Annals of the Fondazione Luigi Einaudi
Volume LIV, December 2020: 179-194

TRAJECTORIES OF POLITICAL EXILE IN FRANCE AND THE UNITED STATES. THE DOUBLE EXILE OF NICOLA CHIAROMONTE

Cesare Panizza *

ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to analyze the history of Italian antifascist exile to France and United States and it is focused on the different features of these cases. In the first one the exiles were usually well accepted inside the Italian immigrant community mostly composed by people moved from Italy in search of economic security. These communities have often offered a support to the antifascist activities and has given to the exile the opportunity to enter in different social and cultural network and to reduce the condition of displacement that is a peculiar effect produce by exile experience. The situation in the United States was different: here Italian communities, quite totally oriented in favor of fascism, were not available to accept political refugees. Language also was a strong obstacle for the integration in the hosted society. Comparing these two different situations we can, however, underline that American academic and cultural institutions were usually well oriented toward exiles and offered them more opportunities. From this point of view, the double exile experience of Nicola Chiaromonte, who spent some years in Paris (1934-1941) and in the United States (1941-1948), is paradigmatic. After a difficult period of adaptation, he became an estimated voice in the world of the American radical left.

Keywords: Antifascism, Italian Exile in France, Italian Exile in USA, Generations.

Recent studies have extensively demonstrated how wrong it is to superimpose the images of exile in France and exile in the United States.[1] Though sharing the general features of the complex phenomenon that was

* Università degli Studi Verona. Address for correspondence: cesare.panizza@tin.it.

[1] On exile in the USA, see Camurri 2009; on exile in France, see Gabrielli 2004.

ISSN: 2532-4969
doi: 10.26331/1122

20th century exile,[2] they were in fact two very different events. They differed in the social and political settings where they developed, differed in their historical evolution and demographic scope, and differed – profoundly – in their outcomes. And the memories of exile in France and exile in the US differ, since they accumulated over time from personal and group experiences, acquiring connotations – political and otherwise – that were difficult to assimilate.

Specifically, what was different was the way the experience of exile was rationalized by the exiles themselves, in their awareness of the somewhat radical change it brought to their ability to analyze the world, and thus how they looked at the evolution of the Italian situation. In this sense, of course, what counted was the gradient, in terms of the cultural distance – and not just the trivially geographical distance – between Italy and the two host countries. Without absolutizing, the United States' greater "distance" or, in others words, its radical otherness, enabled the exile to look at the Italian problem from above, taking a medium-long view. By contrast, the closeness and the greater "familiarity" of the French situation inevitably condemned the exile to take a more immediate view of developments in Italy. From beyond the Alps, exiles were able to grasp the economic thrusts of history, undoubtedly giving them a greater reactivity, at the expense, however, of any real capacity for perspective. Proximity made it inexorably difficult for the exile in France to escape the so-called "fuoriuscitismo" of those who waited for the opportunity to return to their homeland at short notice, often deluding themselves about their uncomfortable but not remote vantage point's ability to keep tabs on Italy's unfolding domestic affairs or to continue to understand their meaning. Being exiled in America, on the other hand, was experienced as an irreversible rupture – existential as well as physical – which brought about profound changes in the relationship with one's Italian identity. In some cases, the outcome was an apparent depoliticization of the exile – at least in the way in which political life traditionally took place in the old Continent (the transition from *politics* to *policies*) – which at times led the exile to choose not to return to the homeland and to integrate fully into American society. Arrival in America – even for Italian exiles of non-Jewish origin who had thus not experienced the trauma of the racial laws – was in fact often more than a second exile, a double exile, from Italy and Europe. It was an estrangement from a field of forces, cultural rather than political, opposing each other in a vital tension. For many exiles, this entailed an effort of resignification, which those who

[2] There is an abundant bibliography on the subject of exile. See D'Angelo 2017: 1-11; Ash and Sollner 1996.

remained on European soil, particularly in France, did not necessarily undergo. This is perhaps the reason why exiles in the United States more frequently seemed to acquire the "epistemological privilege" of which Enzo Traverso spoke in connection with certain figures of the Jewish-German diaspora,[3] whereby they – often thematizing their own condition as exiles – were able to capture the long waves of history, prematurely tuning in to the transformative processes taking place in Western society as a whole.

For many, exile also meant discovering a world of unprecedented modernity. It presented itself first of all in the form of a spatial and sensorial experience that had as its stage the great modern metropolises (Paris, New York). A common feature of all exiles' writings is their emphasis on the impact of car traffic, subway travel, frenzy and people's easy irritability on daily life – and the effort that the Italian newcomer had to make in order to adapt.[4] Whereas in Paris, this modernity coexisted with the ancient and the familiar – familiar from earlier experience or at least known through literature and the memory of other exiles – in New York it took on a much more exotic face, but one that at the same time foreshadowed a future that also awaited the old continent, however uncertain the fate of the struggle between fascism and anti-fascism might seem. There was thus an urgent need to define a common language, to translate one culture into another and vice versa, or rather, to shift the focus from anti-fascism to post-fascism, partly in an attempt to orient the future attitudes of American democracy towards Italy and Europe. The outcome of this process was the fertilization of American culture and science – as has already been outlined by other authors – with a decisive reversal in the balance of power with Europe, even within so-called high culture.[5] In this passage, the conditions that permitted a relatively rapid, but not painless, integration of the "refugees" into American society were laid down, in particular though not solely, by the academic world. In France this did not happen. Here, the political solidarity offered by parties and organizations ideologically similar to those one had left behind in the homeland was, if anything, counterbalanced by a substantial social downgrading of the exile, from which, after all, one could only escape through political activity itself. This does not mean, however, that emigration to the USA was always a "success story", even if it may seem so in retrospect. It should not be forgotten that in the case of the US there was a "filter", substantially absent in France, viz., the conspicuous resources – not only economic, but also in terms of "social and psycholog-

[3] Traverso 2004.

[4] Among others see the memoirs of Modigliani 1946.

[5] See Hughes 1975; Gemelli 2000.

ical capital" – that had to be invested in order to reach the North American coasts, as well as the selection made among the exiles while they were still in the countries of departure by the United States immigration regulations and by the directions followed by the relief organizations and the academic institutions themselves.[6]

To be seduced by the skyscrapers of New York or the comfortable libraries of American universities was thus very expensive, leading to renunciations that were not easy to accept. In America, in fact, exiles never seemed to start their own society, as they did in France and especially in Paris, buoyed by a solid tradition that went back to the nineteenth century and constituted the world of political emigration and the much wider world of economic emigration – assuming that it makes sense to distinguish between them in the case of France. In New York or on American university campuses, the real and distinguished *koiné* among individuals from the most diverse parts of Europe that characterized Parisian exile did not exist, except in limited forms and through the mediation of American institutions.[7] It was not by chance that the two most characteristic figures of the Parisian émigré world, the professional revolutionary and the bohemian, were both inexorably out of place in the US. In many cases the exiles lived separated from each other, in tenacious but narrow circles, not communicating with the world of economic emigration, which was little politicized and, at least until the US entered the war, was anything but hostile to fascism. In France, by contrast, exiles often found themselves in very harsh and degrading material living conditions, moving in a social context that was both cosmopolitan and made up of compatriots. A tradition of sociality predating anti-fascism wrapped the exiles in its communal rites, buffering that sense of being uprooted, of desperation, that inevitably accompanies exile. Indeed, it was precisely that social net that soon became a potential political resource – or at least so it seemed to many. By offering solidarity and fraternity, and thus prefiguring the future free society, it seemed to be the most stubborn pocket of resistance to fascism's advance. This was confirmed in the mobilization for the Spanish Republican cause. In France. too, the trauma of language – having to articulate one's thought in a language which is not one's own, barely mastered at the beginning and learned with great sacrifice – was mitigated for the Italian anti-fascists. This was not only because of French's similarity to Italian and the fact of its being considered a language of culture in Italy at that time, but because in

[6] See Gemelli 2000.

[7] Bechelloni 1984; Milza 1986; Milza and Peschanski 1996. On the French case see Jeanpierre 2009: 27-41; Loyer 2005.

France there was already an audience of Italian-speaking readers in France to whom the exiles could address their writings. In the United States, on the contrary, antifascist exiles, as we already know, had to create their audience from the beginning, together with associative and political structures that had no antecedent in America.

Paradoxically, then, we could say that for the exile, America turned out to be cold, but welcoming in the end, while France was initially warm, but ultimately exclusionary. Certainly, in the initial insertion phase the difficulties were enormously greater on the other side of the Atlantic. And whether these exiles ended up in a country such as France that was about to be overwhelmed by political and warlike events, or in a country that the war would put at the center of the world undoubtedly weighed in their trajectories. Moreover, the time when arrival in a new country took place was not without consequences. Whether one arrived in France in '25 or '26 or did so in the mid-thirties made a difference, as did arriving in the USA before or after 1938, or again after 1940. Proximity was not always an advantage, since relations with Fascist Italy were much more important for France than for the United States, thus exposing emigrant anti-fascism to the possibility of becoming a "bargaining chip" in international politics, at least in certain phases.

To understand the extreme variety of the trajectories of exile, we must then consider the baggage – in terms of political, cultural, psychological and experiential resources – with which that "journey" without destination and apparently without return was faced. Age, above all, made a difference. Without generalizing, it was not the same to be born in the 1870s and '80s or thereafter, while there was a similar gulf between those who had experienced the trenches of the First World War and the political passions of the immediate post-war period and those who had not.

As an example of what has been said so far, we can consider Nicola Chiaromonte's lengthy experience[8] of exile, first in France from 1934 to 1941, and then in the United States from 1941 to 1948. Given the plurality of settings he crossed through as well as the awareness he brought to them, his itinerary can be used as a tool to penetrate the world of exile in Paris and New York described above.

Born in 1905, Chiaromonte belonged to the generation that had not had the time to truly take part in pre-fascist Italian political and cultural life. At the same time, however, he had not yet been formed in a fascist society, so it is hard to say that he consciously chose exile. Rather, he was forced into it by a stubborn search for the intellectual freedom denied him

[8] Bianco 1999; Panizza 2017.

at home. Before he matured a clearly "political" awareness of the value of his existential choices, it was the need to "broaden his horizons" that pushed him to venture beyond the Alps, with the ambitious yet unrealistic plan of moving to France and living off his freelance activity as a theatre and literary critic. Although he approached *Giustizia e Libertà* in 1932 during his second stay in Paris – the meeting with Carlo Rosselli was certainly arranged by Alberto Moravia, cousin of the leader of GL and Chiaromnte's fraternal friend since his university years – it was not until the summer of 1934 that Chiaromonte left Rome and against his own expectations did not return for the next thirteen years. The reasons to expatriate were not only the March 1934 arrests in Turin that had disrupted the ranks of the movement, but the invitation received by Paul Desjardins to participate in the prestigious annual *Décades de Pontigny*, which the young intellectual born in Lucania saw as the gateway to the French intellectual world.

Moreover, Chiaromonte had begun to be active in *Giustizia e Libertà*[9] with some misgivings, critically, assigning his clandestine activity against Mussolini's dictatorship a primarily intellectual purpose, of understanding and studying Italian society during the years of triumphant Fascism. In this choice of commitment – which though stopping short of a total consecration to direct politics exposed him to great risks – contact with the world of Parisian exile, with that very *koiné* formed by the exiles of the most diverse European nations, had a decisive weight. Two meetings were pivotal in this connection: one with the Italo-Russian Andrea Caffi,[10] whom Chiaromonte considered his "only master", certainly the most complete personification of the figure of the exile (first from Tsarist Russia, and then from Bolshevik Russia, as well as from Fascist Italy) and of the marginalized because of the unorthodox positions he took even within the world of exiles; and one with Annie Pohl, an Austro-Helvetian painter and set designer of Jewish origin – daughter of Otto, member of the party executive of the Austrian Social Democrats and the Second International, later converted to Communism – who had long been divided between Switzerland, France and Italy, and was to become Chiaromonte's wife in 1937.

The most evident effect of this Parisian discovery was on Chiaramonte's networks of intellectual relations during his first stays in France. If in 1931, when he crossed the Alps for the first time in 1931, he was still mainly associated with the Roman circles hung between a disdainful a-fascism and the perhaps lukewarm acceptance of the regime as an inescapable fact of Italian reality. But when he returned to Paris in 1932, Chiaromonte seemed

---

[9] On "Giustizia e Libertà", see Giovana 2005; Bresciani 2017.

[10] Bresciani 2009.

by now connected with the Florentine circles of the magazine "Solaria", which strived to keep channels of communication open with the most advanced European culture.

Even with these premises, exile was, of course, a trauma for Chiaromonte too, when he had no choice but to remain in France in 1934: at the end of the year he became aware of the fact that the Fascist police had identified him as "Luciano", author of subtle but cutting analyses of the regime for the "Quaderni di Giustizia e Libertà". The inevitability of a long separation was combined with the fear that his personal choices could open a rift with his family, not least because of the resulting damage to their reputation and wellbeing (Chiaromonte, for whom an arrest warrant was issued, was referred to the Special Court for the Defence of the State in 1935). Chiaromonte's parents – originally from Lucania – did not blame him: they were not in favor of the regime, although they did not share the ideological and political positions that Nicola had taken up after a painful break with the profoundly Catholic upbringing they had given their children, and accepted the situation that had arisen with stoic resignation. The reaction of his three younger brothers and sister was much different: from deaf hostility by the eldest, Mauro, a Jesuit priest, sympathy and support from his sister Giuseppina, to the angry and painful silence of the youngest, Franco. From that moment on, Chiaromonte's correspondence with his relatives was all directed towards defending the choices he made and accepting the inconveniences that arose, protecting his special relationship with Giuseppina from Mauro's influence and laboriously rebuilding his connection with Franco. Like other exiles, through his letters, Chiaromonte tried to soothe a painful detachment – accentuated by the repeated order, handed down by Mussolini himself, to deny a passport to his family so that they could go to France – maintaining, albeit at a distance, a presence in his family's life. This would prove to be, as was often the case for exiles of bourgeois extraction, an essential resource in the years of French exile. Not only did it provide him with the economic support he needed, as he had lost the meagre earnings that came from his collaborations with Italian magazines and was substantially isolated even within the Italian anti-fascist movement, but it also allowed him – albeit at a high price – to pursue his strategy for becoming part of the French intellectual scene.

Because of the particular intellectual rather than political nature of his exile, combined with his relatively young age, Chiaromonte could not and did not want to fully fit into émigré anti-fascism, harshly criticizing the mentality of "fuoruscitismo" that he saw as its most evident political limit. It was precisely the value assigned to the very experience of exile – a decisive broadening of intellectual horizons for which he willing to pay a very high price in material terms – that set him apart from his seniors in

age or in length of emigration, and especially from the "politicians" who had come to France around or immediately after 1925-1926. The latter, although burdened by a sense of defeat, took comfort in the idea of not being part of something unprecedented, but of a new episode in that almost uninterrupted series of expatriates across the Alps which, confused in the flows of economic emigration, had accompanied Italian history since the dawn of the Risorgimento.[11] Above all, the most recent experience, which followed the crisis and the authoritarian attempt at the end of the nineteenth century, seemed to inspire their confidence in the transience of the situation. The result was a general attitude of closure toward French society, where they felt they were "guests" and, if anything, had a sense of urgency in ensuring ideological continuity and organizational support for the political cultures to which they belonged in order not to lose their identity. At the risk of generalizing, this was the position of the old leaders of Italian socialism in its various ramifications, of the Turatis, the Morgaris, the Treves, and most of the Republicans as well, a position that Chiaromonte criticized so severely in the Anti-Fascist Concentration. Even the attitude of *Giustizia e Libertà* – indebted to the middle generation of exiles, those who were between 35 and 40 years old at the time – was not satisfactory in his eyes. Beyond its direct political terms – a different evaluation of the possibilities of action against a regime Chiaromonte conceptualized as "totalitarian", the latter's insistence on the need to think about post-fascism starting from a lucid and unillusioned reflection on what the emergence of totalitarian regimes in European history meant – the dissent that in 1935 set Chiaromonte, Andrea Caffi, Mario Levi and the even younger Renzo Giua against Rosselli, Garosci[12] and Venturi,[13] and that determined their early – at the beginning of 1936 – exit from the Giustizia e Libertà movement brought a different way of interpreting exile. It is no coincidence that, in the harshness of the comparison, their respective lifestyles were called into question, for some too bohemian, for others too petit-bourgeois.[14] In the perspective that interests us here, we could say that the "novatori" as Aldo Garosci[15] would later define them, whose iconoclasm was seen by the leaders of the movement as politically inopportune, refused to renounce precisely that "epistemological privilege of the exile" that we mentioned earlier in the name of the primacy of action and political opportunity. After

[11] Audenino and Bechelloni 2009: 343-369.

[12] See Pipitone 2017.

[13] See Viarengo 2014.

[14] Panizza 2017: 105-120; Bagnoli 1996: 84 *ff*.

[15] Garosci 1946: 100-101.

all, the entire political strategy that Chiaromonte indicated to the Giustizia e Libertà movement was intended to turn exile – or rather, the cosmopolis to which it had given rise – to advantage as the core of a pro-European and international movement that he believed to be the only way out of the crisis of civilization that had spawned totalitarianism. From this standpoint, it is no coincidence that the group of "innovators" had attached itself to the older and very "unfashionable" Andrea Caffi. A Russian-born Italian who had lived for a long time in France and Germany, Caffi was a man of prodigious erudition that bridged the East the West. He seemed to them the incarnation of cosmopolitanism and at the same time of a nineteenth-century cultural tradition, overshadowed by the figure of the professional revolutionary and what would later be called the organic intellectual, but authentic in its utopian impetus.

In confirmation of how much the paths of exile can differ in an almost unlimited multiplicity of factors, Caffi, Chiaromonte, Giua [16] and Levi,[17] despite the intellectual and psychological cohesion achieved by the "gang", as they themselves defined their small "group", were propelled along very dissimilar trajectories in the following years. This divergence was weighed down by their failed attempts to achieve anything more than a passing integration in French society, or to free themselves from the world of escapism, which for some time had also involved two other figures who had ventured along paths that were unorthodox compared to the classical anti-fascist ones, Angelo Tasca and Ignazio Silone, both of whom were not by chance more at ease in the intellectual circles of the host societies – French for the former, Swiss-German for the latter – than in those of Italian political emigration. Giua was swallowed up by the Spanish Civil War – he died in March 1938 – in which Chiaromonte participated briefly (from August to December 1936), without succeeding in inducing either Levi – who moved to Courpière, a small village in the Auvergne, in mid-1935 – or Caffi to join him in Madrid, where he hoped to create a printing center to document the activities of Italian volunteers. Chiaromonte was in fact convinced that mobilizing volunteers in support of the Republic in the civil war could generate something similar to that international, libertarian and pro-European movement he described in his articles for the GL movement. The course of the war and above all the weight assumed by the communists and the Soviet Union within the Republican front quickly disabused him of this hope, pushing him to return to France. The gang re-formed in Paris at the end of 1937, when Caffi, Chiaromonte and Levi worked together with Giuseppe

[16] See Mila 1947; Foa 2004; Foa 2018.

[17] About Mario Levi see Ginzburg 1963.

Faravelli, Emanuele and Vera Modigliani under the direction of Angelo Tasca on a radio program in Italian – essentially news, seeking to unmask Fascist propaganda from across the border in France. The French defeat and the German occupation, however, once again divided their paths. Chiaromonte, even after the death of his first wife, Annie Polh, who was already seriously ill with tuberculosis, was unable to bear the turmoil of the hasty escape from Paris to Toulouse, where the group, like tens of thousands of refugees, fled after the fall of the capital. He thus decided to try to reach the United States. Levi, who like his friend had an emergency visa for the USA, and Caffi – who did not have one and had hoped to find shelter in Mexico – decided to stay in France, where they made a notable contribution, one to the French resistance, fighting in Toulouse under the pseudonym of Antoine, and the other to the survival of Italian socialism (in October 1941, Caffi participated in the drafting of the so-called "Toulouse thesis" insisting, together with Faravelli, on the creation of a European Federation as a revolutionary objective of the antifascist struggle).

Chiaromonte arrived in New York in August 1941, via Algiers-Orano-Casablanca. On Algerian soil, he was helped and hosted by Albert Camus, then a young journalist, not yet revealed as a writer, who was to become one of Chiaromonte's best friends and intellectual guides. It was to Camus, in the first letter he was able to send him after the liberation of the French capital, that Chiaromonte confessed what a qualitatively different experience exile in the United States had been for him, and what difficulties it had entailed at the beginning:

> Il m'a fallu apprendre à écrire en anglais (j'en suis donc à mon troisième changement de langue). Et puis au début je suis tombé dans une triste boutique pour gagner ma vie – et d'autre part l'Amérique m'avait complètement désaxé, démobilisé, réduit en miettes. Rien de ce que je pensais – ou de ce que j'étais, tout simplement – ne paraissait valable ou même réel. Je m'en suis tiré par une certaine révolte réfléchie (dans laquelle, la pensée constante de l'Europe a été un de mes soutiens – l'autre, très vivante aussi, étant Miriam et son amitié de vraie copine.[18]

In a few lines, Chiaromonte summarized the new condition for him as an exile in America where he had arrived as a refugee, without a life project or prospects, even though, as we will see, not totally lacking in resources. The initial difficulty in adapting – the need to learn a new language and to master it enough to be able to use it to resume his intellectual activities, entering the American cultural setting – and therefore the need to do any kind of work in the immediate future, is associated with the new fact of

---

[18] Camus and Chiaromonte 2019: 36.

American society – an encounter described here as a real shock. We have testimony to this in the only letter that remains of those Chiaromonte sent to his family upon arriving on American soil – before the country's state of war with Italy also severed that tenuous bond with his own family – a letter significantly sent to his sister Giuseppina, where Chiaromonte describes New York in these terms:

> New York è grande – questo lo sai – bella, non lo si può dire. Ma forte, con un grande respiro. La sera, ci sono le luci che hai visto al cinematografo. Tutto qui somiglia al cinematografo in modo straordinario. I ragazzi, le ragazze, i poliziotti, i negozi ecc. Poi c'è l'abbondanza: per chi viene dall'Europa adesso, è quasi inquietante, quasi offensiva. Ci si sorprende a fare il conto di quel che si spreca. Di quel che c'è di troppo. Il ben di Dio divenuto abitudine. Vuoi che ti parli dei grattacieli? Non c'è un gran che da dire: ce ne fosse solo uno stupirebbe. Ma sono centinaia, ormai, se si contano le case di più di venti piani. Allora, non è che non ci si fa caso, ma insomma, si dice: ho capito. Quel che si guarda sono i negozi. Sempre per la faccenda del ben di Dio. Ma non c'è una gran varietà, perché anche il ben di Dio ha un limite, e a un certo punto non può che ricominciare. C'è troppo di tutto, direi. Anche troppa gente. Ma tutto in ottimo stato e salute migliore. Va bene. Poi ci sono i musei e le biblioteche, ottime cose, ben fornite, larghe, comode, alla portata di tutti.[19]

If the material difficulties, however, can – as will happen to Chiaromonte – be surmounted once the early hurdles have been successfully overcome (which, in his case as in others, could take several years) to the point that in 1945 Chiaromonte was able to send essential material aid to friends overseas, it was harder for Chiaromonte to escape a more subtle trap that accompanies exile on American soil. It is not just a question of "quality" that America supposedly lacks compared to Europe. It is the easier life that

---

[19] "New York is big – you know that – but you can't say it's beautiful. But strong, with a huge energy. At night, there are the lights you saw at the movies. Everything here is extraordinarily like the movies. The boys, the girls, the cops, the stores and so on. Then there's the abundance: for people coming from Europe now, it's almost disturbing, almost offensive. It's surprising to see how much is wasted. Of what there's too much of. The good things have become a habit. You want me to tell you about skyscrapers? There's not much to say. Ifthere were only one than it would amaze you. But there are hundreds of them now, if you count all the buildings over 20 stories high. Well, it's not that you don't notice them, but you know, you just say: ok, got it. What you looking at are the shops. Always about the good things. But there is not much variety, because even the good things have a limit, and at a certain point it can only start all over again. There's too much of everything, I'd say. Too many people. But everything is in excellent condition and better health. That's all right. Then there are the museums and the libraries, excellent things, well-stocked, large, comfortable, accessible to everybody". Letter by Nicola Chiaromonte to Giuseppina Chiaromonte, 17 September 1941, University of Yale, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Nicola Chiaromonte Papers, GEN MSS 113, Series 1, Outgoing Correspondence, Box 4, Folder 110, Chiaromonte Pina/1930-1951.

is led in a fully developed industrial society, which threatens to strip the exile of his personality, to undermine his individuality, making his whole previous life seem worthless. It is the temptation of oblivion that Chiaromonte struggles against with a "reflexive rebellion" in his New York years – as he wrote to Caffi at the time, the only real experience of exile in his life, since France was never a land of exile for him – trying above all to make the most of his discovery of America, which in his case translates into a further fleshing out of his highly original reflection on mass society and the depersonalizing forces operating in it.

In truth, however, Chiaromonte was not entirely without contacts when he arrived in the United States.[20] Some of his good friends had moved to the US and taken refuge there. Giorgio Diaz de Santillana, overseas since 1936, had become a visiting lecturer at Harvard in September 1938 after an assignment at the New School for Social Research in New York[21] while Rudolf Arnheim, who had taken Chiaromonte's place as film critic for "L'Italia letteraria", left Rome for London in 1938 as a result of the racial laws. He finally settled in the USA in 1940, becoming professor of psychology at Sarah Lawrence College and visiting lecturer at the New School in 1943. On his arrival in the United States in 1940 after a stop in France, he was given shelter by his fraternal friend Paolo Milano, who later became professor of theatre history at the New School. The Dean of the New School was Max Ascoli, who had emigrated to the USA well before the racial laws, and he too was a long-time friend of Chiaromonte.[22] Because of the resources he was able to mobilize and the influence he was able to exert, Ascoli was a fundamental connection between the two sides of the Atlantic. He was also the president of the Mazzini Society and a very active member of the Italian Emergency Rescue Committee, chaired by Lionello Venturi. Thanks in part to the funding it obtained from Augusto Bellanca's Italian-American Labor Council and Luigi Antonini's Italian Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, this organization had set itself the goal of helping the anti-fascists at greatest risk to emigrate. It was Max Ascoli himself, who considered Chiaromonte "one of my best and most valuable friends [whose condition had] reached a degree of appalling severity",[23]

---

[20] Concerning Italian exiles in the US, see Fermi 1968.

[21] Rutkoff and Scott 1986; Sivin 1976: 439-443.

[22] On Max Ascoli, see Grippa 2009; and on the role of Ascoli as a mediator between the world of Italian exile and American society and institutions see the essays contained in the volume edited by Camurri 2012.

[23] Letter by Max Ascoli to Frank Kingdon, 22 August 1940, quoted in Tosiello 2000: 123. Ascoli and Chiaromonte probably knew each other from Chiaromonte's university years in Rome. At the beginning of the conflict, Chiaromonte had indicated Ascoli to his family as a

who included him among the intellectuals to be removed from the reach of the OVRA, quickly securing him an American emergency visa as early as the summer of 1940. When he arrived in New York, however, Chiaromonte, true to his libertarian positions, did not want to become a member of the Mazzini Society,[24] whose concern for Italy's status after the war and for its territorial integrity he did not share, thus aggravating the difficulties of his assimilation in the US. Once again isolated from other anti-fascist emigrants, he preferred to build himself a small circle of exiled friends with whom he could replicate the forms of sociality he had experienced during his French exile, despite the lack of the community ties among the exiles – however heated their political disputes – that he had enjoyed in his years in France. He made friends in particular with Lamberto Borghi and Aldo Bruzzichelli, who had emigrated to the USA as a result of racial laws. Chiaromonte appreciated the former for his intellectual qualities and temperament, in some ways complementary to his own.[25] A trained philosopher influenced by Calogero and Capitini, and professor at Harvard and Cornell between 1942 and 1944, Borghi developed an exclusive interest in pedagogy during his American exile, when he discovered Dewey's teachings. On his return to Italy he became one of the most important representatives of secular and democratic pedagogy in our country. Bruzzichelli, a Florentine textile merchant with a sincere love for culture – in the post-war period he became a music publisher as well as dealing in textiles – had a brought a vigorous practical sense to Nicola's circle of friends. They were later joined by the Italo-Russian writer Niccolò Tucci, who, initially close to fascism, later embraced libertarian anti-fascism.

From 1943, as the war took a turn for the better for the Allies and his material conditions stabilized thanks in part to his marriage to Miriam Rosenthal, Chiaromonte resumed its political activity by collaborating with Gaetano Salvemini,[26] also now involved with the "Mazzini Society", and editor of "l'Italia Libera" together with Enzo Tagliacozzo. However, his collaboration with American intellectuals was more important. Paradoxically, whereas in France his lengthy pursuit of inclusion in the host country's cultural circles had been unsuccessful despite influential friends (among them André Malraux, with whom he had embarked in the Spanish adventure), in the US Chiaromonte became one of the most prominent

---

trusted person to whom they could send the correspondence they wished to address to their son in case of Italian belligerence.

[24] See Varsori 1984; Varsori 1982.

[25] Borghi 1996: 20-27.

[26] Audenino 2007; Killinger 2002.

voices of European culture – at least in radical intellectual circles – writing in magazines such as "The Nation", "Partisan Review" and "The Atlantic Monthly". This was mostly thanks to his friendship with Mary McCarthy and Dwight Macdonald, with whom he shared – becoming a sort of co-director – the adventure of "Politics", perhaps America's most remarkable and unconventional political magazine during the war years.[27]

Contrary to what one might assume and to the choices made by the majority of exiles in America, Chiaromonte decided to return to Europe after the war. Unlike almost all of those he had known during his French exile – at least among the "politicians" – he returned, not to Italy, but to France, to Paris of course. Here he expected, thanks to his friendship with Albert Camus and his reunion with Caffi and Levi, who had always been determined to remain on the other side of the Alps, to renew that pre-war experience of "fraternity", so intellectually and humanly fruitful.

It was precisely the choice to re-establish himself in the French capital, with aspirations that were frustrated again – in 1953, he resigned himself to returning to Rome – that indicated how radically exile had shaped his intellectual personality. Even after his definitive return to Italy, exile was a condition from which he neither wanted or was able to escape by living in one place, or between several places (Rome, Paris, New York). Even after the war, he continued to try in some ways to enhance one peculiar political condition, precisely the condition of the exile, made up at the same time of uprooting and multiple belongings. For some time, before the Cold War with its bipolar logic was at the center of political and intellectual life, he tried, together with Dwight Mac Donald and Mary McCarthy on one side of the Atlantic, and Albert Camus on the other, to bind European and American intellectuals in a common political project, intended to overcome the divisions generated by the conflict and renew democratic political cultures under the banner of a rigorous anti-totalitarianism. Later, he brought these demands to the Congress for Cultural Freedom, a transnational intellectual organization, however clearly lined up to defend the West in the clash with the Soviet bloc, of which he was, together with Ignazio Silone, the principal Italian mover. Mindful of his personal experience, he turned his attention above all to the world of exiles and dissidents from Eastern countries, in particular, thanks to the mediation of Gustav Herling, towards Polish intellectual circles. In doing so, Chiaromonte fulfilled a very important role as mediator between different cultural and linguistic spheres, becoming between the Fifties and Sixties the leading intellectual for the circulation of ideas between the two sides of the Atlantic and be-

---

[27] Sumner 1996.

yond. It is therefore his itinerary that exemplifies all the ambivalences of the twentieth century exile known to those who – stripped in the course of their lives of every strong political and ideological affiliation – elected, to put it in the words of the Spanish philosopher Maria Zambrano – contributor to "Tempo presente", the magazine founded by Chiaromonte together with Ignazio Silone – "esilio a propria patria".

References

Ash M.G. and Sollner A. 1996, *Forced Migration and Scientific Change. Emigré German-Speaking Scientists and Scholars after 1933*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Audenino P. (ed.) 2007, *Il prezzo della libertà. Gaetano Salvemini in esilio (1925-1949)*, Soveria-Mannelli: Rubettino.

Audenino P. and Bechelloni A. 2009, "L'esilio politico fra Otto e Novecento", in P. Corti and M. Sanfilippo (eds.), *Migrazioni. Storia d'Italia. Annali*, 24: 343-369.

Bagnoli P. 1996, *Rosselli, Gobetti e la rivoluzione democratica*, Firenze: La Nuova Italia.

Bechelloni A. (ed.) 1984, *L'Italia in esilio. L'emigrazione italiana in Francia fra le due guerre*, Roma: Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Centre d'Études et de Documentation sur l'Émigration Italienne, Centro Studi Piero Gobetti, Istituto Italiano di Cultura di Parigi.

Bianco G. 1999, *Nicola Chiaromonte e il tempo della malafede*, Manduria: Lacaita.

Borghi L. 1996, "Società e nonviolenza nel pensiero di Andrea Caffi", in G. Landi (ed.), *Andrea Caffi un socialista libertario*, Pisa: BFS Edizioni: 20-27.

Bresciani M. 2017, *Quale antifascismo? Storia di Giustizia e Libertà*, Roma: Carocci.

Bresciani M. 2009, *La rivoluzione perduta. Andrea Caffi nell'Europa del Novecento*, Bologna: il Mulino.

Camurri R. (ed.) 2012, *Max Ascoli. Antifascista, intellettuale, giornalista*, Milano: Franco Angeli.

Camurri R. (ed.) 2009, "L'Europa in esilio", *Memoria e Ricerca*, 17: 31.

Camus A. and Chiaromonte N. 2019, *Correspondance 1945-1959*, S. Novello (ed.), Paris: Gallimard: 36.

D'Angelo F. 2017, "Premessa", *Viaggiatori. Circolazioni, Scambi ed Esilio*, 1 (1): 1.

Fermi L. 1968, *The Illustrious Immigrants: The Intellectual Migration from Europe 1930-1941*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Foa A. 2018, *La famiglia F.*, Roma-Bari: Laterza.

Foa L. 2004, *È andata così: conversazioni a ruota libera in via Aurelia*, Palermo: Sellerio.

Gabrielli P. 2004, *Col freddo nel cuore: uomini e donne nell'emigrazione antifascista*, Roma: Donzelli.

Garosci A. 1946, *Vita di Carlo Rosselli*, Milano: Edizioni U.

Gemelli G. (ed.) 2000, *The 'Unacceptables'. American Foundations and Refugee Scholars between the Two Wars and After*, Bruxelles: P.I.E.-Peter Lang.

Ginzburg N. 1963, *Lessico famigliare*, Torino: Einaudi.

Giovana M. 2005, *Giustizia e Libertà in Italia. Storia di una cospirazione antifascista*, Torino: Bollati Boringhieri.

GRIPPA D. 2009, *Un antifascista tra Italia e Stati Uniti: democrazia e identità nazionale nel pensiero di Max Ascoli* (1898-1947), Milano: Franco Angeli.

HUGHES S. 1975, *The Sea Change: The Migration of Social Thought, 1930-1965*, New York: Harper and Row (it. transl.: *Da sponda a sponda. L'emigrazione degli intellettuali europei e lo studio della società contemporanea*, Bologna: il Mulino: 1977).

JEANPIERRE L. 2009, "Gli emigrati francesi negli Stati Uniti durante la seconda guerra mondiale: un'eccezione?", in R. Camurri (ed.), "L'Europa in esilio. La migrazione degli intellettuali verso le Americhe tra le due guerre", *Memoria e Ricerca*, 31: 27-41.

KILLINGER C. 2002, *Gaetano Salvemini. A Biography*, Westport-London: Paeger.

KROHN C.D. 1993, *Intellectuals in Exile: Refugee Scholars and the New School for Social Research*, Amherst: University of Massachusetts.

LOYER E. 2005, *Paris à New York: intellectuels et artistes français en exil, 1940-1947*, Paris: Grasset.

MILA M. 1947, *Destino spagnolo. Ricordo di Renzo Giua*, Milano: Tipografia Colombi.

MILZA P. and PESCHANSKI D. (eds.) 1996, *Exils et migrations. Italiens et espagnols en France, 1938-1946*, Paris: L'Harmattan.

MILZA P. (ed.) 1986, *Les italiens en France de 1914 à 1940*, Roma: EPR.

MODIGLIANI V. 1946, *Esilio*, Milano: Garzanti.

PANIZZA C. 2017, *Nicola Chiaromonte. Una biografia*, Roma: Donzelli.

PIPITONE D. 2017, *Alla ricerca della libertà. Vita di Aldo Garosci*, Milano: Franco Angeli.

RUTKOFF P.M. and SCOTT W.B. 1986, *New School. A History of the New School for Social Research*, New York, Collier Macmillan.

SIVIN N. 1976, "Giorgio Diaz de Santillana", *Isis*, 67: 439-443.

SUMNER G. 1996, *Dwight Macdonald and the Politics Circle: The Challenge of Cosmopolitan Democracy*, Ithaca-London: Cornell University Press.

TOSIELLO R.J. 2000, "Max Ascoli: A Lifetime of Rockefeller Connections", in G. Gemelli (ed.), *The "Unaccettaptables". American Foundations and Refugee Scholars between the Two Wars and After*, Brussels: P.I.E.-Peter Lang: 123.

TRAVERSO E. 2004, *Cosmopoli. Figure dell'esilio ebraico-tedesco*, Verona: Ombre Corte.

VARSORI A. (ed.) 1984, *L'antifascismo italiano negli Stati Uniti durante la Seconda guerra mondiale*, Roma: Archivio Trimestrale.

VARSORI A. 1982, *Gli alleati e l'emigrazione democratica antifascista (1940-1943)*, Firenze: Sansoni.

VIARENGO A. 2014, *Franco Venturi, politica e storia nel Novecento*, Roma: Carocci.