabilization, on the other. Thus an analysis of the Italian case provides an especially vivid example of the tensions present in American policy, of the interaction between various forces and motives that were behind it, and of the partial incongruity of both its inspirations and the results it achieved. The intervention of the American government in Italian trade union activity is presented as a case study that provides greater depth and concreteness to the analysis of a program conceived and carried out on a continental level.

The study of other national cases would clearly bring out different specific problems. But what we know of the impact of the Marshall Plan in Great Britain, Germany, and France, whose experiences will be discussed as a comparison in the conclusion, confirms the same dilemma brought out by the examination of reconstruction in Italy, even though circumstances differed. The American plans elicited responses and reactions from the countries concerned that coincided only partially with Washington's aims. No European nation presented a blank sheet of paper for experiments in social engineering to be derived from the American experience. The proposal to reestablish

Europe and to "Americanize" its social customs drew its political force from the strategic universality of its design and from the degree of American commitment. But its limits were there also, due to the abstraction, and to some extent the incoherence, of a theoretical model that could be applied only



partially and was sometimes distorted as it was implemented in the reality of specific historical circumstances.

The debts of gratitude accumulated over years of research are such and so numerous that they cannot effectively be repaid. However, these debts can at least be mentioned, although that does not repay them. I have discussed the entire scope of this research as well as its limits, directions, and results with Gian Giacomo Migone and Alan S. Milward, receiving encouragement and guidance that go well beyond a fruitful professional collaboration, since they have not only enriched this book but also led me on an intellectual and personal journey. I have received invaluable advice and inestimable help in locating numerous sources from Ronald Filippelli, Horst Lademacher, and Margherita Zander. Nicola Tranfaglia, Dora Marucco, James Miller, Ennio Di Nolfo, Mariuccia Salvati, and John Harper have read the manuscript in various stages, providing criticism and suggestions without which it would certainly have been poorer and less clear. From David Montgomery, Joseph La Palombara, Charles S. Maier, Lutz Niethammer, Victor Reuther, and Vincenzo Saba I have received several suggestions that rescued me from circular reasoning and pointed the way to more fruitful fields of endeavor. I would like to thank those without whose work in various archives and libraries this book would have been simply impossible: Jerry N. Hess, Sally M. Marks, David A. Pfeiffer, and John Taylor at the National Archives; Catherine Vogel and Tom Connors at the AFL-CIO archives; Anthony Zito at the archives of the Catholic University of America; Robert Lazar at the archives of the ILGWU; Hank Guzda at the Historical Office of the Department of Labor; Mila Scarlatti at the library of the Centro Studi CISL (Florence); and personnel of the Giulio Pastore Foundation in Rome.

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## ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE TEXT

ACC	Allied Control Commission (later Allied Commission, AC)
ACLI	Associazioni cristiane lavoratori italiani (Christian Associations of Italian Workers)
ACTU	Association of Catholic Trade Unionists
AFL	American Federation of Labor
AMG	Allied Military Government
CDG	Consigli di gestione (Worker-Management Councils)
CGIL	Confederazione generale italiana del lavoro (Italian General Confederation of Labor)
CGL	Confederazione generale del lavoro (General Confederation of Labor)
CGT	Confédération Générale du Travail (General Confederation of Labor)
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CIO	Congress of Industrial Organizations
CISL	Confederazione italiana sindacati lavoratori (Italian Confederation of Workers' Unions)
CIT	Confederacion Interamericana de Trabajadores (Interamerican Labor Confederation)
CLN	Comitato di liberazione nazionale (Committee of National Liberation)
CLNAI	Comitato di liberazione nazionale alta Italia (Committee of National Liberation in Northern Italy)
CNP	Comitato nazionale per la produttività (National Productivity Committee)
DC	Democrazia cristiana (Christian Democratic Party)
DGB	Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund (German Federation of Trade Unions)

ECA	Economic Cooperation Administration
ERP	European Recovery Program
ERP-TUAC	European Recovery Program Trade Union Advisory Committee
FEA	Foreign Economic Administration
FIALC	Free Italian-American Labor Council
FIL	Federazione italiana del lavoro (Italian Labor Federation)
FO	Force Ouvrière (French Labor Federation)
FTUC	Free Trade Union Committee
IALC	Italian-American Labor Council
ICFTU	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
IFTU	International Federation of Trade Unions
ILGWU	International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union
ILO	International Labour Organization
ITS	International Trade Secretariats
ITWF	International Transport Workers Federation
LCGIL	Libera confederazione generale italiana del lavoro (Free Italian General Confederation of Labor)
MSA	Mutual Security Agency
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NSC	National Security Council
OEEC	Organization for European Economic Cooperation
OSS	Office of Strategic Services
PCI	Partito comunista italiano (Italian Communist Party)
PdA	Partito d'azione (Action Party)
PRI	Partito repubblicano italiano (Italian Republican Party)
PSI	Partito socialista italiano (Italian Socialist Party)
PSIUP	Partito socialista italiano di unità proletaria (Italian Socialist Party of Proletarian Unity)
PSLI	Partito socialista lavoratori italiani (Italian Socialist Workers' Part
PSU	Partito socialista unitario (Unitary Socialist Party)
TUC	Trade Union Congress (British)
UAW	United Automobile Workers
UIL	Unione italiana del lavoro (Italian Workers' Union)
UNRRA	United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration
USWA	United Steel Workers of America
WFTU	World Federation of Trade Unions

