

# 1 Family Life and the Challenges of Reconstruction

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## 1 Introduction

The Second World War saw cities and infrastructures razed to the ground, ideologies discredited and political systems overturned. The war also transformed the lives of families and communities beyond recognition. The upheaval left behind by the conflict encompassed material, political and moral dimensions, and also caused disruption to social bonds and the intimate relationships in domestic life.

Although the war had been a significantly different affair in Italy and Poland, in terms of material devastation, number of victims, and political consequences, its impact on family life had unsurprising commonalities. Losses and separations transformed families' physiognomy, while political struggles and civil wars undermined their cohesion. Material destruction and forced departures deprived people not only of material dwellings, but also of places of identity and belonging.

Both in Italy and in Poland, as in many other parts of Europe, recreating the conditions in which family life could resume was not simply a matter of building new dwellings. The material circumstances created by the war required a rethinking of countries' social and economic structures. Forced separations, hasty war marriages and the uncertain faith of the wives of absent soldiers, questioned existing legal arrangements in relation to marriage and family law. The crucial role

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played by women in the conflict showed the limits of legal systems that still denied them fundamental rights, both in and outside the home.

The issues left behind by the war challenged existing provisions and questioned the role of the State in relation to family life. It was obvious that postwar recovery could not simply be a return to the past. On the contrary, it required a thorough rethinking of the relationship between states and citizens, which directly questioned the role of the postwar State in the family and domestic life. The consequences of the war gave new relevance to the question of whether what happened within families should be considered a private matter or an issue of collective interest. It also questioned which public actors should or could play a role in it.

The aim of this chapter is twofold. The first part of the chapter highlights three issues, which had a lasting impact on the reorganisation of family life in both Italy and Poland, namely the destruction of cities and dwellings; the devastation of the countryside in two heavily agrarian countries; the losses and separation endured by families. The second part of the chapter introduces the postwar settlement in Italy and Poland and discusses its relevance for the family.

## 1.1 Cities of Rubble and Ashes and the Loss of Home

The Second World War left behind a threefold destruction: it deprived people of the physical dwellings where they had lived; it destroyed the communities in which they found meaning; and it undermined the political communities to which they had belonged. No reflection on family life in the postwar era can ignore these starting points.<sup>1</sup>

The notion of postwar reconstruction must also be understood as a complex notion, encompassing material, political and symbolic levels, and the same applies to the work of reconstruction that took place at the level of family life.

Few places in Europe made the all-encompassing meaning of reconstruction clear as the Polish capital.

Between 1943 and 1944, Warsaw became the very emblem of the physical, moral and human devastation resulting from war. The destruction of the Warsaw Ghetto in April 1943 and the razing to the ground of large parts of city in the aftermath of the 1944's rising, transformed the Polish capital into "a city of rubble and ashes", where those who had escaped death struggled for survival in locations "never conceived as human dwelling".<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> On the idea of home as encompassing "both the life lived within a specific dwelling and the larger space or community within which a person is at home in the universe", Levine, "Home Loss", 98.

<sup>2</sup> Szpilman, *The Pianist*, 185.

UNRRA analysts estimated that, by the end of 1945, “half a million of the evacuated population of Warsaw had returned to the ruins of the city”, where they lived “in cellars, single rooms and patched up buildings”, and where contagious diseases festered.<sup>3</sup>

Although no Italian city experienced anything resembling the annihilation of Warsaw, here too the devastation caused by the war hit hard families suffering from the consequences of poor housing stock, multiplying the number of those who lived in dangerous and precarious accommodation.<sup>4</sup>

For the survivors of the war, material devastation represented the first huge challenge to be confronted with. Both in Italy and in Poland, providing new and healthy shelters was not only a matter of material urgency, but an issue of huge symbolic and political relevance.

In Poland in particular, rebuilding dwellings and cities acquired an explicitly political meaning. The new Communist powers called upon the workers to build a new political community, in radical discontinuity with the past. As the sociologists Aleksandra Jasińska and Renata Siemieńska noticed in 1983, this act of collective (re)building, quickly became a crucial trait of the “socialist personality”, and a founding element in the construction of a new Poland in which the working class was due to hold power.<sup>5</sup> Testimonies from the period give us a sense of how collective and individual projects intersected.

The worker Kazimierz Szymczak narrated in a memoir published in the early seventies how in 1945 he had refused to leave Warsaw with his wife and daughter to take up “a well-paid job” in the north of the country. Despite the fact that the family home was reduced to rubble, Szymczak could not bring himself to leave the city “when she needed any available pair of hands willing to do work”.<sup>6</sup>

Szymczak’s narrative provided a model response to the call of the new Communist government. By taking part in the rebuilding of his old apartment block, Szymczak showed his commitment to the rebuilding of the common home. The determination and even self-sacrifice he described in his memoir read as a measure of his commitment to the new political project.

<sup>3</sup> *Operational Analysis Papers*, nr. 31, “Health Conditions in Poland”, Division of operational analysis, UNRRA European Regional Office, London W1, March 1947, 8; *Operational Analysis Papers*, nr. 32, “Health Conditions in Italy”, 4.

<sup>4</sup> UNRRA analysts estimated that, by the end of the war, nearly 6 million rooms had been damaged, a million and a half, completely destroyed. This represented 1/8 of the total rooms that existed in the country. *Operational Analysis Papers*, nr. 32, “Health Conditions in Italy”, 3. On Italy’s housing needs, see also, Alberti, “Fabbisogno e costruzioni di abitazioni in Italia”, 345-6, and Cardelli, Calcaprina, “Premesse a un programma di edilizia sociale”, 29-37.

<sup>5</sup> Jasińska, Siemieńska, “The Socialist Personality”, 22.

<sup>6</sup> Kazimierz Szymczak ‘Samum’, “Jaskinie, nory, mieszkania” [Caves, Burrows, Flats], 39. All Polish and Italian quotations have been translated into English by the Author.

In later years, the housing issue would assume a very different political meaning in Poland, as the State's struggled to provide good quality housing, particularly for young families. In the immediate aftermath of the war, however, the first wave of reconstruction carried with it a huge symbolic significance, which helped to rally ordinary Poles behind the State.

Fitly, the Italian Communist daily newspaper *L'Unità* celebrated the reconstruction of Warsaw as the very symbol of the socialist victory against fascism. In the "largest building site in the world", wrote Luciano Barca in 1950, each builder worked not only for his salary, but to bring life back to the capital and to participate in the recovery of the county. Through their work and thanks to the planning abilities of the Socialist state, "thousands and thousands of families pushed away from their city by Nazi violence" had been able to return "to welcoming apartments, full of modern comforts".<sup>7</sup>

In the same year in which Luciano Barca praised Poles' dedication to work and reconstruction, the Law on Socialist Work passed by the government in Warsaw imposed harsh penalties for ill-disciplined workers, "in effect classifying recalcitrant or slack workers as enemies of the State".<sup>8</sup> The same legislation punished strikes and introduced labour camps throughout the country. The rhetoric of rebuilding the common home could do little to obscure the iron fist of Stalinism, which ensured the work would be done.

For the Communist Barca, as for many others, the housing plans pursued in Poland in the immediate postwar years, together with the full employment imperative that accompanied them, stood in sharp contrast with Italy's economic conservatism. The objective of reaching monetary stabilisation dominated Italy's postwar economic policy. While this succeeded in keeping inflation under control and progressively reduced the country's economic deficit, it also curbed public spending dramatically, limited housing provisions, and contributed to the spiraling of unemployment, which reached over 2 million people in 1948.<sup>9</sup> Despite a housing plan launched in 1949, largely motivated by the aim to tackle unemployment, the economic and political investment put in the (re)building of housing and infrastructures remained modest in the early years of the Republic.<sup>10</sup>

In post-war Italy, housing was mostly left to private initiative. This meant that in many areas of the country, poor housing conditions and

<sup>7</sup> Luciano Barca, "Su ogni casa in costruzione l'effigie del miglior operaio". *L'Unità*, 15 June 1950.

<sup>8</sup> Kopka, *Obozy pracy*, 35.

<sup>9</sup> Bortolotti, *Storia della politica edilizia*.

<sup>10</sup> On the "Provvedimenti per incrementare l'occupazione operaia, agevolando la costruzione di case per lavoratori", usually referred to as the *Ina casa plan*, Tafuri, *Storia dell'architettura italiana*, 22-3.

overcrowding would last well into the sixties. In 1969, the Communist Maria Antonietta Macciocchi described life in the *bassi* of Naples in a way that was uncomfortably reminiscent of the description made by Matilde Serao long before her.<sup>11</sup>

Although attracting less visibility than Naples, similar conditions of precariousness in housing could be found across the country and more acutely in its southern regions.

The modest attention given in Italy to building programmes stood in direct contrast to a political rhetoric that emphasised the commitment of the postwar State to the protection and upholding of family life.

In both countries, the issue of how to rebuild intersected the question of what sort of economic and social development should be pursued, which is to say whether the rural economy which still dominated both Italy and Poland could still have a future.

## 1.2 Destroyed lands

Both Italy and Poland entered the war as agricultural countries and both emerged from it with their agriculture in tatters. In Poland, the “systematic and injurious exploitation of the country by the Germans” and “the death, displacement or migration of a large part of the farming population” resulted in a “complete disorganisation of agriculture”.<sup>12</sup> The impact on food supplies was devastating and added to the struggle of families, both in the cities and in the villages.

In Italy, the double occupation experienced between '43 and '45 resulted in the decimation of villages and in the disarticulation of much of the rural economy.

If the destruction of cities left a particularly strong impression on the postwar mind, the impact of war on the countryside was perhaps less visible, but not less dramatic in its consequences.

Both in Italy and in Poland, the so-called ‘rural question’ played a crucial part in postwar politics and had huge implications both for family life and for society at large.

From the perspective of the family, the transformation of the rural economy and the tumultuous processes of urbanisation that took place in both countries in the postwar years, affected women’s social status, altered the relations between generations, and revolutionised the shape of the household. As it is often the case in this story, Italy and

<sup>11</sup> Macciocchi, *Lettere dall'interno del PCI*, 90-1; Serao, *Il ventre di Napoli*.

<sup>12</sup> *Operational Analysis Papers*, nr. 30, “Agriculture and Food in Poland”, Division of operational analysis, UNRRA European Regional Office, London W1, March 1947, 1. The report estimated that the production of wheat had fallen by 68% compared to pre-war levels, that of barley by 59%, and that of potatoes by 51%.

Poland followed different paths to the same goal, namely the modernisation of the rural economy. In Stalinist Poland, transforming the countryside was part of an overall project aimed to remoulding the country's social structure. In the Italian (rather conservative) approach to postwar recovery, the improvement of the rural economy should act as a stabilising mechanism, necessary to avoid growing social tensions, particularly among the landless rural labourers of the South.

The contexts in which intervention took place were also different. In Poland, the redrawing of borders brought both losses and gains of agricultural lands. Poland lost in absolute terms, with circa 20% of its pre-war territories ceded to the Soviet Union; the territories gained from Germany, however, brought far more fruitful and better run land than the lost territories of the East. The 'Polonisation' of the newly acquired western territories was an effort that encompassed economic, cultural and political dimensions. No less than the reconstruction of the cities, the transfer of more than two million people from the eastern territories to former German cities, towns and villages became part of the postwar narrative of patriotic responsibility. The model of the pioneer became the shorthand for "a person possessing an iron will and unshakable faith and courage to begin life over again on the new lands".<sup>13</sup> As in all good Wild West stories, the family of the pioneer represented an essential component of his success.

The reality encountered on the ground, however, was hardly romantic. The observers sent by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (from now on, UNRRA) to Poland, noted that migrants often lacked even the most basic dwellings and were left to fend for themselves, while the priority assigned to the reconstruction of cities made it "exceedingly difficult" even to get the building material necessary to the construction of new houses for the peasants.

The issue of land redistribution figured highly both in the Italian and Polish political agenda; in both countries the reforms implemented fell short of expectations.

In Poland, the transformative drive of the immediate postwar years envisaged the elimination of the country's largest holdings, the redistribution of land, the creation of cooperatives and state farms. The Land Reform Decree passed in 1944 allowed the State to take over and redistribute among previously landless peasants and small farmers 1.3 million hectares.<sup>14</sup> The redistribution of land, accompanied by the establishment of new agricultural services, was designed to advantage collective and state farms over private holdings.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Jasińska, Siemińska, "The socialist personality", 23.

<sup>14</sup> *Operational Analysis Papers*, nr. 30; "Agriculture and Food in Poland", 5.

<sup>15</sup> Most of the family/private farm-holdings (about 35 per cent) measured between 2 to 5 hectares and only 6 per cent had more than 15 hectares of arable land; the size

The government's effort to introduce collectivisation in Poland in accordance to the Stalinist blueprint provoked, however, huge resistance. The collectivisation drive produced patchy results and great resentment and it was officially abandoned in 1956. Out of ten thousand co-operatives (in fact collective farms) created by the State, eight thousand ceased to exist shortly after the official abandonment of collectivisation.<sup>16</sup>

Paradoxically, the attempt to eradicate small private farming conducted in the Stalinist years ended up strengthening the idea that family farming held an irreplaceable value among Polish peasants. The result, unique to East Central Europe, was that family farms continued to exist in Poland throughout the postwar era, becoming, together with the relative autonomy of the Roman Catholic Church, a significant reminder of the shortcomings of the socialist transformation.<sup>17</sup>

In Italy, the first effort to reform exploitative systems of land tenure was put forward in 1944, with the war still ravaging the country, by the anti-fascist coalition government headed by Bonomi. The reform, put forward by the Communist Minister of Agriculture Fausto Gullo, sought to ensure that peasants retained at least 50% of production, encouraged the creation of cooperatives through the right of taking over abandoned or poorly cultivated land, and promised the extension of all agricultural contracts.<sup>18</sup>

Unlike in Poland, the reform largely failed not because of the opposition of family farmers, which were virtually non-existent in the *latifundia* of southern Italy, but because traditional forces did not hesitate to use violence and intimidation against agricultural labourers fighting for the application of the Gullo's decrees. The reform was also hampered by the lukewarm support of the national leadership of the Communist Party, fearful of a "radicalisation which could become an element of disturbance" to the fragile alliance of the coalition government.<sup>19</sup>

Calls for a transformation of the rural economy affected not only the *latifundia* of southern Italy, but also the central and northern areas of the country, where peasant asked for the modification of the sharecropping contracts, predominant in the area. The transformation of a traditionally conservative sector of society into a political subject

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of state and collective farms were, "respectively, slightly more than 4000 hectares and about 350 hectares" (Gorlach, Mooney, "Defending Class Interests", 261). See also Halamska, "The Specificity of Family Farming", 107-29.

**16** Gorlach, "On Repressive Tolerance", 25. The fact that peasants were left to fend for themselves on lands that had lost most of their productivity and the obligation to deliver quotes of production at a very low fixed rates, and to provide for the need of the urban population, further diminished the popularity of the State in the countryside. See UNRRA, *Operational Analysis Papers*, nr. 30, "Agriculture and Food in Poland", 39.

**17** Kersten, "1956-Punkt zwrotny", 13-26.

**18** Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy*, 60.

**19** Paolo Spriano quoted in Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy*, 63.

ready to mobilise owed much to the impact of the war and the Resistance, which had helped to forge significant links with Communist and socialist parties, as well as with the trade union movement. The mobilisation showed the extent to which the large peasant family typical of Italy's sharecropping areas could become a centre of political activation. As trade unionist recalled, meetings took place in the "great kitchen", which was the heart of the rural house. In a cautious breaking down the rigid hierarchies of the sharecropping multigenerational households, political meetings saw the participation of the younger members of the family, as well as of women.<sup>20</sup>

Far from representing islands of tradition and separation from the world of politics, the rural household had become a place of political elaboration and engagement. As Paul Ginsborg noticed, the mobilisation of 1945-46 left a significant legacy. Not only had a tradition of collective action been established, but "family and collectivity had been drawn sharply together" and the younger generations had found a voice within the traditional set up of the rural family.

As we will see in the next chapter, significant differences characterised the relationship between the peasants and the Communist parties in Italy and Poland. While the resistance against forced collectivisation strengthened the hostility of the Polish peasantry against communism, the PCI benefitted greatly from the struggle for reform, establishing a new and lasting presence in the Italian countryside.

### 1.3 Separation and Displacement

Similarly to the environment in which they existed, postwar families hardly resembled those that had entered the war. Throughout the Second World War, families had found themselves hostage in a conflict that found in population politics a privileged means of waging war. Displacement and deportation accompanied the war and its immediate aftermath, with unparalleled violence in Eastern Europe. In the aftermath of the war, as a result of the redrawing of Poland's borders and of the overall determination to create homogeneous national spaces, over two million people considered as Poles were resettled from the territories now incorporated in the Soviet Union within the boundaries of the new Poland. Between 8 and 11 million ethnic Germans fled or were forcibly removed; half a million 'Ukrainians' were expelled, while 140,000 were forcibly moved from the southeast part of Poland to the newly acquired western territories. In many cases, Ukrainian speaking families were scattered around,

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<sup>20</sup> Quoted in Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy*, 108.



“as to forestall the consolidation of a Ukrainian ethnic community”.<sup>21</sup>

The forced moves produced traumatic experiences of eradication and loss among millions of families. The sense of isolation and the feeling of not belonging would last a lifetime. The memoirs of Ukrainian-speaking families dispersed across different villages in the western part of the country, often among hostile neighbours, told of the near endless struggle to recreate a sense of community. For this Orthodox minority, resettled in a now homogeneous Catholic country, the possibility of attending religious services provided both a sense of belonging and a source of fear, amply testified in memoirs and personal narratives.<sup>22</sup> “During the studies in high school – remembered Janina Kisielewicz, who had been brought to the Wrocław region as a young girl – I attended the religious classes and went to Catholic mass. When I was with my family, however, I always tried to go to the Orthodox Church. In my class there were a few Lemkos. We knew of each other, but we tried not to attract attention”.<sup>23</sup>

No comparable population movements took place in Italy, where the main instance of population transfer concerned ethnic Italians (circa 270,000 people) forced to leave Istria and Dalmatia, following their annexation to Yugoslavia. The evacuation took place over a number of years, stretching from 1943 to 1956. In the absence of a central plan for relocation, families were scattered in the north and central areas of the country. For most of those who left, the sense of disorientation produced by the loss of home was amplified by the less than warm reception they often found in the country they thought of as their homeland.<sup>24</sup>

If forced transfers represented the extreme example of the upheaval caused by the war, resuming family life was only marginally easier for those who had experienced long separation or extensive family

**21** Porter-Szűcs, *Poland in the Modern World*, 198; Snyder, “To Resolve the Ukrainian Problem”, 111-15 and *The Reconstruction of Nations*, 179-201; see also Naimark, *Fires of Hatred*, 108-38; for a Polish perspective, see Madajczyk, *Przylączenie Śląska Opolskiego*, and Nitschke, *Wysiedlenie ludności niemieckiej*. On the effect of forced population movements on Polish society, Kersten, “Forced Migration and the Transformation of Polish Society in the Postwar Period”.

**22** Sitek, *Mniejszość w warunkach zagrożenia*, 20. On the experience of the new inhabitants of the Recovered Territories, Popiołek, *Wspomnienia nauczycieli śląskich* and Karp, *Codziennosc zapamietana*; Filipowski, *Oswiata na Warmi i Mazurach*.

**23** *Mniejszość w warunkach zagrożenia*, 21. Lemkos represented one of the Ruthenian minorities of Poland, who had historically inhabited the southeastern region of Galicia; they were forcibly resettled to the Recovered Lands as part of Operation Vistula, in 1947, see also Magocsi, “Nation-Building or Nation-Destroying”, and Michna, *Lemkowie*. On the historical role of Galicia in the history and imaginary of Poland and Central Eastern Europe, see Wolff, *The Idea of Galicia*.

**24** Colella, *L'esodo dalle terre adriatiche*; Gustavo Corni, “L'esodo degli italiani”; Crainz, *Il dolore e l'esilio*.

losses. The slow return of prisoners of war and the uncertain faith of missing soldiers created existential and legal limbos that could last for years. Waiting was an integral part of the postwar families' experience.

In a memoir published in the seventies, the Italian feminist Alessandra Bocchetti, gave a glimpse into the suspended space occupied by families waiting for missing soldiers from the perspective of a child.

So my father was 'disperso' (missing). It seemed almost another surname: Federigo Bocchetti Disperso. Disperso meant that my mother cried all the time and kept waiting for this man, who could arrive at any moment. At the same time, she and I travelled across the city, from one Ministry to the other to try to obtain a certificate of 'presumed death', which was necessary to obtain a pension.

Between those two irreconcilable poles, the desire for the husband's return and the request for a death certificate, stood the dilemmas lived by postwar families. 'Presumed' widows needed a death certificate not just to get a pension and eventually to remarry, but to be able to exercise full authority over children.<sup>25</sup> Family roles and bureaucratic practices shaped social roles and individuals' experience. For women in particular, the protracted experience of running and providing for households in the absence of men produced both in Italy and in Poland a crucial social discontinuity, whose far-reaching implications would become clear in the aftermath of the conflict.<sup>26</sup>

The disruption brought by the war would remain a running theme in post-war Italy and Poland, informing the debates on how to regulate marriage and, eventually, allow it to end.

#### 1.4 Political Legacies: Families in Divided Societies

The social and political legacies of the war ensured that both in Italy and in Poland family life should emerge as a big issue in the postwar years. In both countries, the war saw the birth of new political regimes, which claimed a strong discontinuity with the past and promised a far-reaching transformation of the social, legal and economic landscapes in which postwar families would exist.

In Poland, the rise of Soviet-backed Communists to power promised to transform the relationship between State and citizen and the position of the family in Polish society. In Italy, the creation of a republic that defined itself as 'anti-fascist' also imposed a rethinking of

<sup>25</sup> Bocchetti, "La mia guerra", 44-8.

<sup>26</sup> For a reflection on the impact of men's absence on the social role and image of Polish women, see Fidelis, "Czy 'nowy matriarchat'?", 433-4.

the prerogatives of the State, particularly in regard to the family, after the systematic attempt made by fascism to render families subservient to its needs and desires.

In Italy, the new republic had to mark a clear discontinuity with the intrusive politics of the past. In a reverse direction, the new Communist regime of Poland promised a far greater intervention in family life that had been the case in the past. If protecting families' freedom became one of the catch phrases of postwar Italy, the Polish state fashioned itself as a benevolent and all-powerful father, aware of the needs of its citizens-children and able to intervene in their favour, also within the domestic sphere.

The different power dynamics at work over the regulation of family life are at the core of this book. They cannot be understood without looking at some crucial political elements at work in both countries.

Three elements stood out as of particular relevance. The first concerns the nature of the postwar settlement in the two countries; the second, the role of Communist parties in those settlements; the third, the relationship between State and Church.

#### 1.4.1 National Settlements

For sometimes now historians have debated whether what took place in Poland in the aftermath of the Second World War is best described as a brutal Communist takeover or as a revolution.<sup>27</sup> The interpretation followed in this book is that not only the two interpretations are not mutually exclusive, but that both highlight crucial aspects of the transformation undergone by the country.

As Brian Porter-Szűcs succinctly put it, the revolution was at once "real enough" and "most definitely channeled" by Stalin "along paths that few Poles would have chosen on their own".<sup>28</sup> It is undoubted that Communist Poland was oppressive and often violent and corrupted. This narrative, however, should not obscure the far more complex and nuanced reality experienced by ordinary and less ordinary Poles. Polish communists were certainly powerful, but not powerful enough to shape all aspects of people's lives, nor all the transformations that went on in the country.

<sup>27</sup> Examples of the first readings are Hammond, *The Anatomy of Communist Takeovers*; Davies, *Heart of Europe*; Torańska, "Them": *Stalin's Polish Puppets*; Ekiert, *The State Against Society*. For a reading stressing the revolutionary nature of the transformations, Kenney, *Rebuilding Poland*. A particular contribution to the reassessment of postwar political and social transformation has come from recent works focused on the experience of ordinary people and of women in particular, among them, Lebow, *Unfinished Utopia* and Fidelis, *Women, Communism, and Industrialisation*.

<sup>28</sup> Porter-Szűcs, *Poland in the Modern World*, 187.

A particular dimension of the Polish situation concerned the fact that the establishment of Communist rule was enacted by a political group that until the war had no significant following, and in fact by a party that had not existed until 1941.<sup>29</sup> In this sense, it can be said that the seizure of power was made possible only by the back up provided by the Soviet Union, against the will of the majority of Poles.<sup>30</sup>

In Italy, the transition had gone in the opposite direction. A fascist dictatorship was substituted by a democratic republic, inspired by the values of the anti-fascist struggle. Here too, however, the changes could hardly be read as representative of Italians' general will. Although constructed in the postwar years as a national war of liberation, the years 1943-45 had seen a violent civil war fought throughout the country, with both anti-fascist and fascist fighters claiming for themselves the label of 'true patriot'. By the end of the war, Italians were divided on just about all the most important events that had occurred in the previous five years, as well as on the shape of things to come.<sup>31</sup>

Even among those who had fought on the same side of the Resistance, and who defined themselves as anti-fascists, deep divergences existed when it came to reconstruction. The Resistance had been a complex and composite struggle. If everyone had fought against a common enemy, the political values they had hoped to affirm in the aftermath of the war had ranged from monarchy to a communists revolution, with several other positions in between.

In Poland too, the war against the German occupier had coincided with a struggle between resistant groups, each with a different idea of what a liberated Poland should look like. If Polish communists had envisioned an overall change of the system as its ultimate goal from the day of its formation, the bulk of the resistance movement, represented by the Home Army, was as anti-Communist in outlook as it was anti-German. At the end of the war, the Soviet power guaranteed the communist victory and helped to physically eliminate or silence those who had fought for a different outcome of the war.<sup>32</sup>

Although no external power could eliminate the deep divisions that existed among Poles of different political persuasions, the Soviet Union made all the difference in terms of what kind of postwar settlement could be achieved. Its ubiquitous presence ensured that the winning

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**29** Dzięwanowski, *The Communist Party of Poland*, 149-54; Kemp-Welch, *Poland under Communism*; Fleming, *Communism, Nationalism and Ethnicity*.

**30** See Polonski, Drukier, *The Beginnings of Communist Rule*, 128-9.

**31** On the deep fractures left behind by fascism and by the conflict, Pavone, *Una guerra civile*, Crainz, *L'ombra della guerra*. On the position of Italy and Poland in the early Cold War, Naimark, *Stalin and the Fate of Europe*, 122-56, 196-230.

**32** On the broader process of sovietisation in East Central Europe, Naimark, "The Sovietization of East Central Europe", 63-86.

side was able to impose its will, effectively crushing opposing views. This would result in a series of reforms, and eventually in a constitution, which reflected the coherent ideology of the party in power.

By contrast, the Italian return to peace was characterised by a far-reaching exercise in compromise, first of all between Communists and Catholics. The Italian Communist Party and the Christian Democratic one emerged from the war as the main anti-fascist forces in the country; although divided on just about every issue, they agreed on the fundamental principle that Italy should have a new democratic constitution, able to mark a clear transition from the fascist past.<sup>33</sup>

The constitution that emerged from this difficult compromise was a patchwork of conflicting ideologies. As the socialist Giuseppe Saragat pointed out in 1947, despite the revolutionary rhetoric that had accompanied the Resistance, what had happened in Italy had little to share with those “political revolutions” that in other parts of Europe “had brought down the old social order” and the “political societies of which they were the expression”. The collapse of fascism had produced a collapse of Italy’s “political structures”, but not of the country’s “economic and social structure”. One could be pleased or sorry for the continuities that still existed in Italy, but this was a fact that could not be ignored.<sup>34</sup>

Poland, by contrast, could be taken as an example of the alternative scenario presented by Saragat: the Communists’ political victory brought with it an economic and social revolution that found expression in the reforms undertaken since 1945. Little of those reforms could be traced back to the different political traditions that had existed in Poland before the war. When the new Constitution of the People’s Republic was approved in 1952, its ‘linearity’ confirmed Saragat’s observation that writing ‘coherent’ constitutions was far easier when “minorities [had] no voice” and when there was only one party in charge. It was far more complicated when, as in the Italian case, the parties were many and all determined to leave their imprint on the text.

The compromise forced upon Italian political forces, wrote Saragat, helped to leave behind ‘individualistic’ notions of the economy in favour of an idea of social economy that safeguarded individual freedoms.<sup>35</sup> At the same time, however, the constant bargaining that took place in a pluralist but fragile system produced a complexity that bordered on contradiction.

**33** On the inability/unwillingness of the Italian state to pursue a real discontinuity with the fascist past at an institutional level, Pavone, *Alle origini della repubblica*.

**34** *Atti Parlamentari*, Assemblea Costituente, Seduta Pomeridiana di giovedì 6 marzo 1947, 1842.

**35** *Atti Parlamentari*, Assemblea Costituente, Seduta Pomeridiana di giovedì 6 marzo 1947, 1843.

The treatment of the family in the Constitution and in the law, as we will see, stood out as a major example of the costs of continuous compromise.

The ambiguities that surrounded the treatment of the family in Italy contrasted sharply with the apparent coherence of Poland's transformative zeal. Of particular relevance to this outcome was the very different political voice that Catholics could exercise in the two countries. The failed attempt in Poland to transform the *Stronnictwo Pracy* (SP) in a Christian democratic force able to act as the official political representative of Polish Catholics meant their *de facto* exclusion from the legislative process.<sup>36</sup> This had huge implications for family law. It is well illustrated by the Italian case, where the family became a major terrain of political bargaining between Catholics and Communists.

The determination to keep the uneasy alliance with the DC and the fear to alienate Catholic masses encouraged the leader of the PCI, Palmiro Togliatti, to accept the bulk of Catholic tenets and a notion of the family in strong continuity with the past. In Poland too, power relations dictated the nature of the competition over the family. Unlike their Italian counterpart, however, Polish Communists had no interest in seeking a compromise with the Church on a matter that was very close to its interests. On the contrary, the new party-state did not hesitate to assert its vision of secular modernisation in the regulation of family life and its exclusive authority over family matters. This also bore high costs, starting with the risk of alienating a large part of the public opinion that was still imbued with Catholic values.

The different approaches that Italian and Communist parties displayed towards the legal treatment of family life reflected broader political patterns and the opposite, and yet mirroring, positions they occupied in the two countries.

In Italy, Communists emerged from the war hugely popular, but with little chances of ever reaching the national government. In Poland, they held an incontestable power, whose authoritarian nature quickly eroded any popularity they may have had.

Conversely, the Catholic Church occupied in Italy a position of influence that was safeguarded by the power held by the Christian democratic party. Its proximity to power and its obvious manipulation of the political system in defence of her own privileges, would have in time contributed to a sharp critique, even from the faithful. In Poland, by contrast, the Church had to confront the open hostility of the State, and saw its institutional power significantly reduced from the early postwar

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**36** Confusingly for a western audience, the name of the reformist catholic party in Poland, *Stronnictwo Pracy*, translated as Labour Party. On the attempt to create a Christian Democratic party in postwar Poland and on the political conditions that prevented it, see Kosicki, *Catholics on the Barricade*, 129.

years. Far from harming the Church's social standing, the battle engaged with a State increasingly devoid of legitimacy, strengthened her authority, not only on moral matters, but also in political terms.

#### 1.4.2 Communists and the State

Both in Italy and in Poland, Communists sought to ground their appeal to represent national interest to the anti-fascist credential gained through the war and through the Resistance. These efforts, however, produced very different outcomes.

As Tony Judt observed, "it was in western Europe, where real resistance had actually been least in evidence, that the myth of the Resistance mattered most". In the East, "where large numbers of real partisans had engaged the occupation forces and each other in open battle, things were, as usual, more complicated".<sup>37</sup>

While Italian communists could bask in their long record of anti-fascist opposition, matters were indeed more complicated in Poland.

In Italy, the celebration of the Resistance dominated the postwar political discourse, as the only source of collective national pride. The myth of the Resistance delayed Italy's reckoning with the past and provided reassuring models of individual and collective behaviour that were celebrated throughout the postwar years.<sup>38</sup>

Constructing the Resistance as a 'national struggle' allowed Italians to think of the fascists years as a sort of juvenile error, to be left behind without confronting all its implications. It also allowed to relegate to the margins the bitterness and resentment left by the civil war, both among the defeated fascists and among those Communists who had fought not only against fascism, but for the beginning of a socialist revolution.

Although by no means an exclusively Communist affair, the armed struggle against nazi-fascism had seen a predominant Communist presence, both in the leadership of the movement and among the rank and file. This put party leaders among the founding fathers of the postwar democratic state. The decision taken by the Communist leader Palmiro Togliatti to abandon any idea of class war in favour of a reformist path set the basis for the PCI's full participation to the postwar political settlement. The strategy secured to the PCI a mass membership, which reached two and a quarter million in 1947. The compromises accepted by Togliatti's party included an appeasing attitude towards the Catholic Church, considered necessary both to avoid the hostility of Catholic masses and to defend the fragile alliance with

<sup>37</sup> Judt, *Postwar*, 41-2.

<sup>38</sup> Lepre, *L'anticomunismo e l'antifascismo*, 100.

the Christian Democratic Party, in the face of the unrelenting attacks of the catholic hierarchies.<sup>39</sup>

Dynamics were very different in Poland. As the pre-war Communist Party (KPP) had been dissolved by the Comintern in 1938 and many of its leaders executed, the new party created in 1941 was a product of Stalin's politics, with little to share with the earlier history of Polish communism. Even the name of the new party, Polish Workers Party (PPR) suggested a discontinuity with the past.<sup>40</sup>

Equally important was the marked anti-communism of the Polish Resistance movement. Throughout the war, Polish resistants had managed to keep alive an Underground State and a military organisation (the Home Army), which had no parallel in Europe.<sup>41</sup> Despite the ability of the Home Army to provide the foundations for postwar institutional and administrative reconstruction, however, any such possibility vanished once Poland fell under Soviet control.<sup>42</sup> Portraying the partisans of the Home Army as reactionary forces, Soviet authorities quickly disbanded the Army's units and dismantled the Underground State's network, leaving minority Communist organisations as the only authorities in liberated Poland. The paradoxical result was that the largest and best organised Resistance movement in Europe played no role in the country's political reconstruction.<sup>43</sup>

Contrary to the Italian situation, Polish Communists could not build on the authority gained through the Resistance struggle.

If Italian Communists had to make a complicated transition from a small revolutionary party to a mass organisation adherent to the principles of democratic politics, Polish communists found themselves in charge of the country and with the power to pursue a revolutionary agenda. However, they had to do so against the will of a large part of the population and against the prestige gained throughout the war by a Resistance movement that had been anti-Nazi and anti-Communist in equal measure.

The harshness and ultimately undemocratic nature of the postwar confrontation, however, should not let to ignore the widespread consensus that had existed during the war on the need for far-reaching transformations to be introduced in Poland.

<sup>39</sup> On the role of the Church in the Italian political confrontation, Kent, *The Lonely Cold War*, 198-200.

<sup>40</sup> For a broader discussion see among others Fleming, *Communism, Nationalism and Ethnicity*, 13-15.

<sup>41</sup> Judt, *Postwar*, 42.

<sup>42</sup> The Polish resistance's underground military organisation counted more than 300,000 members; the network of political institutions and civil society organisations was equally impressive. See Gross, *Polish Society*, xi.

<sup>43</sup> Gross, *Fear*, 6.



The programme *What the Polish Nation is Fighting for*, released by the AK in 1944 and representing a common statement from social democrats (the PPS), agrarians (the PSL), right-wing nationalists (Endecja) and the Christian Democrats (SP), envisaged a “fundamental rebuilding of the structure of economic life”, able to “satisfy the interests of the broad masses of rural and urban people”. Moreover, the programme envisaged a crucial role for the State in the management of the economy, including the right “to acquire or socialise” firms and key industries when general welfare and common interest demanded it. Private property should no longer be seen as an unrestricted “personal privilege”, but as the basis for the realisation of social goals; labour, in turn, should be regulated as to guarantee the dignity of workers and avoid their exploitation.<sup>44</sup>

In Poland as in Italy, the idea that the fight against the Nazi occupation should also represent the beginning of a struggle against the oppression determined by an archaic and exploitative social structure was by no means limited to the small faction represented by the Communists. Equally widespread was the expectation for men and women’s legal equality and the transformation of women’s economic position.<sup>45</sup>

The legal reforms pushed through since 1945 set the ground for a socialist transformation and in many aspects adopted a Soviet model that was very much resisted by Poles. However, they also responded to broadly felt expectations with regard to economic and social reform. The idea that the modernisation of the country’s economy should also bring an end to the nefarious influence of outdated cultural models, of which the Church seemed the main bastion, had also an appeal that went far beyond the limited reach of communists.<sup>46</sup> Resentment against economic exploitation and anti-clerical feelings were diffused in postwar Poland and could coexist with anti-communist feelings. In Italy as in Poland, the “struggles of the immediate postwar years pit different varieties of socialists against each other, with all of them sincerely believing that their ultimate goal was to advance the cause of freedom and democracy”.<sup>47</sup>

The postwar international settlement set the basis for what would quickly become Communists’ *de facto* unchallengeable power.

<sup>44</sup> Quoted in Porter-Szűcs, *Poland in the Modern World*, 194.

<sup>45</sup> Dudek, Gryz, *Komuniści i Kościół*, 15-17; see also Adamski, *Rodzina między sacrum a profanum*.

<sup>46</sup> Although the strategy of the national front had been pursued in Poland as in the rest of Eastern Europe, this represented no more than a temporary strategy, paving the way to Communist rule. The rigged referendum of 30 June 1946, held instead of the elections formally agreed at Postdam, confirmed the unwillingness of Poland’s new authorities to stick to the democratic game. See Kersten, *The Establishment of Communist Rule*, 280-3.

<sup>47</sup> Porter-Szűcs, *Poland in the Modern World*, 193.

By 1947, the intensification of Cold War tensions and Moscow's decision that the experience of the postwar coalition governments should come to an end solidified the power of the one-party regime. In September 1948, the substitution of the Party's Secretary Władisław Gomułka with the hard liner Stalinist Bolesław Bierut further aligned Poland to the Soviet's plans for transformation. Shortly afterwards, the merge of the Polish Workers Party (PPR) with what was left of the Polish Socialist Party (PPS) made the Polish United Workers Party (Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza, or PZPR) the only official representative of the country's working class.

The same years that sanctioned Communist control in Poland marked the relegation of the Italian Communist Party to the opposition, following the heavy loss suffered by the party in the elections of April 1948. By the end of 1948, both Italy and Poland had reached a political stabilisation of sort. In Poland, this coincided with the beginning of the heaviest period of Stalinist rule; in Italy, with the beginning of Christian Democratic Party's rule, which only the fall of the Berlin wall would end.

#### 1.4.3 State and Church

Of the various issues that accompanied postwar political dynamics, few were as relevant for the family as the relationship between State and Church. Having long seen itself as carrying a special responsibility for family life, the Church tried to maintain its authority in the altered circumstances of the postwar years. While the effort would prove hardly challenging in Italy, the Polish situation presented far greater obstacles.

Both in Italy and in Poland, the political and moral role of the Church was as important as it was complicated. The Church's anti-Communist credentials could not be doubted. In the complex dynamics of the interwar years, the Catholic Church had given language and ammunition to the anti-Communist and anti-Bolshevik discourse across Europe, even at the risk of getting dangerously close to fascist and nationalist forces. In Italy, Catholicism had been quickly adopted by Mussolini in his effort to consolidate power; in Poland, Catholic devotion had been an essential element of the exclusionary and ethnic nationalism that had emerged in the country in the thirties. During the war years, the Church had accumulated in both countries a mixed record. On the one hand, it had provided important networks of support, often acting as the only existing authority and organisation in occupied countries. On the other hand, the Church had accumulated a less than honourable

moral record in Pius XII's refusal to speak up against the Holocaust.<sup>48</sup> Both in Italy and in Poland, Catholic organisations, as well as lay Catholics, had played a crucial, although sometimes ambiguous role in regard to persecuted Jews, offering shelter and protection, but often at a price – most often that of conversion or, in the case of Polish Jewish children, the forsaking of one's past.

In Poland, the position of the Catholic Church was, in the words of Norman Davies, “stronger than at any previous period of its thousand-year mission”.<sup>49</sup> Although depleted in her ranks, the Roman Catholic Church could now claim to represent nominally 90% of the Poles, thanks to the redrawing of the country's borders and the dramatic transformation of its population. In 1931, Roman Catholics had represented the 64.8% of the population; by 1945, the murder of Polish Jews and the expulsion of Germans and Ukrainians left an overwhelmingly homogeneous population in what had been one of the most ethnically and religiously diverse regions of Europe.<sup>50</sup> The open hostility of a little-liked new power provided further boost to the Church.

Both in Italy and in Poland, Catholics advocated their right and duty to play a role in the work of reconstruction and transformation that awaited their countries. In both countries, the participation of the Catholic Church to the work of reconstruction was heralded as essential to avoid the dangers of political regimes that ignored the primacy of the spiritual over the material world and against the risk of a new “pagan idolatry of the state”.<sup>51</sup>

In both countries, the Church faced the challenge of redefining its role in the face of rapidly changing political and institutional environments, in which its pre-war interlocutors no longer held power. The challenges faced, however, were of a different nature.

In the immediate aftermath of Mussolini's fall, the Italian catholic hierarchies had been uncertain as to whom to look as the best new political ally; the Christian Democratic Party, founded in 1943 from the remnants of what had been the anti-fascist People's Party, quickly emerged as the natural choice. The DC would provide a committed and faithful defender of the positions of the Church for the following

**48** The strongest indictment of the role of the Catholic Church in the Holocaust remains. Goldhagen, *A Moral Reckoning*; see also, among others, Phayer, *The Catholic Church, and Pius XII, the Holocaust and the Cold War*; Zuccotti, *Under this very window*; Miccoli, *I dilemmi e i silenzi*.

**49** Davies, *Heart of Europe*, 10.

**50** For a description of Polish religious geography through time, Bilaska-Wodecka, “From Multi-Confessional to Mono-Confessional”, 341-55.

**51** The expression made reference to Pius XI's encyclical letter *Non abbiamo bisogno*, 29 giugno 1931.

decades.<sup>52</sup> Christian Democrats would ensure the “Christian inspiration” of the new Constitution, in supposed accordance with the will of Italians, who “being a Christian people” could not “wish or accept a secular or agnostic State”.<sup>53</sup> The determination of Italian Communists to avoid any major conflict with the Catholics contributed to ease the position of the Church.

The Polish episcopate also looked with great sympathy to the possibility of rendering the SP the “party of Polish Catholics”, envisioning it not as a party of pure resistance and conservatism, but rather as a force able to bring “Christian patriotism” to the “healthy revolutionary content of the times”.<sup>54</sup> To have a party able to represent the Catholic voice seemed all the more important in the very uncertain situation of the immediate postwar years.<sup>55</sup>

Already in July 1944, the Polish Committee of National Liberation had repudiated the 1935 Constitution (defined as ‘fascist and illegal’), bringing back the provisions included in the Constitution of 1921. This had significant implications for the Church. Although asserting religious freedom and describing the Roman Catholic Church as occupying a “leading position in the State” on account of being the religion of the majority of Poles, in fact, the 1921 Constitution did not recognise any special entitlement to it.

This was followed, in September 1945, by the decision of the provisional government to declare null and void the Concordat signed in 1925, which had granted special rights to the Church in the fields of education, marriage, and family life, as well as a series of privileges in terms of property, taxation, and the clergy’s civil duties.

The situation could not have been more different in Italy, where the Lateran Pacts, signed by Mussolini in 1929, were about to be included without modification in the new constitution, against the opposition of smaller secular parties, but thanks to favourable vote of the PCI.

Despite the obviously different atmosphere, it is important to underline that in Poland too the years 1945-1947 were marked by efforts to negotiate as much as by conflict. The Catholic University of Lublin was the first university in the country to re-open, followed shortly but all catholic schools; mandatory religious teaching was also reinstated across state schools. Unlike in most other Eastern European countries, moreover, the restoration and rebuilding of the many churches

<sup>52</sup> On the dynamics that rendered the DC the only interlocutor of the Church in Italy, Miccoli, *Fra mito della cristianità e secolarizzazione*, 377-87; Lanaro, *Storia dell'Italia Repubblicana*, 90-111; Poggi, “La Chiesa nella politica italiana”.

<sup>53</sup> Gonella, *La DC per la nuova Costituzione*, quoted in Ginsborg, 99.

<sup>54</sup> August Hlond, “Chrześcijaństwo czy materializm”. *Tygodnik Warszawski*, 2 December, 1945.

<sup>55</sup> Chappel, *Catholic Modern*, 144-81.

destroyed during the war was included in the general state plan for reconstruction. Equally importantly, three major lay Catholic weeklies, *Tygodnik Powszechny*, *Tygodnik Warszawski*, and *Dziś i Jutro* were founded in Poland in 1945. All three publications were steeped in the tradition of interwar social Catholicism, and all three had the declared ambition of reaching a mass circulation and to contribute to the radical transformation of postwar Poland.<sup>56</sup> The three publications were joined in 1946 by the monthly *Znak*. Each of these publications could be seen as an important part of the effort to carve a space for Catholics in the political discourse, not entirely rejecting the transformation but trying to influence it.

As the new powers tried to solidify their hold on the Country, reforms obviously hostile to the interests of the Church, such as the new marriage legislation, which will be addressed later, went hand-in-hand with at least a superficial attempt to keep a dialogue of sort open with the Polish episcopate (in contrast with the sharp criticism moved against the Holy See). In this complicated environment, the Polish Church too tried to maintain a space for manoeuvre with regard to the State and the Party, which included a willingness to find an understanding on symbolic issues (such as agreeing to hold masses when Władisław Bierut gave his presidential oath in 1947), as well as on more substantive matters.

The kind of dual policy that the Church would try to follow in the first years of Communist rule was sketched by the Primate August Hlond in the first public statement issued under the new powers: the Church would not compromise its ethical principles by opening to materialist ideology, but it would remain willing to cooperate with the authorities in the pursue of national recovery, and in order to build a system “without privileges and injustices”.

Translating this plan into action was far from easy. In September 1946, Hlond intervened in the electoral campaign, to remind the faithful of their obligation to oppose organisations or parties that supported positions contrary to Christian teaching, and to warn them against any activity aimed (whether overtly or not) at the undermining of Christian ethics. Catholics should be equally discerning with their vote, supporting only those candidates and electoral programmes that did not contradict Catholic teaching and morality.<sup>57</sup> In a clear manifestation of the new government’s determination to limit the Church’s field of action and the reach of its voice, however, the letter was suppressed by the authorities.

Both in Italy and Poland, the confrontation between Communists and the Catholic Church took a sharp turn between 1947 and 1948.

<sup>56</sup> For an extended discussion of the role and nature of these publications, Kosicki, *Catholics on the Barricades*, 116-20.

<sup>57</sup> *The Tablet*, London, November 16, 1946.

In Italy, this took the rather benign form of the Church pulling all its weight in the electoral campaign of 1948, in which Communists were represented as godless barbarians set to destroy all western civilisation. If in some parts of Italy, particularly in Emilia Romagna, the propaganda made room for physical clashes and sporadic attacks to priests, on a national scale, the Church's offensive instead saw the PCI on the defensive.

In Poland, however, the confrontation took a rather more sinister turn. In 1947, any dream of creating a Polish Christian Democratic party came to an end, while hostilities against representatives of the Church intensified. In 1948, the first wave of priests' arrests under a range of specious accusations marked the beginning of an anti-clerical campaign that would result in a widespread effort to silence the Church. This included the suspension of its broadcasting and the banning or heavy censorship of its publications, including *Znak*, shut down in 1949. Youth organisations were also closed down and the control of charitable organisations taken over by the State. In early 1950 most of the Church's land was expropriated. The delicate position occupied by the Polish Church was hardly helped by the hardening of the intransigent line pursued by Pius XII, in his effort to present the Church as a bastion against communism.<sup>58</sup> The excommunication of Catholics working with Communists decided by the Holy Office in 1949 contradicted the effort of the Polish Primate Wyszyński to keep negotiations open with the Communist authorities.<sup>59</sup> The Holy See's refusal to accept the new German-Polish border contrasted not only with the policy of the country, but also with the Polish episcopate's own national(ist) position.<sup>60</sup> While in Italy the position of the national Church largely coincided with that of the Vatican, this was not the case in Poland.

Indeed, not even the heightened conflict of the late forties stopped a dialogue of sort from taking place. The result was the agreement announced in April 1950, according to which the Church was to rally behind Polish *raison d'état*, by taking distance from the Holy See ambiguous attitude towards the status of Poland's Recovered Territories and by refraining from any effort to boycott State's initiatives, such as elections or the setting up of rural cooperative. In exchange, many privileges and rights of the Church would be restored.<sup>61</sup>

This ambiguous and to some extent contradictory relationship continued in the following years, with short relaxations of tensions followed

<sup>58</sup> On the complicated diplomatic situation faced by Poland and the Vatican in 1947, Kent, *The Lonely Cold War*, 185-90.

<sup>59</sup> Kent, *The Lonely Cold War*, 217-36.

<sup>60</sup> On the relationship between the Polish episcopate and Pius XII, Kosicki, *Catholics on the Barricades*, 158-62; on the position of the Church in relation to the Oder-Neisse, Dudek i Gryz, *Komuniści i Kościół*, 10-18, 33-6; Żaryn, *Stolica Apostolska wobec Polski*.

<sup>61</sup> Weigel, *The Final Revolution*; Czaczkowska, *Kardynał Wyszyński*, 85-150.

by new sharpening of the confrontation, which, somewhat paradoxically, would enter its worst period in the aftermath of Stalin's death.

A widespread reading identified the Polish Catholic Church with national resistance to Communism. This is an appealing narrative, but it fails to capture much of the complexities, tensions and contradictions that characterised the relationship between State and Church in Communist Poland. There is little doubt that Communist authorities tried to subordinate the Church to the State, limiting the extent of its activities and trying to control them; it is also fairly clear that the State failed in its attempt to undermine the Church's legitimacy.

Although crucial, the narrative of conflict should not obscure the complicated pattern of mediations that took place throughout the Communist period.<sup>62</sup> It was the combination of conflict and negotiation that shaped the relationship between State and Church and that contributed most to transform the nature of both actors over time.<sup>63</sup>

While conflict and negotiation could be detected in Italy as well, the prevailing modality here was one of accommodation, as the political predominance exercised by the Christian Democratic party, organically linked to the Catholic Church, secured the protection of Catholic interests and the upholding of the Church's positions throughout most of the postwar period.

Historians of postwar Europe have long agreed that the notion of reconstruction needs to be understood as a multifarious process, encompassing material, political, economic and even moral and psychological aspects.

For all the differences that characterised the process of postwar reconstruction in Italy and Poland, a number of common dynamics existed, which directly invested in family life and its regulation.

While the political and economic system differed dramatically in Italy and Poland, a number of similar dynamics sharpened families' political and social relevance. The birth of new republics compelled the new political actors to spell out the prerogatives of the State in relation to the family, while the effort to pacify fractured political communities encouraged to look at families as a symbol of national unity. The need to renegotiate the relationship between the State and the Church also found in the family an important terrain of confrontation.

Despite the very different political circumstances that existed in postwar Italy and Poland, family figured prominently in both countries' postwar political discourse. This was all the more obvious in the political confrontation that opposed Catholics and Communists, which I will discuss in the next chapter.

<sup>62</sup> Pawlicka, *Polityka władz wobec Kościoła*, 15.

<sup>63</sup> For a sociological appraisal of the struggle for legitimacy in the eighties, Wałaszek, "An Open Issue of Legitimacy".

