

removal of the Communists from national leadership a prerequisite for economic assistance, encouraged a major reshuffling of the ruling parliamentary coalition in Rome that brought to an end the experiment in broad anti-fascist collaboration. In May 1947, the Christian Democratic prime minister, Alcide De Gasperi, resigned and then formed a new government that excluded the parties of the left. Instead he relied on a coalition of centrist and right-wing political forces to achieve his parliamentary majority. At the same time, pressure from Moscow led the Italian Communist party to abandon any further compromises with the “parties of the bourgeoisie” and to go into open opposition to the new government. By the end of 1947, the Socialist party agreed to take part in a united Democratic Popular Front with the Communists in preparation for the national elections of the following year.

The elections of April 1948 proved to be the most pivotal political event of the post-war era. In a bitterly fought campaign, unprecedented intervention by the US government, the Italian-American community, and the Roman Catholic Church combined with a soviet *coup d'état* in Czechoslovakia in February to mobilize a massive anticommunist vote on the peninsula. The Italian electorate gave the Christian Democrats a stunning victory at the expense of both the parties of the left and extreme right. The Catholic party won nearly half the vote and gained an absolute majority (305 of the 574 seats) in the Chamber of Deputies, while the Communists emerged as the dominant party on the left, with 140 deputies compared to the 41 won by the Socialists. These results laid the foundation of a political system in Italy that would remain largely unchanged for the next four decades, in which the Christian Democrats dominated every government and western Europe's largest Communist party played the role of a permanent parliamentary opposition. Mounting political polarization also had a major impact on the previously unified Italian labor movement, which now divided into three rival union federations, the General Confederation of Labor (Cgil), which represented Communist and Socialist workers, the Social Democratic and Republican Italian Workers Union (Uil), and the Catholic Confederation of Free Italian Unions (Cisl).

In the years after 1948, the city of Turin found itself on the front lines of the Cold War. The United States government, especially in the early 1950s, viewed the Piedmontese capital as a crucial arena in the struggle against communism. The American ambassador, Clare Boothe Luce, for instance, did not hesitate to caution Valletta in February 1954 that her government's contracts with local companies were contingent upon substantial efforts to exclude leftist unions from any role in the