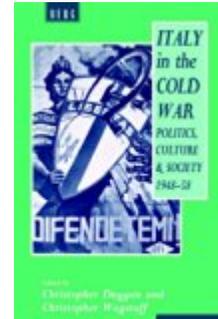


H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Christopher Duggan, Christopher Wagstaff, eds. *Italy in the Cold War: Politics, Culture and Society, 1948-58*. Oxford, England, and Washington, D.C.: Berg Publishers, 1995. xi + 228 pp. \$47.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-85973-038-6.

Reviewed by Alan J. Mayne (University of Melbourne)
Published on H-Italy (February, 1997)



Staring out from the cover of this monograph, a dramatically personified Italy deflects a hurled hammer-and-sickle, her shield emblazoned with the cross of the Christian Democrats. “Defend Yourselves!” exhorts this Cold War poster. The dramatic intensity of its message, distilling for postwar Italians the stark realignments of a broader new world order, is not ultimately fully appropriated by the pastiche of historical interpretations that follow in this timely, important, albeit compromised, book. Yet the book does unambiguously succeed in opening a window upon Italy in the volatile decade 1948-58, and in so doing goes far toward establishing a research agenda for further study of this relatively overlooked period in recent Italian history.

Duggan and Wagstaff have drawn together a collection of conference papers that were initially presented at the University of Reading in 1990. Thirteen authors contribute to the monograph, imparting to it the collage-like structure of sometimes capricious elements that characterises the genre of conference proceedings. Arguably, a more rigorous selection process, reducing the number of contributors and increasing the scope for elaboration within the remaining chapters, would have served the editors better. Moreover, because the book retains the inward-looking character of conference discourse amongst experts in particular fields, it falls between stools in terms of wider audiences. Its chapters tend to assume more historical knowledge than that likely among beginners, so that the book is unlikely to become a mainstream teaching text. Yet the chapters’ unevenness (in terms both of word length and of reflective integration of research within the historiography of modern Italy) undercuts the book’s effectiveness as a research tool for more advanced readers.

These quirks are nonetheless to a very large extent contained by Christopher Duggan’s magisterial opening survey of postwar Italy (and which also constructs a thematic shell within which to place the diverse preoccupations of the following chapters), and by the very real scholarly gems uncovered as one reads on. Two broad thematic continuities are identified by Duggan within the book: the political and economic consequences of the Cold War upon Italian society, and ramifications upon Italian cultural reference points of the mental divide between the United States and the Soviet Union. Duggan emphasises the indeterminacy of outcomes facing Italians in the 1950s: the continuities of fascist traditions, Pius XII’s efforts to shore up the Italian state as a bastion of Christian civilisation, the contending images of US modernist consumerism and (until 1956) of Soviet social justice, the massive expansion of a Christian Democrat clientelist state. Above all, he stresses the failure of the new republic to provide a solid peg for postwar national identity.

Chapters by D. W. Ellwood and Antonio Varsori examine Italian participation (bankrolled by billions in U.S. aid) in the military and economic integration of Europe. Their studies are complemented by Peter Hebblethwaite, Vera Zamagni, and Percy Allum, who probe in turn Pius XII’s reactions to the Cold War, U.S. influence on the Italian economy, and the consolidation of a distinctive new form of “catch-all” party political structure by the Christian Democrats.

These wide-ranging chapters provide a setting for much more focused studies. Christopher Wagstaff offers a fascinating analysis of postwar Italian cinema. Stephen Gundle reviews Togliatti’s harnessing of Gramsci to the

fashioning of a new vision of communism grounded in the particularities of Italy. Donald Sassoon deals with Italian images of Russia, and Robert Dombroski takes Franco Fortini as an exemplar of Marxist intellectual life, analysing his reviews of writers on a spectrum ranging from Gramsci to Lampedusa. Lesley Caldwell identifies important areas for further research into the legal constructions and the experiences of Italian families. Penny Sparke provides a short but compelling review of Amer-

ican influence upon Italian design. Diego Zancani assesses the significance of Anglo-American linguistic borrowings, and assembles a list of examples that range from *guerra fredda* and *cortina di ferro* to teddy-boy and welfare state.

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Citation: Alan J. Mayne. Review of Duggan, Christopher; Wagstaff, Christopher, eds., *Italy in the Cold War: Politics, Culture and Society, 1948-58*. H-Italy, H-Net Reviews. February, 1997.

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