

Modern Italy's Founding Fathers: The Making of a Postwar Republic, by STEVEN F. WHITE, London and New York, Bloomsbury, 2020, x + 243 pp., \$35.96 (paperback), ISBN 9781-4742-1549-7

This decade will mark the thirtieth anniversary of the 1994 elections which ushered in Italy's first right-wing government since the Fascist era. This represented a watershed moment for a republic founded on anti-fascist principles as it saw an increasing mainstreaming of far-right and fascist ideology and discourses of *Italianità*, represented today by Matteo Salvini's Lega (which has openly courted the neo-fascist Casa Pound) and Giorgia Meloni's Fratelli d'Italia (a direct descendent of the neo-fascist MSI). Such views would be anathema to the anti-fascist 'founding fathers' of the postwar republic: Alcide De Gasperi, Palmiro Togliatti, and Pietro Nenni. Steven F. White's account of how these three individuals overcame their own ideological differences to construct a democratic and republican Italian identity therefore provides a timely and valuable contribution to the literature on postwar Italy in a moment when Europe is experiencing a resurgence of far-right politics.

Modern Italy's Founding Fathers is an enjoyable, informative, and page-turning account. The book promises to be of use to both scholars and students of Italian history as well as the general reader. White does not presuppose any specialist knowledge of the wider history of the Italian peninsula, yet is careful not to overexplain. Drawing on a discourse analysis of political addresses and writings of the three leaders, White complements this material with correspondence, interviews, and memoirs, as well as commentaries from relatives, colleagues, and contemporaries. In doing so, he examines how anti-fascism provided the glue which bound together the opposing ideologies of Christian Democracy, Communism, and Socialism in the immediate postwar years. The book, however, focuses not only on these leaders, but also on the internal and external influences that shaped the Italian Republic, including the Cold War between the USA and the Soviet Union, which contributed to the solidification of the 'White' and 'Red' political subcultures that coloured Italy's political landscape until the early 1990s.

The book's opening two chapters work in tandem to establish a historical context for the immediate postwar era. Chapter 1 provides a succinct biographical outline of De Gasperi, Togliatti, and Nenni's formative years, giving an 'Aristotelian' interpretation of how the three protagonists' differing personalities complemented one another. White concludes that

De Gasperi's greatest strength as a founding father lay in his *ethos* (his credibility as a person, rooted in his upstanding character), while Togliatti most embodied *logos* (his logical appeal to his audience), and Nenni *pathos* (his emotional appeal to his audience) (p.39).

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the fine balance struck at various levels during the transition between Fascism and democracy, such as balancing demands for a purge of Fascist officials and the need to 'retain as many competent Italian officials as possible' (p.48). Chapter 3 introduces the reader to the 'colorful and diverse set of personalities' which made up the Committees for National Liberation (CLN) (p.74). Analysing the interaction between these personalities, these pages trace the passage from 'Resistance idealism to parliamentary pragmatism' (p.91). Chapter 4 examines De Gasperi's skill in convincing his Communist and Socialist counterparts to accept a referendum as a solution to the institutional question. White highlights the fragility of Italy's fledgling democracy as the results of the referendum were called into fierce dispute by reactionary forces.

While Chapter 5 traces how the anti-fascist alliance overcame tensions and mutual distrust to oversee the drafting of a constitution and negotiate a punitive and difficult peace treaty with the

Allies, Chapter 6 describes the subsequent deterioration of this uneasy alliance amid the parliamentary elections of 18 April 1948. Chapter 7 gives a new perspective on the postwar political system in Italy that Giorgio Galli famously dubbed the '*Bipartitismo Imperfetto*', explaining how De Gasperi focused on 'excluding the Communist Party from the nation's government, while still containing them within the parliamentary arena' (p.169). The final chapter brings the reader up to 1994, and the collapse of the First Italian Republic in the wake of the Tangentopoli corruption scandals and the election of Berlusconi who, White states in the closing pages, 'fell far short of the standards set by the republic's founders' (p.209).

This final point highlights a slight weakness in White's analysis. Nostalgia at times obscures a more critical reading of Italy's postwar politicians. Conspicuous in its absence, for instance, is any reference to the discourse of '*partitocrazia*' or an emerging 'totalitarianism of the parties'. This term, coined by Liberal politician Giuseppe Maranini and later adopted by Guglielmo Giannini's *Uomo Qualunque*, conveyed the idea that the CLN did not correspond to a model of authentic democracy but in some way configured a sort of new 'single party' dominating Italian society.

While certainly not subscribing to this view of Italy's postwar government, I believe the short shrift given to such narratives (two pages are dedicated to *Uomo Qualunque* in Chapter 3) is insufficient in understanding their pervasiveness. Indeed, in the 1980s and 1990s, the far-right Lega Nord would use '*partitocrazia*' discourse as a stick with which to beat and weaken the Italian Republic, particularly in the wake of the Tangentopoli scandals. This discourse played a key role in the collapse of the First Italian Republic and the dissolution or fragmentation of the parties which, under De Gasperi, Togliatti, and Nenni, had played such a key role in its formation.

This, however, should not distract from what is a well-informed account of three veterans of the anti-fascist resistance who, in overcoming ideological differences, managed to forge a postwar Italian identity and continue the work of Italy's Risorgimento founding fathers of 1861. As we approach the 160th anniversary of this historic event, White's account of De Gasperi, Togliatti, and Nenni serves as a timely reminder that the project of 'making Italians' must not fall once again into the hands of those whose ideas hark back to the destructive ideas of fascism, militarism, and disdain for democratic governance.

George Newth
University of Bath
ghn20@bath.ac.uk

© The Author(s), 2021. Published by Cambridge University Press on behalf of the
Association for the Study of Modern Italy
doi:10.1017/mit.2021.38

L'Italia sullo schermo. Come il cinema ha raccontato l'identità nazionale, by GIAN PIERO BRUNETTA, Rome, Carocci Editore, 2020, 367 pp., €32.00 (paperback), ISBN 9788843098910

Gian Piero Brunetta, Professor Emeritus in History and Criticism of Cinema at the University of Padua, received the prestigious 'Antonio Feltrinelli' international award from the National Academy of Lincei in 2017 for his original studies on the history of Italian cinema. He is one of the world's foremost scholars of Italian cinema and his internationally recognised work has been translated into several languages. Brunetta is a prolific scholar, having authored and edited over 50 books on early Italian cinema and the silent era, neorealism, cinema as a tool for political