

The origins of neoliberalism between Soviet socialism and Western capitalism: “A galaxy without borders”

Johanna Bockman

Published online: 11 July 2007

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Abstract Scholars have argued that transnational networks of right-wing economists and activists caused the worldwide embrace of neoliberalism. Using the case of an Italian think tank, CESES, associated with these networks, the author shows that the origins of neoliberalism were not in hegemony but in liminality. At CESES, the Italian and American right sought to convert Italians to free market values by showing them how Soviet socialism worked. However, CESES was created in liminal spaces that opened up within and between Soviet socialism and Western capitalism after the death of Joseph Stalin in 1953. Scholars from East and West at CESES developed new knowledge about actually existing socialism, which, due to the shifting context of the Cold War, seemed to provoke left-wing sympathies among the scholars and the students involved. CESES in fact required left-wing scholars, who had necessary skills and a fascination with a common project of democratic or market socialism, to create this new knowledge. The new knowledge that developed out of an East–West dialogue not only helped right-wing transnational networks to reorient their hegemonic projects, but also helped those on the left to understand actually existing socialism and what socialism might become. This knowledge could not be obtained without this dialogue and had to travel through liminal spaces.

Scholars have argued that transnational networks of right-wing economists and activists caused the worldwide embrace of neoliberalism – policies that seek to establish strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. According to such accounts, economists and activists spread neoliberal ideas through a strategic network of right-wing think tanks, associations like the Mont Pelerin Society, foundations like that of the Scaife family, and economics departments at the University of Chicago and elsewhere (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1999; Cockett 1995; Hartwell 1995; Kelly 1997; Smith 1993; Valdes 1995; Yergin and Stanislaw 1998). The think tanks and foundations, it is argued, packaged the

An organizer of CESES activities agreed that CESES was part of a liminal space, “a Galaxy without borders.” Personal correspondence with CESES organizer, April 4, 2007.

J. Bockman (✉)

Department of Sociology and Anthropology, George Mason University, 4400 University Dr., MSN 3G5,
Fairfax, VA 22030, USA
e-mail: jbockman@gmu.edu

neoliberal ideas of academic economists as a clear and concise course of action and had the resources to promote this package worldwide (Campbell 1998).¹ According to neo-institutionalists, economists and elites marginalized from the mainstream adopted neoliberal ideas to please international constituencies and fuel their own rise to power worldwide, while national institutional conditions shaped the actual realization of neoliberalism in each country (Babb 2001; Dezalay and Garth 2002; Fourcade-Gourinchas and Babb 2002). These processes created a global economics profession dominated by the American economics profession (Fourcade 2006). From a neo-Gramscian view, these neoliberal ideas, networks, institutions, and economic structures worked together to create a hegemonic constellation that supported certain transnational capitalist interests and blocked attempts at considering alternatives to neoliberal capitalism (Gill 1990; Plehwe et al. 2005).

These accounts, however, assume omnipotent activists, who have clear right-wing identities and successfully spread already packaged right-wing or pro-capitalist ideology or propaganda. These accounts also assume clearly identifiable recipients of this propaganda – either other activists or naïve victims – who hear the message of neoliberalism clearly, are converted, and have no other competing economic or political ideas. The right-wing activists appear so empowered in these works because scholars focus on the intentions of American or West European funders or activists and assume unitary national actors without examining the actual activities of these heterogeneous networks. When one looks at neoliberal hegemonic projects on the ground, rather than from the perspective of the activists, it becomes clear that history has been rewritten by these activists and that academia has bought this history. In fact, the origins of neoliberalism are not in hegemony but in liminality. By neoliberalism, I mean proposed or realized government policies that seek strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade as a new form of governmentality resting on new relationships among the economy, the state, society, and the individual. In contrast to European classical liberal philosophy, as Foucault argued, the market mechanism regulates the neoliberal state – inverting the classical liberal relationship between the state and the economy – and strengthens the state and decentered locations of governmentality with novel tools to intervene indirectly throughout society (Lemke 2001).² Neoliberalism – as a political and utopian project – has its origins in transnational discussions about socialism that could take place only within liminal spaces dominated by left-wing scholars and activists. Right-wing activists later appropriated these spaces and their knowledge about markets and planning for battles in their own countries.

The case of the Center for the Study of Economic and Social Problems (CESES, pronounced: chay-sis)³ in Milan, Italy was, to all appearances, a right-wing think tank controlled by transnational right-wing activists. Confindustria, the primary association representing private industry in Italy, created and funded CESES to check not only the influence of the Italian Communist Party but also the influence of a number of Italian capitalists who supported planning and experimental forms of socialism, such as the industrialist and publisher Adriano Olivetti and the millionaire publisher Giangiacomo Feltrinelli. Functioning from 1964 to 1988, CESES sought to create a new managerial class that supported capitalism and rejected communism, by showing members of this class the

¹The epistemic communities literature also examines the ways that new economic ideas influence policy through networks of knowledge-based experts (e.g., Hall 1989).

²American liberalism also employed a strong state, but neoliberalism differs in that it seeks to disembed capital from Keynesian state ownership and state redistribution (Harvey 2005: 10–11).

³CESES was known as either Centro studi economici e sociali or Centro studi e ricerche su problemi economico-sociali.

failures of socialism and revealing the demand for market reforms in Eastern Europe. Members of the Mont Pelerin Society, the transnational network in support of free markets and a limited state, organized and participated in CESES activities. In his memoirs, Milton Friedman presented CESES as part of a broader pro-free-market transnational network centered around himself. Friedman referred to CESES as “the Mont Pelerin Society of the East,” which was founded “to promote free-market ideas” (Friedman and Friedman 1998: 338–339). Milton Friedman, Warren Nutter, and other members of the American New Right were active participants in CESES activities. American right-wing foundations also funded CESES.⁴ CESES published translations of Hayek, Friedman, and other members of the Mont Pelerin Society in Italian. Warren Nutter wrote in 1968:

I know of few activities with greater potential payoff for a relatively tiny investment than the conferences and contacts now being arranged through Mieli [the head of CESES]. In many respects, the hope of the West lies in the East. The best prospect for halting the plunge of the West into collectivism is revolt against communism in the East. It would be romantic to expect any single activity to move the course of history, but drops of water can wear away stone if properly concentrated.⁵

The transnational neoliberal network controlled by right-wing activists considered CESES an essential soldier in the fight to protect and spread capitalism.

When I began studying CESES as one of many locations from which global neoliberalism spread, I realized that the right-wing activist perspective did not explain the global diffusion of neoliberalism, but rather obscured it. I have used the archives of Confindustria, interviews I conducted with 22 CESES organizers or participants, CESES publications, and secondary sources.⁶ This research reveals three important aspects of the history of neoliberalism and suggests that other institutions share similar qualities with CESES.

First, neoliberalism was born from a prediction of, and in some cases a hope for, the convergence of Western capitalism and East European socialism. In the East and the West, Marxists and non-Marxists predicted that all highly industrialized societies would converge economically (with increased economic rationality, concentration of firms, and the rise of a technocratic class), socially (through deproletarianization, the end of class distinctions, and mass consumption), ideologically (with the end of ideologies and an embrace of pragmatism and scientific rationality), and politically (towards democratic socialism, a bureaucratic polity, or apocalyptic totalitarianism; Kelley 1973; Meyer 1970; Nelson 1978).⁷ Scholars on both sides of the Iron Curtain believed that they had common problems emerging from advanced industrialization and common tools to combat these problems, such as scientific

⁴CESES programs were funded by the William Volker Fund, the Scaife Foundation, the Earhart Foundation, and the Relm Foundation (Moore 2003: 23).

⁵Library of Congress, William J. Baroody, Sr., Papers, confidential memorandum to W. J. Baroody and others from G. W. [Warren] Nutter, Subject: CESES Seminar, Florence, September 14–16, 1966. September 29, 1966, pp. 5–6. Reprinted from Bockman and Eyal (2002), p. 336.

⁶The author conducted the interviews with 14 Italian participants in the summers of 2004 and 2005, with 6 American participants from 2000 to 2002, and with 2 Hungarian participants: 1 in 2000 and the other in 2002. The archival research was conducted in summer 2005 at the Confindustria Historical Archives located in Rome, Italy. The Confindustria Historical Archives are referred to as “Confindustria” in the footnotes. All translations were made by the author.

⁷Not everyone wanted convergence, but many predicted convergence would happen. Convergence theory appeared earlier too, such as in the work of Kautsky and those associated with the Labor and Socialist International (Kelley 1973: 174).

management, computer technologies, and democratic pluralism. In contrast, Soviet officials, Chinese officials, and American New Right conservatives held that capitalism and communism had their own separate logics and thus would never converge (Prybyla 1964: 4).⁸ CESES was one of a number of transnational academic meetings driven by an interest in convergence and a fascination with the economic experimentation in the East Bloc. Most well-known, during the 1960s and early 1970s, the Praxis Group in Yugoslavia brought together East European and Western intellectuals at the Korcula Summer School to discuss Marxism and critically analyze both Soviet socialist and Western capitalist societies (Sher 1978). From the late 1970s through the 1980s, Western intellectuals, including Jacques Derrida, Jürgen Habermas, and Richard Rorty, participated in independent seminars organized by Czech dissidents in Prague (Falk 2003: 92–94). Susan Buck-Morss's remarkable *Dreamworld and Catastrophe* emerged out her collaboration with Soviet philosophers in the late 1980s and their "common project of establishing a common *critical* discourse" (Buck-Morss 2002: xii). While not the topic of this article, similar collaborations based on an interest in convergence also took place between intellectuals in the USA, Western Europe, and the Third World. This article is an attempt to remember this belief in convergence and make sense of what happened to this belief in light of the convergence seemingly realized after 1989.

Second, these discussions emerged out of the shifting political, economic, social, and cultural context resulting from criticisms of Stalinism, economic reforms in Eastern Europe, the end of Fordism, new social movements, and new social actors. This shifting context allowed for liminal spaces and liminal individuals to appear. Douglas (1966) and Turner (1967, 1969) theorize that individuals "betwixt and between" statuses are seen as polluting and thus dangerous, as well as charismatic, due to their access to inaccessible and potentially corrupting knowledge of the realms they stand between.⁹ Although examining rituals, Douglas' and Turner's concepts also illuminate the emergence of liminal spaces within Eastern Europe and Western Europe that were critical of Soviet socialism and Western capitalism and that became transnationally connected. As part of these spaces, CESES brought together people with politics outside the usual Cold War dichotomies – including former communists, anti-Soviet socialists, libertarians, East European reformers, and East European émigrés – to discuss the nature of socialism, both actually existing and possible future socialisms.¹⁰ In the Cold War, those at CESES had charismatic and dangerous access to Cold War enemies in a world entering into the 1960s and 1970s.

Third, while most accounts assume the diffusion of preexisting neoliberalism as ideology from the West to the Rest, in fact, neoliberalism developed within liminal spaces, in which the participants created new forms of social scientific, historical, and philosophical knowledge.¹¹ David Harvey (2005) argues that neoliberalism is primarily a political project to restore the power of economic elites with a related, though less important, utopian

⁸Soviet officials had a kind of convergence theory, in which capitalism would evolve into socialism and then communism (Prybyla 1964: 4–5).

⁹Douglas (1966) argues, "To have been in the margins is to have been in contact with danger, to have been at the source of power" (p. 97).

¹⁰My approach is similar to that of Callon (1998), Latour (1988, 1999), Mitchell (1990, 2002), and Ross (2002), who seek to reconnect the heterogeneous networks that create knowledge.

¹¹Chabot and Duyvendak (2002) have shown the shallowness of most understandings of transnational diffusion, which see knowledge as fully formed, flowing from the USA or the West to the Rest, and used unproblematically in the new environment. Globalization theorists who criticize the theses of cultural imperialism and related global homogenization support the arguments made by Chabot and Duyvendak (Hannerz 1997; Tomlinson 1999; Tsing 2001).

project led by neoliberal advocates within the Mont Pelerin Society and other organizations to reorganize international capitalism according to their theoretical design (p. 19). However, when the Mont Pelerin Society began in 1947, its members had very little knowledge about actually existing socialism – since there was little information about the Soviet Union available in the West, had no idea about the future of market socialism in Eastern Europe, had no information about what capitalism would become in the post-Fordist world, and had little information about the conditions required for markets to function. They made many assertions about capitalism, socialism, and markets, but they had few details and had not tried out these ideas in a systematic way.¹² To members of the Mont Pelerin Society, socialism became a laboratory for economic knowledge, knowledge that they could then use for battles about capitalism back in their home countries (Bockman and Eyal 2002). This knowledge was not only utopian or ideological; it also allowed economists and economic elites to understand capitalism through knowledge about socialism and thus shaped the neoliberal political project itself. Furthermore, this knowledge also allowed those on the left in the East and the West to understand actually existing socialism and what socialism could become. This detailed knowledge about the other – Western capitalism or Soviet socialism – could not be obtained directly, but rather had to travel through liminal spaces.¹³

CESES

Opened in 1964 in Milan, Italy, CESES had a budget of \$1.2 million (2006 dollars).¹⁴ A powerful group of Italian industrialists in the leadership of Confindustria, the primary association representing private industry in Italy, provided the majority of the funding to CESES. They decided to create CESES “to break the monopoly which, in the absence of competitive initiatives, the extreme left has succeeded in establishing...among the Italian intellectuals most committed and active in political life.”¹⁵ According to the logic of the Confindustria leadership, the most effective way to undermine communism and the left was to teach people about the goals of Soviet socialism and to show how Soviet socialism had failed in reality. To reach these goals, CESES was “to introduce to our country’s cultural

¹²For example, Friedrich von Hayek changed his ideas in response to developments in actually existing socialism in Eastern Europe. He based his earlier work on a dichotomy between classical liberalism and central planning. With the emergence of market socialism in Eastern Europe, he developed a new understanding of classical liberalism in opposition to market socialism, as can be seen in his final book *The Fatal Conceit* published in 1988 (Shearmur 1996: 73). Boettke (2001) agrees that the debate about the possibility of socialism allowed Austrian school economists to develop their understanding of markets: “It is this debate that taught the Austrian economists how their understanding of the market system differed from their neoclassical colleagues” (p. 5, italics in the original text).

¹³Knowledge production is in fact most intense along borders because “the boundary is that from which something begins its presencing.” Martin Heidegger, “Building, dwelling, thinking,” quoted in Bhabha (1994), p. 1. Many excellent studies of the cultural cold war have started from a study of the intentions of the Cold War superpowers (e.g., Scott-Smith 2002; Saunders 2000). Rather than assume the Cold War divisions between East and West, this article examines knowledge production that can only take place on borders and in liminal spaces.

¹⁴Confindustria 15.1/1, File A. Centro Studi e Ricerche su problemi economico-sociali, CESES, 1964–67, File 1964, inner file “Seminario CESES,” Letter from Vittorio De Biasi to Dr. Furio Cicogna, Nov. 6, 1964. According to this letter, the costs of the first year, 1964, would be 125 million lire.

¹⁵Confindustria 15.1/1, File A. Centro Studi e Ricerche su problemi economico-sociali, CESES, 1964–67, File 1964, inner file “Seminario CESES,” “Relazione sull’Attività del CESES,” Oct. 7, 1964. Attachment 3: “Schema operativo di un centro di studi sui problemi del socialismo,” p. 1.

and entrepreneurial milieu – as far as possible – exact knowledge of socialism, understood not as a utopia projected into the future, rather as a reality already experimented with for a long time in various countries.”¹⁶ Therefore, CESES had to teach the Italian people, and especially the elites, about Marxist–Leninist theories and the realities of already existing socialism in the East Bloc in order to persuade them to support liberal democracy and the market economy at home.¹⁷ To achieve these goals, CESES had three main activities: the development of Sovietological expertise in Italy, Sovietological publications, and anti-communist youth leadership training.¹⁸

Liminal spaces, liminal people

Almost immediately, regional members of Confindustria balked at the costs of CESES, and CESES supporters attending its activities criticized the organization. Regional Confindustria offices paid the CESES budget through yearly subscriptions. They also recommended young students from their regions as participants in CESES activities. When CESES met with Confindustria regional leaders to ask for financial support, these leaders claimed to support the goals of CESES, but they did not want to pay their subscription fees. Instead, they wanted to use these funds to support candidates in local election campaigns and other local activities. Within the first year and a half, the CESES budget was cut by 40 million lire, about 25% of its budget.¹⁹ A high-level Confindustria officer attended an international economics conference run by CESES and found that the conference did not succeed and had gone far from its original goals. The conference did not “fully adhere to the institutional task of anti-communism, which CESES claims.”²⁰ Confindustria continued to fund CESES, but the criticisms accumulated. A participant in the youth training courses reported that there were “elements oriented to the left” in the courses and the teachers were often left-wing.²¹ This criticism forced the CESES leadership try to sell the idea of CESES once again to the regional offices of Confindustria.²² A regional leader in Confindustria told the CESES organizers that critics had informed him that the whole ambiance of CESES had taken a turn to the left.²³ Confindustria finally stopped paying for CESES in 1976, though CESES would continue until 1988. What was going on at CESES?

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷One CESES participant noted that if CESES founders had wanted to convert East Europeans to capitalism they would have discussed Western capitalism directly (Author’s interview, May 28, 2004).

¹⁸As a reflection of the importance of Sovietology to Confindustria, according to one observer, there was a central committee of top-level Confindustria industrialists – called by some “the 12 apostles of Christ” – in which one of the “apostles” was tasked to develop the study of Communism (Pistolese 1996: 5–6).

¹⁹Confindustria 15.1/1. File A: Centro Studi e Ricerche su problemi economico-sociali, CESES, 1964–67. File 1966. File: Corrispondenza, “Relazione sulle finalità e attività del CESES,” July 18, 1966, p. 13.

²⁰These unsigned notes were most likely written by Gennaro Pistolese. Confindustria 15.1/1, File A. Centro Studi e Ricerche su problemi economico-sociali, CESES, 1964–67, File: 1966, File: Seminario Internazionale di Firenze: 14/16-9-66, “Appunto per il Segretario Generale,” n. 131, Sept. 19, 1966, p. 5.

²¹Giuliano Cittanti, a participant in the CESES courses, reported his criticisms to Confindustria. His report is described in Confindustria 15.1/1, CESES B., File: 1968, File: Programma, “CESES – Corso propedeutico Ottobre 1967, Relazione Dicembre 1967 del dott. Cittanti (Ferrara),” Jan. 16, 1968.

²²Confindustria 15.1/1. CESES B, File 1968, File: Programma. Letter from Vittorio De Biasi to Dr. Angelo Costa, President of Confindustria, Jan. 16, 1968.

²³Confindustria 15.1/12. Letter from Luigi Valenti of the Centro Studi Attività Economiche to Vittorio De Biasi, Oct. 31, 1969.

CESES was created in the liminal space that opened up within and between Western capitalism and Soviet socialism after the death of Stalin in 1953. In his famous 1956 criticism of Stalin, Khrushchev opened the door to reevaluating the Soviet past and suggesting other socialist pathways. Importantly, the new negative label of “Stalinism” for the earlier system allowed the aspects of critiques of the system to become a critique of the whole system (Strada 1988: 28), and motivated thought about other forms of socialism. Zizek (2001) has commented on this phenomenon:

Although the Communist regimes, in their positive content, were mostly a dismal failure, generating terror and misery, they simultaneously opened up a certain space, the space of utopian expectations, which, among other things, enabled us to measure the failure of actually existing Socialism itself. (p. 131)

Zizek (1999) argues that, in its “attempt to escape the logic of capitalism,” communism itself opened and sustained this space (p. 9). Similarly, as Falk (2003) argues, democratic socialist criticism of existing Communist regimes emerged from a radical and democratic reading of Marxism–Leninism (pp. 25, 61).²⁴ Yet, the negative nature of this criticism, as anti-Stalinist, meant that this liminal space contained many alternatives and traditions.

A similar space also emerged in Italy, which had a strong Communist party. The revelations of Khrushchev and then the Soviet intervention in Hungary in 1956 caused thousands to leave the Italian Communist Party (PCI).²⁵ A liminal space emerged as Communists rejected both the PCI and the party in power, the Democratic Christian Party (DC), the two poles in Italian politics. The main founders of CESES were themselves former PCI members: Renato Mieli, Vittorio De Biasi, and Carlo Ripa di Meana. In the PCI, Mieli had worked directly with Palmiero Togliatti, the party leader, and became the director of the Milanese edition of the party newspaper *L’Unita* (Mieli 1996). Ripa di Meana was the editor of *World Student News*, the major publication of the communist International Union of Students, published in Prague. Mieli and Ripa di Meana left the PCI around 1957, in response to the Soviet repression of the Hungarian uprising (Ripa di Meana 2000). After leaving the PCI, Mieli joined a research center in the Edison company and Confindustria, working with Vittorio De Biasi, who was a former close colleague of Antonio Gramsci and was now a powerful, “visceral anti-communist” leader of the Edison company (Mieli 1996: 124–125). Ex-PCI members were not trusted by others because their political orientation was not clear.²⁶ For example, these three figures relentlessly criticized the PCI and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, while Mieli also declared in 1964 that he was one of the “militants of the Italian workers movement” and continued to speak at socialist conferences until at least 1988.²⁷ Mieli repeatedly declared that he was inspired

²⁴As Oushakine (2001) has shown, dissidents’ oppositional discourse was not separate from the official discourse, but rather mimicked this discourse. Similarly, Burawoy (1992) writes, “Rather than endorsing alternative values, the working class embraced the regime’s values as its own, which became a basis for opposition to the regime’s actual practice” (p. 777).

²⁵In the literature, there seems to be some agreement that about 200,000 people left the PCI between 1956 and 1958 (Bracke and Jorgensen 2002: Appendix; Galli 2000: 51; Groppo and Riccamboni 1987: 112). However, people also left the PCI before 1956 (Blackmer 1975: 54).

²⁶Mieli (1996) remembered that it was difficult for him and many other former “communists by profession” to find work after leaving the PCI because many did not trust ex-communists and the “anti-communists” felt satisfied by the PCI crisis without doing anything to help the ex-communists (pp. 122–124).

²⁷In 1964, Mieli had written a book with many others on the Italian Communists who had died during the Stalinist purges. After quoting Rosa Luxemburg calling for freedom of thought, the authors identified themselves as “militants of the Italian workers movement” (Zaccaria 1964: 7).

by Khrushchev's revelations about Stalin and was not "anti-communist": "For the same reasons that I became an anti-fascist, I could not be an anti-communist." (Mieli 1996: 99).²⁸ Mieli became the director of CESES and its driving force. The founders of CESES did not show a clear anti-communist, anti-left identity.

This space of former PCI members linked up with an already existing, small anti-Soviet socialist culture in Italy. Italy has had a long history of attempts to create different forms of democratic socialism, which fascism and the Cold War undermined.²⁹ For CESES, liberal socialist Andrea Caffi was particularly important.³⁰ The main biographer of Caffi, Gino Bianco, headed the history section at CESES, while other socialists headed other sections, Giorgio Galli was the head of the sociology section and Carlo Ripa di Meana ran the cultural section.³¹ Reflecting the general ambiance of CESES, Caffi followed a kind of Proudhonian socialism, an anarchism that rejected the state, centralization, rationalization, scientific planning, nationalism, and political parties (Bianco 1977). As described positively by a young CESES participant, Caffi supported "direct socialist action to increase the social control on bureaucratic mechanisms and on the oligarchic power of industrial corporations. Only in such a way is it humanly possible to protect the freedom of the individual" (Monti-Bragadin 1971: 62). Caffi argued for the long-term subversive potential of underground counterculture, consisting of networks of small groups of individuals, practicing and preaching the Enlightenment virtues of cosmopolitan sociability: friendship, equality, mutuality, tolerance, and open dialogue (Sumner 1996: 150). CESES can thus be seen as an attempt to put Caffi's liberal socialism into practice.³²

Others within the liminal space did not define themselves as on the left, but as "liberals." This group included the head of the research section, Renato Pavetto, and the head of the economics section, Giovanni Salvini, both of whom came from the newspaper funded by Confindustria, *Il Sole 24 Ore*. Though after leaving the PCI he never joined another political party, Mieli would eventually define himself as a liberal and join the Mont Pelerin Society. Some participants saw the goal of CESES as building "a liberal culture" in Italy.³³ At the same time, a few participants defined themselves as "liberal" because they would

²⁸In 1964, Mieli published his revelations about Togliatti's official role in the killing of Polish Communist Party members, after, Mieli claims, being inspired by Khrushchev's revelations (Mieli 1988: 17).

²⁹Urbinati and Canto-Sperber (2004) and the translations edited by Urbinati (Gobetti 2000; Rosselli 1994) reveal the Italian tradition of bringing together liberalism and socialism. In this article, I am speaking about a broader and more heterogeneous group than just liberal socialists.

³⁰Caffi lived from 1887 to 1955. Caffi was exiled from Russia, after his participation in the 1905 revolution, and saw himself as on the left. Caffi returned to the Soviet Union and worked there in the early 1920s only to leave again after being arrested. In Italy, Caffi worked against the Mussolini government and was tortured by the Nazis in prison (Bianco 1977).

³¹Before working at CESES, Gino Bianco was the editor of *Critica Sociale*, the main journal of the autonomous socialist movement. Galli had also written for this journal (Galli 2000: 21). The autonomous socialist movement sought to be independent from the Soviet socialist movement and was formed long before Antonio Negri's *Autonomia Operaia* emerged in 1973 (Wright 2002). One of the editors at CESES, Alfredo Azzaroni, later became the editor of *Metropoli*, a journal of this later *Autonomia* movement.

³²Caffi and his close colleague Nicola Chiaromonte had much earlier talked about establishing a small publishing house, a journal, and a commune (Bianco 1977: 90). Chiaromonte popularized Caffi's ideas in the USA while working at the *politics* journal, which included Dwight McDonald, Mary McCarthy, and Gaetano Salvemini (Sumner 1996).

³³Author's interviews: May 19, 2004; May 20, 2004; July 22, 2005.

listen to others, as opposed to extremists who would not.³⁴ In general, however, liberals in Europe primarily supported economic and political liberalism.

While this emerging liminal space was liminal precisely because its members had such differing views, they did share some characteristics. These individuals were strongly anti-PCI, anti-Soviet, anti-fascist, often anarchist, and often secular.³⁵ Since they often rejected all the existing political parties, many worked in universities, think tanks, journals, and other areas of cultural work in Italy, rather than as politicians.³⁶ They thus had a great influence on Italian culture (Bobbio 1999: 83; Teodori 1998: xxvii). They sought to change Italy fundamentally, in order to move beyond the fascist past, to avoid future totalitarianism, and to create a new society. In their view, empirical research was an essential part of this new society because, reflecting the influence of Karl Popper's *The Open Society and its Enemies* (Popper 1950), dialogue and empirical testing of hypotheses would reveal the lies of ideologies and totalitarianism.³⁷ They criticized the PCI and "Italian culture" for its commitment to Marxist–Crocean historicism, its rejection of modern social science, and, as Italo Calvino asserted, having "given us so little with which to understand the world" (Sassoon 1996: 262). Finally, those occupying this liminal space were also interested in European convergence and sought contacts with East Europeans in the Soviet bloc in the hopes that discussions and friendships would make a future world war more difficult and would lay the groundwork for reunited Europe.³⁸ CESES shared these qualities and was one of many such institutions in Italy.³⁹

East Europeans living in Eastern Europe and those living abroad brought new knowledge and politics to transnationally connected liminal spaces. On the one hand, East European dissidents openly condemned Communist parties. On the other hand, as Žižek (1999) has observed, more "reform-minded" East Europeans did not make these overt condemnations and thus were more useful for East–West dialogues inspired by dreams of détente and convergence, like those at CESES. Former dissident émigrés were deeply divided politically, ranging from "voices truly frightening in their vehement and blind hatred of everything modern, everything progressive, achieved in Russia and throughout the world since the age of Enlightenment" to those who supported democratic socialism in

³⁴Author's interview, May 28, 2004. Another person in the CESES youth programs said that CESES hoped to create a "pragmatic" political elite like those in the American political system, where elites, according to this view, could have debate (Author's interview, May 17b, 2004).

³⁵This group defined themselves as *laico*. While *laico* means secular, some Italian intellectuals have denied that it is anti-religious and have expanded its meaning to include European liberalism (e.g., Giorello 2005).

³⁶The journals included *Il Politecnico*, *Mondo operaio*, *Il Ponte*, *Comunita* (later *Critica sociologica*), *Nord e Sud*, *Il Mondo*, *Tempo Presente*, *Problemi del socialismo*, *Rivista storia del socialismo*, and *Tempi Moderni* (Tranfaglia 2005: 279–289).

³⁷Mieli (1984) himself had long been committed to a Popperian process of reevaluation of his political beliefs and called for the use of the "experimental method" in politics in order to verify one's political beliefs in a laboratory (p. 146).

³⁸To build a grassroots-based public sphere outside conventional politics and the Cold War blocs, intellectuals sought to create numerous organizations including the Congress for Cultural Freedom, *Recontres internationales de Geneve*, and *Societa europea di cultura*. Norberto Bobbio (1999) worked in the 1950s with these organizations to reunite Europe and considered those who sought out East–West connections as naturally on the left. Berghahn (2001) finds similar characteristics among a smaller group of intellectuals around the Congress for Cultural Freedom.

³⁹Gramsci's "war of position" reflected a widespread Italian belief in the need to wage a cultural war to control civil society. The CESES founders had also worked in journals of either the PCI or the international communist movement as leaders of the cultural wing of the PCI, and thus were well acquainted with the PCI's strategies.

the Soviet Union and elsewhere (Deutscher 1977). More “reform-minded” East European émigrés played a central role in CESES. Émigrés who participated in CESES activities included Alec Nove, Vaclav Belohradsky, Andrzej Brzeski, Alfons Clary-Aldringen, Jiří Pelikán, and Eugène Zaleski. Émigrés brought first-hand information about the East Bloc and had a great deal of passion about the events going on in the region.

Americans were also part of these transnationally connected liminal spaces. Many American scholars, often East European émigrés, took part in international conferences to bring together those from the West and East. Some of these American scholars belonged to the American New Right. Looking for allies in their battles at home, the American New Right saw those in the Italian liminal space – and in other similar spaces worldwide – as anti-communism, anti-state, and pro-free market allies. They did not necessarily understand the heterogeneous nature of this space, communicating in English with the CESES founders who needed funding and thus had an interest in presenting CESES as a location of stable identities and allies. The American two-party system and the identification of the American Left with state-directed programs led the American New Right to interpret liminal spaces as part of itself. The Italian political landscape was much more fragmented and more heterogeneous than that in the USA.⁴⁰

These liminal spaces expanded through the 1960s and 1970s. They were not centrist or a slippery slope towards neoconservatism, as in the case of the New York Intellectuals.⁴¹ They formed a heterogeneous network, “a Galaxy without borders,” as one CESES organizer put it, that shared some characteristics.⁴² CESES was one of many institutions that brought heterogeneous groups into dialogue to understand socialism and capitalism. The shifting context of the Cold War that allowed this “Galaxy” to emerge would continue to change with post-Fordism, new social actors, new social movements, and reforms in Eastern Europe. The nature of this space could be perceived as homogeneous only from some stable location that did not exist, but could be made to appear to exist only after 1989.

Sovietology and liminality

The Confindustria leadership funded CESES to counter the PCI, by confronting the world with “what communism is.”⁴³ To do so, CESES imported American Sovietology to Italy. CESES editors translated and reprinted articles from the top American Sovietological journals: *Problems of Communism* and *Soviet Studies*. American Sovietology seemed to provide the perfect antidote to Soviet socialism. Created within the emerging Cold War and the politics of the McCarthy era, American Sovietology, with its theory of totalitarianism,

⁴⁰The Kennedy and the Johnson Administrations had also supported liminal spaces because they were seen as a way to combat communism. The CIA and other American government agencies used those from the anti-communist left, through such organizations as the Congress for Cultural Freedom, to fight the cultural Cold War (Scott-Smith 2002; Saunders 2000). However, by 1964, American funding priorities had changed, and CESES could find support only from the American New Right.

⁴¹According to Wald (1987), the “New York Intellectuals” abandoned their Trotskyist origins to embrace Cold War liberalism and then neoconservatism. Critics of Wald have pointed out the more complex nature of the American anti-Stalinist left and found that the path from Trotskyism to neoconservatism describes only a part of this group (e.g., Lipsitz 1988, Wolfe 1988).

⁴²See footnote 1. The attempts to bring together these groups into umbrella parties continued to fail throughout the Cold War (Bobbio 1999; De Grand 1989).

⁴³Confindustria 15.1/1. File A. Centro Studi e Ricerche su problemi economico-sociali, CESES, 1964–67. File 1966. File: Corrispondenza. Letter from Vittorio De Biasi to Dr. Angelo Costa, July 19, 1966.

only criticized the Soviet Union, did not criticize the American system, viewed the Soviet Union as fundamentally different – culturally, economically, socially, and politically – from Western countries, claimed moral superiority of the West over the Soviets, and practiced a knee-jerk anti-Communism (Gleason 1995; Meyer 1993). CESES transported American Sovietology to Italy in the hopes of undermining the PCI and the left more generally.⁴⁴

The founders of CESES created a Sovietological center that examined the economics, politics, sociology, and history of the East Bloc. CESES began operations with an annual international economics conference to spread knowledge about the Soviet Bloc worldwide. The 2 to 3 day conferences were held annually in various cities around Italy from 1964 to 1984, and were reported in the mainstream Italian press. At these conferences, internationally recognized experts discussed economic Sovietological topics. After the first year, East European economists also took part in these conferences. In addition to economics conferences and an economics section that conducted research, CESES also had conferences and research sections covering the sociological, historical, and legal study of the East Bloc. These conferences and the work of the sections were intended to develop and publicize the most up-to-date knowledge about the realities of Soviet socialism and the PCI, as well as to interest a new cohort of recent college students (*laureandi* and *laureati*) and new professors (*assistenti*) in Sovietological research and teaching. To further this research, CESES created an archive of documents about communist movements and a large library, which in its first 6 months acquired 1,500 volumes, as well as journals from around the world. CESES also published a Sovietological journal, *L'Est*, which contained articles by Italians, as well by non-Italians in translation, and a bulletin of translated articles from the Soviet and East European press, *Documentazione sui Paesi dell'Est*.⁴⁵ Within a year of its opening, CESES was a fully functioning center for Sovietological research.⁴⁶

The international economics conferences run by CESES evoked doubts, however, in the minds of its funders. To the funders, the conferences appeared sympathetic towards communism. For example, as mentioned earlier, one high-level Confindustria officer found that the third international economics conference did not “fully adhere to the institutional task of anti-communism, which CESES claims.”⁴⁷ There were several reasons why CESES appeared sympathetic towards communism.

⁴⁴Similarly, American foundations sought to export American social science to Europe “in hopes of discouraging the expansion of Marxism in social and political studies” and strengthening “Western democracies using the social sciences to stimulate social and economic reform” (Gemelli and Row 2003: 183).

⁴⁵From 1967 to 1971, CESES also published *Notizie Est*, a news service for newspapers and magazines, and a book series, *Cultura Libera*. In the *Cultura Libera* series, CESES published 17 books, including Friedrich von Hayek, Milton Friedman, Francois Fejto, Hannah Arendt, Neil J. Smelser’s *Theory of Collective Behavior*, and Adam Ulam’s work on the Russian Revolution. While one might have expected CESES to highlight Hayek’s and Friedman’s works, the CESES report of its activities in 1969 noted the “most significant works” in the series: Wittfogel’s *Oriental Despotism* and J. Thayer’s *Italy and the Great War*. Confindustria 1969–70. File: CESES: Relazioni. “Relazione sull’attività svolta nel 1969,” p. 10. One CESES participant remembered that only 70 copies were made of some of the *Cultura Libera* books (Author’s interview, June 4, 2004).

⁴⁶CESES was consciously modeled on the Cattaneo Institute in Bologna, which opened in 1956 and became a center for empirical social science research focused on the Italian educational system and electoral politics (Catanzaro 2000; Galli 2000: 101). Cattaneo imported American social science, after establishing a relationship with the Kennedy Administration and American foundations. Giorgio Galli had worked at Cattaneo before joining CESES. Similar to CESES, Cattaneo and its related publishing house Il Mulino published social science journals and books, trained students and young professors in social science methods, and conducted social science research.

⁴⁷Confindustria 15.1/1, “Appunto per il Segretario Generale,” n. 131, Sept. 19, 1966, p. 5.

In interviews, former CESES participants agreed that CESES used its conferences and publications as “elegant propaganda” or “clever propaganda.”⁴⁸ CESES was not overtly anti-communist, but rather “pragmatic” and “objective.”⁴⁹ Mieli sought to show how socialism functioned in Eastern Europe and used East European economists as witnesses to the problems in East European planning in order to provide intellectually sophisticated proof for the failure of Soviet socialism. However, this scholarly proof did not yet exist to be packaged as ideology. With the changes in the post-Stalinist period in the Soviet Bloc, it was difficult to know what would happen in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Would Stalinism be reintroduced? Would there be anti-Stalinist revolutions in the region as there were in East Germany in 1953 and Hungary in 1956? Would economic reforms fundamentally change Soviet socialism? As a result, Sovietologists had to study a moving target and could no longer make simple claims about communism. As one newspaper reporter recounted about one of the CESES conferences, “It is difficult to draw conclusions from these conversations...the opinions of the experts differ greatly, they say here that it is time to discard simplistic or ‘sensational’ hypotheses.”⁵⁰

By 1960, Sovietologists in the USA and elsewhere had begun a revolution in their own field, condemning the totalitarian framework that dominated Sovietology and calling for comparative politics and comparative economics.⁵¹ As a result of their original totalitarian framework and its structural functionalist assumptions, Sovietologists had presented the Soviet Union as an unchanging system, for the functional subsystems of Stalinism did not have a reason to change. After Khrushchev’s attack on Stalin, Sovietologists criticized the totalitarian model and sought new tools to understand the changing East Bloc. These new tools were those of mainstream social science, which assumed similar institutions and processes in the East and West. In addition, the East Bloc became increasingly differentiated. In Hungary, Poland, and Yugoslavia, for example, the party-state leadership implemented economic reforms, allowed dissident communities, and witnessed political movements and revolutions. Within Sovietology, those in East European Studies followed these new developments with interest and were considered less conservative than those studying the Soviet Union. The turn away from the totalitarian framework and structural functionalism and toward mainstream social science tools and a focus on Eastern Europe created a new kind of Sovietology in the 1960s.

In the 1950s and 1960s, the study of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe was virtually impossible in Italian universities. While CESES covered many areas of Sovietology, it was the only Italian institution that had a research focus on socialist

⁴⁸ Author’s interviews: May 19, 2004; June 3, 2004.

⁴⁹ Author’s interviews: May 17b, 2004; May 19, 2004; August 13, 2004.

⁵⁰ Confindustria 15.1/12. Newspaper clippings sent Aug. 5, 1970. Pino Querenghi, “Dove passano i confini della mappa del potere,” *La Voce Repubblicana*, July 24/25, 1970.

⁵¹ Gleason (1995) considers Robert Tucker the person who initiated this revolution: “Tucker was the first to express a feeling that was almost certainly more broadly shared: that study of the Soviet Union was taking place in too isolated an arena. He contended that a more comparative approach was necessary, since the comparison entailed in totalitarianism, primarily that between Nazi Germany and Communist Russia, was too narrow” (p. 128). The American Council of Learned Societies invested large sums of money in the development of comparative Communist studies through new publications, associations, and retooling in the 1960s, while American Political Science Association and other associations had broad debates about the future of Sovietology (Fleron 1969: 28). In comparative economics, Gregory Grossman was one of the pioneers and a long-time participant in CESES international economic seminars.

economies.⁵² Sovietology had a controversial history in Italy. University professors and many others were suspicious of imported American social science and empiricism more generally, which greatly informed the new Sovietology.⁵³ Comparative politics, which included political Sovietology, entered the universities in the 1960s after much resistance (Morlino 1991). On the economics side of Sovietology, university faculty did not want students to learn Marxist economics and no one taught Soviet economics.⁵⁴ The first comparative economics courses, which covered economic Sovietology, were not taught until 1970.⁵⁵ Moreover, Italian universities had no formal graduate training until the 1980s (Cotta 1996: 340). Italian social scientists began teaching in universities after completing their undergraduate degrees. Since there was no university training in Sovietology, CESES provided previously unavailable training and teaching resources, including its international conferences, published proceedings from these conferences, its translations of the East European press, and its Sovietological journal.

CESES can be seen as one of many institutions - including Harvard University's Russian Research Center and Columbia University's Russian Institute - simultaneously creating a new Sovietology based on broader changes in the social sciences and in Eastern Europe. Until Stalin's death in 1953, there had been very few interactions between the capitalist and socialist blocs and thus little information flowed between them. After 1953, scholarly exchanges and other forms of travel were allowed (Richmond 2003), but it was still difficult to get information about what was happening in Eastern Europe beyond the official sources.⁵⁶ Existing books and articles on the region did not provide enough information to assist potential teachers or researchers. As one CESES participant noted, right-wing and left-wing evaluations of Eastern Europe were not helpful because the right-wing ones were polemically negative and the left-wing ones were naively apologetic. Reading hundreds of books and articles did not replace talking with East Europeans at CESES conferences or reading the proceedings of these conferences.⁵⁷ Informal discussions with East Europeans, where East Europeans seemed to speak more freely, were especially appreciated by the Italian and American scholars. American scholars particularly benefited from CESES conferences because US visa restrictions allowed them even less contact with East European scholars or East European Communist Party members than Italian scholars had.⁵⁸ CESES participants provided scarce and invaluable information, and translated this information for one side or the other during the Cold War. As one participant in CESES

⁵²The Gramsci Institute worked on historical and political topics. The Feltrinelli Institute studied historical topics. The Trieste Institute for the Study and Documentation on Eastern Europe (ISDEE) focused primarily on trade.

⁵³Sovietology and earlier Slavic studies had long existed in Italy. Slavic studies were associated with Mazzini Europeanism and then were used by the Italian fascist state in its attempts to take over Eastern Europe (Santoro 2003).

⁵⁴Author's interview: May 19, 2004 and May 31c, 2004.

⁵⁵Author's interview, May 31a, 2004. Many Italian students went abroad to do graduate work. While some went to the USA or England, others went to Poland and Hungary, where the most exciting innovations in economics were happening in the 1960s.

⁵⁶Even in 1993, Motyl remarked "[e]xcept for the Smolensk materials and a smattering of other documents, until recently scholars had no direct and unimpeded access to Soviet archives. Soviet evidence filtered, screened, selected, misrepresented" (Motyl 1993, p. 85).

⁵⁷Author's interview, May 31a, 2004. It was even better to travel to Eastern Europe. CESES participants used their contacts with East Europeans to organize research trips to Eastern Europe and meet a wide range of specialists there.

⁵⁸Author's interviews: May 17a, 2004 and May 20, 2004.

conferences remembered, “We as go-betweens were happy to translate their contributions into formulations understandable by Western economists” (Lavigne 1997: 481). Scholars practicing the new Sovietology – no matter what their personal political predilections – required heterogeneous networks meeting in liminal spaces like CESES.

While CESES activities brought together people with a wide range of political orientations, those who identified with the left were the most successful in CESES activities. They had the ability, skills, and interest to gain access to the East Bloc. Those on the left could more easily enter the East Bloc to do research. The main organizers and many of the employees of CESES had spent significant amounts of time in the Soviet Union and socialist Eastern Europe, where they had seen actually existing socialism in operation and met East Europeans critical of the Stalinist system.⁵⁹ Those on the left could most easily cross the Cold War divide and speak with a range of individuals with direct knowledge of actually existing socialism. Renato Mieli had spent much time in the East Bloc while he worked for the PCI. When Carlo Ripa di Meana (2000) worked in Prague, he met many dissidents and visiting Italians interested in meeting dissidents. Dario Staffa, Russian translator and a journal editor at CESES, worked at the Casa di Cultura in Moscow and learned then about Russian dissident literature.⁶⁰ Those on the left also studied socialist theory and practice, which helped their research. As one participant in CESES activities remembered, those interested in market socialism learned socialist doctrine because

The doctrine was a kind of code; once the code was deciphered it was much easier to understand the books and articles and to read between the lines, an exercise we were all familiar with. Also, for Western economists who wanted and managed to travel to these countries and meet their colleagues, knowledge of the doctrinal code facilitated access to sources and to institutions (Lavigne 1997: 480–481).

Knowing “the code” and having a left-wing sensibility allowed for contact with East Europeans.⁶¹ In addition to knowing “the code,” those on the left who had lived in the East Bloc had language abilities that enabled them to communicate with a variety of East Europeans. These language abilities were also essential to the work of CESES. Employees read the East European press on a daily basis in search of articles for *Documentazione sui Paesi dell’Est*, a journal published every 2 weeks and containing articles from the Czech, Chinese, Yugoslav, Polish, Hungarian, and Soviet press.⁶²

Those on the left also often had the most interest in Eastern Europe. For example, Carlo Ripa di Meana agreed to work with Mieli to set up CESES to conduct Sovietological research, “A task which I found fascinating.... I had had the occasion to see from the inside

⁵⁹Barghoorn (1960) writes, “roughly from 1948 to 1953 – most of the contacts between Russia and the noncommunist world, especially Western Europe and America, were between Soviet delegations and foreign communists or fellow-traveler groups, or between visiting groups composed mainly or at least partly of such persons and Soviet communist party and government agencies” (p. 16).

⁶⁰Author’s interview (May 20, 2004) and Staffa (1975).

⁶¹One CESES participant told me that he had “credibility” with those on the left because his scientific works revealed “socialist values.” Author’s interview, May 28, 2004.

⁶²The CESES press office also sought to “reveal problems that do not have a solution” (inside cover of *Documentazione sui Paesi dell’Est* 1965), which drove them to trawl the less censored provincial papers looking for these problems. The CESES leadership determined, “We have reason to think that only CESES, in Italy, is able to supply news and information that only systematic scrutiny of the minor presses of the USSR and the satellites allows.” *Confindustria* 15.1/1. File A. Centro Studi e Ricerche su problemi economico-sociali, CESES, 1964–67. File 1964, File Seminario CESES. “Relazione sull’attività del CESES,” Oct. 7, 1964. p. 5.

the society of my dreams” (Ripa di Meana 2000: 119). Participants in CESES conferences reported that the Italian students involved were generally on the left and were sympathetic to socialist countries.⁶³ One economist who was at CESES numerous times said that the Americans were “boring” because they only collected facts from the East Europeans.⁶⁴ Those on the left at CESES conferences saw themselves working together with East Europeans on a common project of what we might call market socialism or democratic socialism. One participant in CESES remembered: “for those of us – a minority [in economics] – who believed in a ‘feasible socialism’, all that revolved around ‘market socialism’ (including its critics) was significant” (Lavigne 1997: 480). The fascination with market socialism generally covered two broad areas, innovations in planning and innovations in worker self-ownership, which represented very different, and often conflicting, understandings of socialism.

Reflecting the widespread belief in the convergence of Soviet socialism and Western capitalism, the majority of West European *and* American economists shared a great interest in planning, especially in the planning methodologies East European economists were testing.⁶⁵ Western economists were interested in Eastern Europe as a laboratory for economic ideas, including econometrics, linear programming, and theories of prices (Bockman and Eyal 2002). East European economists had actually used economic models to fix prices according to classical price theories, which was of great interest to those outside Eastern Europe. Participants in the first CESES international economics conference agreed that there were great developments in linear programming – a field within mathematical economics – taking place in the Soviet Union.⁶⁶ Italians affiliated with various socialist parties were also great supporters of nationalization and planning (Sassoon 1996: 268). At the CESES conferences in 1964, the Minister of Finance Pieraccini gave a speech in support of planning. According to the report of a high-level Confindustria official, the Minister of Finance said:

the Italian government is involved in a grand work, in which the Italian economy will be governed according to an economic plan: he views sympathetically the study of the themes which examine the foreign experiences because our programming should be democratically open to active participation of the people in economic choices.⁶⁷

Economists from East and West shared a common search for innovative and effective planning methods.

West European and American economists were also interested in market experimentation in Eastern Europe. CESES started just as Eastern Europe was implementing major economic reforms. For example, in 1968, after over 10 years of reform discussions, Hungary created a market mechanism within its planning system (Bockman 2000). At CESES conferences, East European economists were invited to make presentations about

⁶³ Author’s interviews: May 17a, 2004 and May 31a, 2004.

⁶⁴ Author’s interview: May 17a, 2004.

⁶⁵ Engerman (2003) shows that Americans and Russians shared an interest in planning and modernization since the nineteenth century. After the Second World War, economists in East and West proved that competitive market solutions were mathematically similar to optimal solutions calculated in a planning system. Economists across the Iron Curtain thus found themselves sharing a common project.

⁶⁶ Confindustria 15.1/1, File A: Centro Studi e Ricerche su problemi economico-sociali, CESES, 1964–67, File: 1964, inner file Seminario CESES, “Notes for the General Secretary,” N. 243, Nov. 13, 1964, p. 1.

⁶⁷ Confindustria 15.1/1, File A. Centro Studi e Ricerche su problemi economico-sociali, CESES, 1964–67, File 1964, inner file Seminario CESES. “Notes for the General Secretary,” N. 240, Nov. 12, 1964. p. 2.

these reforms and the difficulties involved. These experiments into how markets functioned within various planning and managerial structures had never been done before, and provided new knowledge about the institutional requirements for markets. Even more exciting for the participants were discussions of worker self-management experiments in Yugoslavia and East Germany. Milton Friedman himself visited Yugoslavian factories in 1967 and 1973, because of his interest in system of worker ownership and self-management (Friedman and Friedman 1998: 423–424).⁶⁸ There was a common interest in non-state institutions to escape the oppression of the state in both the East and the West. Solutions found in the East were seen as applicable in Italy because Italians involved in CESES saw Italy and Eastern Europe as having similar industrial economies and similar problems: “There is no doubt that the Italian reader will find material for reflection and new stimulation to rethink the problems which are also ours.”⁶⁹ The market socialist experiments in Eastern Europe interested Western economists and provided them new knowledge about planning, markets, and worker self-management.

To its funders, CESES also seemed sympathetic to communism because the new Sovietology produced a new kind of scholarly interaction. Confindustria members and the CESES organizers wanted to include East European participants as “witnesses” to the failures of communism because their calls for reforms, often market reforms, provided “validation of the capitalist and market economy.”⁷⁰ East Europeans were assumed to be naïve witnesses, who did not understand Western economics but merely reported facts from the communist world (Bockman and Eyal 2002). Yet, to the Confindustria leadership, the East Europeans and other participants did not seem pro-capitalist. According to one report, the conference presenters from Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, West Germany, Britain, Yugoslavia, Poland, and Romania sought only to convince others of the existence of a “third way” between liberal and Marxist economics.⁷¹ The Westerners response to these ideas disturbed this high-level Confindustria official: “The scholars of the West present at the meeting seemed all pervaded by a strong dose of good faith credulity, which is upsetting.” To him, it would have been logical to “refuse hospitality” to the East European “Marxists.”⁷² In fact, “no one at this meeting had thought to propose the

⁶⁸He also visited Yugoslavia in 1962 where he conducted research at a Yugoslavian bank and gave talks. Friedman and Friedman (1998) wrote, “One of our major interests during successive visits was how worker ownership functioned. That led to visits to a number of enterprises and extensive discussion with their managements” (p. 293). During his 1967 visit to Yugoslavia, Friedman traveled with Warren Nutter before a CESES meeting (Ibid, p. 423).

⁶⁹In interviews, CESES participants insisted that knowledge about the East Bloc was necessary for understanding Italy. For example, one had to understand the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in order to understand the PCI. The reforms in Eastern Europe were seen as equally applicable in Italy. Author’s interviews: June 4, 2004; July 19, 2005; July 22, 2005. The quotation above comes from a CESES report on the proceedings of its international economics conference on economic planning in 1968. Confindustria 15.1/1, File B. Centro Studi e Ricerche su problemi economico-sociali, CESES, 1968–70. File 1969–1970. File: CESES: Relazioni – Programmi Giovani – Bilancio, “Relazione sull’attività svolta nel 1969,” p. 9.

⁷⁰Confindustria 15.1/1, File B. Centro Studi e Ricerche su problemi economico-sociali, CESES, 1968–70, File 1968, File: Programma attività CESES 1968; Corso formazione giovani, “Appunto per il segretario generale,” N. 3, Jan. 12, 1968, p. 6. “The ‘proof’ could be offered above all by those who were witnesses of various experiences collected personally.” Confindustria 15.1/1, “CESES – Corso propedeutico Ottobre 1967, Relazione Dicembre 1967 del dott. Cittanti (Ferrara),” p. 6.

⁷¹Confindustria, “Appunto per il Segretario Generale,” N. 131, p. 3.

⁷²Ibid, p. 2

verification of the postulates of this so-called Marxist theory.”⁷³ To similar demands to condemn any Marxist ideas automatically, Vittorio De Biasi responded,

we would betray our duty, would lose our task, if we limited ourselves to the “instrumentalist” teaching, without having first to confront and resolve the problem of knowledge deeply studied on the bases of which is founded the most tragic tyranny of all times.⁷⁴

Reporting on a CESES event, one newspaper reporter wrote that Sovietology “becomes a proposal of civility through approaching communism and its realizations with a new, modern attitude and interests, of research, humanistically, relegating to the past the place of ideological brawls, political dilettantism, pathological mistrust.”⁷⁵ Sovietology provided an arena for knowledge production based on a new form of East–West scholarly interaction.

This Sovietological discussion, however, was not by any means easy. The participants had to work to obtain knowledge they could use within the changing terrain of the Cold War world: they had to “read between the lines,” seek ways to talk informally, build some kind of common language, try not to offend each other, deal with “voices truly frightening” coming from certain émigrés, endure speakers participating for political rather than professional reasons, recognize that visa restrictions would keep some speakers away, and make sense of the knowledge and often depressing news emerging out of Eastern Europe. This discussion would develop the new Sovietology, which depended on skills, experiences, knowledge, and specific interests of those identified with the left working within a liminal space. The necessity of social ties and trust across the Cold War border for Sovietology knowledge production meant that CESES participants were ambiguous and potentially dangerous.⁷⁶ The right-wing hegemonic project to use ideologically secure Sovietology to convert others was undermined by the changing nature of the Cold War, the revolution in Sovietology, and the heterogeneous nature of transnationally connected liminal spaces.⁷⁷ The potentially liberatory nature of Sovietological knowledge would become apparent in CESES’s youth training programs.

Youth training seminars

Mieli and the other founders of CESES gave priority to Sovietological research because they needed more knowledge about the Soviet Bloc to make strong, scholarly anti-

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Confindustria 15.1/1. “CESES – Corso propedeutico Ottobre 1967, Relazione Dicembre 1967 del dott. Cittanti (Ferrara),” Jan. 16, 1968, p. 7.

⁷⁵Confindustria 15.1/12. “Un ‘Bisturi Analitico’: Storia del Ceses,” *Il Gazzettino*, July 21, 1970.

⁷⁶As Shapin (1994) points out, social theory assumes that objectivity comes from the solitary intellectual or the stranger free from social ties, which “allowed truth to be looked directly in the face and told to others” (p. 40). However, as Shapin argues, free action required for objectivity is based on extensive social ties and trust. Similarly, Jasanoff (2004) writes, “Scientific knowledge, in particular, is not a transcendent mirror of reality. It both embeds and is embedded in social practices, identities, norms, conventions, discourses, instruments and institutions – in short, in all the building blocks of what we term the *social*.” (p. 3).

⁷⁷Similar to CESES, the conservative Italian funders of the Cattaneo Institute and its related publishing house Il Mulino sought to create an anti-communism of the right, but instead found the participants to be “a-communists of the left” and, in response, stopped the funding in the mid-1960s (Catanzaro 2000: 6). By the time CESES sought funding, American mainstream foundations had already turned their focus from independent social science research institutes and towards funding Italian university reform and European integration studies (Gemelli and Row 2003).

communist arguments and also because they personally wanted to know more about the Soviet Bloc.⁷⁸ However, the Confindustria leaders simply wanted a new managerial elite indoctrinated into anti-communism and liberal democracy. They criticized Mieli for focusing on Sovietological research rather than on training a new managerial elite (Pistolesse 1996: 6). They successfully – though temporarily – forced CESES to make the youth training seminars its primary activity.⁷⁹ However, with the changing nature of Sovietology and the shifting political, economic, social, and cultural context, this indoctrination depended on left-wing participation and had consequences unintended by Confindustria.

There were two main youth training programs: one for only Italians and another for both Italians and Americans. The Italian youth training program began in 1966 and continued until 1976. The program worked on a 2-year cycle. In the first year, 50 or so youths (preferably undergraduate students [*laureandi*] or graduates working in university departments [*laureati*]) would take the first introductory course that would last two weeks. After that first course, 25–45 participants would be selected to continue with the training, taking four 2-week courses culminating in a group research project. From this course, some would be chosen to conduct individual research projects funded by scholarships. Each year, a new group of students would start in this program.⁸⁰ The other youth training program brought Italians and American students together to learn specifically about Sovietology for 2 weeks each year. These Italian-American meetings were organized by Warren Nutter, a Sovietologist at the University of Virginia and leader in the American New Right, and were funded in part by right-wing foundations. These meetings took place annually from 1967 to 1977 (Mieli 1996). Both of the youth training programs invited speakers to lecture on specific topics and chose students from all parts of Italy in hopes of distributing the impact of the programs throughout Italy.

Similar to the international economic conferences, the youth training seminars did not function as Confindustria had intended. Confindustria members participating in these courses found themselves confused and angered. One “bitterly disappointed” participant in the courses reported that (1) the courses were too short to deal with any topic sufficiently, (2) the students were not all well prepared for the courses, (3) there were “elements oriented to the left” in the courses, and (4) the teachers were sometimes insufficiently prepared and also often left-wing.⁸¹ Within Confindustria, there were “insistent voices,” which saw CESES “as promoting the training of the left.”⁸² According to another member, Vittorio De Biasi might not be aware of this situation because the courses had a completely different character when he visited.⁸³

The instructors for the Italian-American meetings were primarily East European economists who had participated in CESES’s international economics conferences, while the Italian-only program was mainly taught by Italians. In response to criticisms of the

⁷⁸Mieli (1996) wrote, “I wanted to liberate myself from false truth. I wanted to know how things really happened in the Communist world. What was the real history?” (p. 127).

⁷⁹Carlo Ripa di Meana (2000) left CESES in 1966 because he did not like the shift from Sovietology to changing Italian politics (p. 119).

⁸⁰CESES continually (and unsuccessfully) proposed to expand this program to train 100 youths, who would then establish regional CESES branches and spread CESES training throughout all the regions of Italy. Confindustria 15.1/12. “Progetto: Nuovo programma per la formazione dei giovani,” n.d.

⁸¹Confindustria, “CESES – Corso propedeutico Ottobre 1967, Relazione Dicembre 1967 del dott. Cittanti (Ferrara),” p. 1.

⁸²Confindustria 15.1/12. Letter to Luigi Valenti from Vittorio De Biasi, Nov. 13, 1969, p. 2.

⁸³Confindustria 15.1/12. Letter from Luigi Valenti to Vittorio De Biasi, Oct. 31, 1969, p. 1.

Italian instructors, Vittorio De Biasi stated that it had always been difficult to get teachers with any deep knowledge of Sovietology or Marxism–Leninism. De Biasi recognized, “There is no doubt that among the invited teachers there are those of the ‘left,’” but at the same time all are unsympathetic to communism.⁸⁴ The instructors included Giorgio Galli; Lucio Colletti, an ex-communist and director of the journal *La Sinistra*, a journal funded by the extraparlimentary left and noted for having supplied information about making Molotov cocktails (Galli 2000: 108); Leo Valiani, who had left the PCI after the Hitler–Stalin Pact and remained on the left;⁸⁵ Gustav Wetter, a Jesuit Sovietologist, one of the foremost scholars of Soviet philosophy, and participant in the Korcula Summer School in Yugoslavia (Comey 1967; Ramet 1985: 306; van der Zweerde 2003); Ugo Finetti, who wrote on dissent within the PCI, criticized the Italian party system, and became a high-level PSI official in the Lombardy region;⁸⁶ Giulio Seniga, a former high-level PCI official who remained on the left;⁸⁷ and Paolo Spriano, an official in the PCI and historian of the PCI (Galli 2000: 164).⁸⁸ There were also instructors from more conservative liminal spaces including Bruno Leoni, Augusto Del Noce, and Italy’s prominent political scientists, Giovanni Sartori and Nicola Matteucci. CESES chose instructors who had the skills, experiences, and knowledge of the anti-communist left, as well as those from other liminal spaces, necessary to create not only the new Sovietology but also knowledge about left-wing politics in Italy.

The main topics in the courses for the Italian students were Sovietology, political science, and the philosophy of science. CESES, perhaps paradoxically, chose to indoctrinate the youths into capitalism through the introductory course “Marxism: Theory and Practice”:

- 1st Monday: (1) Genesis of historical materialism in the thinking of the young Marx up until Engels, (2) the evolution of Marxist philosophy in the USSR: The contribution of Lenin and Stalin.
- 1st Tuesday: (1) Systematic analyses of current Soviet philosophy: materialism, (2) Marxist dialectics.
- 1st Wednesday: (1) Materialist conception of history, (2) Relations among political power and religious tradition in the USSR.
- 1st Thursday: (1) Soviet society yesterday and today, (2) National minorities in the USSR.
- 1st Friday: (1) Principles of civil law in the USSR, (2) Soviet economic planning.
- 1st Saturday: The political thinking of Mao Zedong.

⁸⁴Confindustria 15.1/1, File B. Centro Studi e Ricerche su problemi economico-sociali, CESES, 1968–70. File 1969–1970, CESES: Relazioni – Programmi Giovani – Bilancio, Untitled. By 1966, De Biasi had already planned to invite “socialist and communist” speakers to participate in the courses “because they could be subjected to criticism.” Confindustria Archives, 15.1/1. File: Corso Propedeutico: November 1966, “Appunto per il Segretario Generale,” Nov. 21, 1966, No. 178. One former student remembered four to six teachers “from the left” at the 1968 courses (Author’s interview, May 17b, 2004).

⁸⁵A short biography can be found at the website of Archivio storico del Senato della Repubblica. 2006. *Catalogo delle pubblicazioni dell’Archivio storico*, 2002–2006, p. 14. http://www.senato.it/documenti/repository/relazioni/archivistorico/catalogo_archivistorico.pdf.

⁸⁶His works *Il dissenso nel PCI* (1978) e *La partitocrazia invisibile* (1985) reflect his critical stance. He was arrested during the Clean Hands investigation. “Tangenti, condannato Ugo Finetti. L’ex segretario psi accusato da Chiesa,” *Corriere della Sera* May 15, 1997.

⁸⁷A former student remembered Seniga as a teacher at CESES (Author’s interview, May 17b, 2004).

⁸⁸Spriano is famous for numerous works on the PCI, including *Storia del Partito comunista italiano* (1967) [*History of the Italian Communist Party*].

- 2nd Monday: (1) Cuba, (2) The Soviet press.
- 2nd Tuesday: (1) Yugoslavia, (2) The Third International.
- 2nd Wednesday: (1) The Arab Middle East, (2) History of PCI (1921–45)
- 2nd Thursday: (1) The ideology of PCI, (2) PCI in the face of Italian socio-economic evolution (1946–1967).
- 2nd Friday: The crisis in the relations among communist states.
- 2nd Saturday: Union policy of the PCI⁸⁹

CESES intended the students to gain enough knowledge about Marxism and actually existing socialism to be able to argue successfully with Italian communists. At the same time, the students were exposed to a wide range of Marxist and socialist ideas, original Marxist works, and criticisms of Leninism and Stalinism from within the anti-PCI left.

In addition to Marxism, the students also took 2-week courses on Italian politics and conducted research on Italian political parties.⁹⁰ This research emerged out of the current research projects of Giorgio Galli, who, in the view of a high-level Confindustria official, did not take a “decisive anti-Marxist position.”⁹¹ Galli had written for Italian socialist journals and had extensive contacts with the Italian left that gave him remarkable access to trends within the PCI and the socialist parties in Italy.⁹² As with many others on the anti-PCI left, he worked with groups importing American social science, such as Il Mulino and the Cattaneo Institute. American political science can be seen as reformist rather than revolutionary because it focused on the political system, political parties, and elections (Morlino 1991). At the same time, the youths in CESES programs conducted research on “the most significant texts of Croce, Einaudi, Mosca, Coppola, Corradini, Corridoni, Rocco, Gentile, Salvemini, Gobetti, Toniolo, Sturzo, Turati, Gramsci, etc.”⁹³ In 1969, the students’ individual research projects included: “The theory of political obligation in Lenin and Gramsci,” “Research on the hypotheses of societal transformation by the PCI,” “Research on the hypotheses of societal transformation by Italian socialism,” “Research on the hypotheses of societal transformation by Italian liberals,” “Research on the Marxist–Leninist left in Italy,” “Catholic dissent groups in Italy,” “Marxism–Leninism and new power,” “Marxism and Cuba,” and “Political science research on the Italian model.”⁹⁴ These readings and research topics within the shifting Italian political context, in which social movements and extraparliamentary groups emerged as strong new actors, challenged the intended reformism of a political science education. In addition, Italian public and elite opinion had long been critical of political parties and saw the political system as corrupt (Lupo 2004). The instructors at CESES often gave the students an anti-PCI left-wing interpretation of political parties and the political system itself.

Philosophy of science became a popular topic at CESES. Many important texts in philosophy of science had been recently published: Thomas Kuhn’s *The Structure of*

⁸⁹Confindustria 15.1/1. File B. Centro Studi e Ricerche su problemi economico-sociali, CESES, 1968–70. File 1968. File: Programma attività CESES 1968; Corso formazione giovani. “Il Marxismo: Teori e Prassi, Secondo Corso Propedeutico, Milano, 6–18 Novembre 1967.”

⁹⁰CESES also offered at least one course on economics in 1970. File: Corrispondenza. Letter from Renato Mieli to Mario Morelli (secretary general of Confindustria), Feb. 3, 1970.

⁹¹Confindustria, “Appunto per il Segretario Generale,” N. 131, p. 4.

⁹²This information about Galli comes from his autobiography: Galli (2000).

⁹³Confindustria, “Relazione sull’attività svolta nel 1969,” p. 3.

⁹⁴Confindustria, “Relazione sull’attività svolta nel 1969,” Attachment: “Elenco delle ricerche effettuate nel 1969 nell’ambito del Programma Giovani.”

Scientific Revolutions in 1962, Carl G. Hempel's *Philosophy of Natural Science* in 1966, and Karl Popper's *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* in 1968 (Popper 1959). A group of students started their own journal, *Controcorrente* [Countercurrent], which CESES funded. In this journal, which ran from 1969 to 1976, the students discussed anarchism, socialism, liberalism, and other topics of related interest, including philosophy of science. To the students at *Controcorrente*, the issues of "burning timeliness" were operationalization, models, definitional schemes, analytic and classificatory concepts, and typologies (Zucchini 1970). These seemingly strange objects of fascination were exciting because Italian scholars and students considered social science methodology cutting edge and another way of discussing politics. Mieli and others had created CESES as a place for dialogue, empirical testing of hypotheses, and persuasion, rather than the conversion supposedly practiced by the PCI and the Catholic Church. The *Controcorrente* students sought to persuade other university students to use social science methodology, Popperian discussion, and critical rationality that they learned at CESES. However, the *Controcorrente* students found: "While the ardour and zeal was huge, the result did not satisfy. We are still a long way from our proposed model. Maybe we were too optimistic" (Scano and Zucchini 1969). The Popperian project of CESES seemed very difficult to realize, and the *Controcorrente* students' attempts to deal with these difficulties ultimately failed when the journal was closed in 1976.

Although persuasion and conversion could fail, attempts to persuade others might result instead in being persuaded by others. The industrialists agreed with CESES that knowing their enemy – the Soviet Union and Marxism-Leninism – was important, but they also felt that this knowledge might be dangerous and might lead to communist sympathies. As one industrialist told Vittorio De Biasi, "the communist idea for decades has succeeded in influencing and seizing the good faith of millions of youth – and non-youth – around the world...I am convinced that actually in this lies the danger of the CESES courses."⁹⁵ This comment suggests the many ways that students and instructors could use the Sovietological and broader social scientific knowledge developed at CESES. In addition, the historical context of these courses altered their intended propagandistic nature. The CESES courses began during the first student occupation of the University of Turin in 1967. The student movements of 1968 and the turmoil of the 1970s flooded into the classroom. Through the workshops and conferences, students learned about Marxist economic theory, economic alternatives to capitalism experimented within Yugoslavia, East European dissident movements, the ideas of Mao and many others, criticisms of the state, calls for autonomous forms of organizing, the ideals that the East European socialist regimes were not living up to, old Italian anarchist traditions, and so on. At CESES, researchers and students were supposed to study the East Bloc in order to understand Italian communism, but East European dissent also provided them a model for Italian dissent.

As a result of their belief in an independent, cosmopolitan public sphere, in which dialogue and empirical testing of hypotheses would reveal the lies around ideologies and totalitarianism, Mieli and others planned to invite youths from all political persuasions in hopes of having an open debate that would be naturally critical of Soviet socialism and the PCI once the realities were revealed. When the Confindustria regional leaders heard the criticisms of "left elements" in the CESES courses, the regional leaders decided that only those with a solid anti-communist, liberal orientation should be allowed to take part, and

⁹⁵Confindustria 15.1/12. Letter from Luigi Valenti to Vittorio De Biasi, Dec. 29, 1969, p. 2.

those left elements that “infiltrate” the courses should be “eliminated.”⁹⁶ Vittorio De Biasi responded that Confindustria members were to blame for the “left elements” because they chose the students.⁹⁷ De Biasi argued that the youths only “appear” left wing to those who did not understand Marxism–Leninism. In fact, to De Biasi, many of the participants in the courses were not particularly bright, and incorrectly saw those who sought to understand Marxism–Leninism as left wing.⁹⁸ The CESES leadership would continue to argue with the Confindustria members about the choice of students for the youth training seminars. Students in the seminars did change their political alliances, but in a variety of directions. For example, one student in the CESES seminars, Silvano Alessio turned to the left and joined PSI; another student, Vittorio Moccagatta later became the right hand man of Berlusconi; another student, Maurizio Vaudagna became a promoter of the student occupation of the University of Turin and then a professor of American History; Federico Avanzini who was briefly at CESES became a central participant in the university occupations.⁹⁹

The CESES youth training seminars were intended to create a new managerial elite indoctrinated into anti-communism and pro-democracy views. However, the many liminal actors participating in CESES activities sought to realize many different projects at CESES. As Giorgio Galli (2000) remembered, referring particularly to the youth training courses, CESES “seemed to me an example of those heterogeneous ends which Hegel placed among the principal makers of history” (p. 104). As a result, these seminars had unintended consequences. The often left-wing instructors taught students about the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, Marxism–Leninism, and a range of new ideas from Sovietology, political science, and the philosophy of science. Further complicating the indoctrination process, the students were immersed in the university protests and the political upheavals of 1968 and the 1970s. Moreover, Italian politics, economics, and society, as well as its counterparts in Eastern Europe, changed so fundamentally during this time that the study of these topics could not be packaged as ideology or propaganda, but rather the instructors, researchers, and students at CESES participated in the very changes they were studying. CESES provided a heterogeneous education that led the students to different political and professional pathways.

Conclusions

CESES contributed to the emergence and global spread of neoliberalism in several ways. Its funders’ right-wing hegemonic project to use ideologically secure Sovietology to convert others was undermined by the shifting terrain of the Cold War, the revolution in Sovietology, and the heterogeneous nature of transnationally connected liminal spaces. In the 1970s, Confindustria and American right-wing foundations stopped funding CESES, which meant the end of the youth programs, *Controcorrente*, *L’Est*, *Documentazione sui*

⁹⁶Confindustria 15.1/12. Letter from Luigi Valenti to Vittorio De Biasi, Oct. 31, 1969, p. 1 and Letter from Luigi Valenti to Vittorio De Biasi, Dec. 29, 1969, p. 2.

⁹⁷However, Confindustria regional offices could not always find students, so CESES often invited students suggested by former CESES participants.

⁹⁸Confindustria 15.1/12. Letter from Vittorio De Biasi to Luigi Valenti, Nov. 13, 1969, p. 2.

⁹⁹This information about the CESES students comes from Galli (2000: 105–108). Maurizio Vaudagna’s professional appointments as an American history professor can be found at this website: http://www.lett.unipmn.it/docenti/vaudagna/default_en.htm.

Paesi dell'Est, Notizie Est, and the Cultural Libera book series.¹⁰⁰ Mieli could then reorient CESES to his favorite areas of study – Sovietology and the PCI – but he had to search continually for funding, which he found through small grants from the Bank of Italy and other organizations.¹⁰¹ The international economics conferences continued until 1984, bringing together famous Sovietologists and East European economists. CESES continued to publish books and articles on the PCI until it was closed in 1988. Mieli died in 1991. While CESES exposed students and scholars to Sovietology, we can see that its programs did not last long and had unanticipated consequences. Thus, CESES can be seen as a failed hegemonic project.

At the same time, the actual activities of CESES produced new knowledge needed by right-wing activists to reorient and realize their hegemonic projects. When Milton Friedman called CESES “the Mont Pelerin Society of the East,” this was just one of many times that right-wing activists would appropriate and shape liminal spaces for their battles back home. By the end of the 1980s, right-wing activists could argue that they had been right all along and declared the success of the global neoliberal hegemonic project organized around Milton Friedman, the Mont Pelerin Society, right-wing think tanks, right-wing foundations, and certain economics departments (Friedman and Friedman 1998; Hartwell 1995; Yergin and Stanislaw 1998). In addition, after CESES had substantially decreased its activities and then closed, right-wing activists could present CESES in any way they pleased. The right coopted liminal spaces, by enframing them, by confining them to narrowly defined notions of either Western neoliberal capitalism or defunct Soviet socialism.¹⁰² The right-wing cooptation was reinforced by academics’ acceptance of a triumphalist right-wing narrative and by power disparities between national economic professions.¹⁰³ Following the Italian Autonomist tradition, we can see the liminal spaces that criticized Soviet socialism and Western capitalism as laying the groundwork for the “communism of capital”:

If we can say that Fordism incorporated, and rewrote in its own way, some aspects of the socialist experience, then post-Fordism has fundamentally dismissed both Keynesianism *and* socialism. Post-Fordism...puts forth, *in its own way*, typical demands of communism (abolition of work, dissolution of the State, etc.). Post-Fordism is the communism of capital (Virno 2004: 111).

¹⁰⁰However, at least one American foundation did continue to pay for American scholars to travel to CESES international economic conferences until at least 1982 (Letter requesting payment from an American participant to Dr. John H. Moore at The Hoover Institution, Sept. 18, 1982). Many reasons have been given for the end of Confindustria’s funding: Soviet pressure on Italian industrialists who wanted Soviet business Finetti (2004), general economic crisis (Paolo Savona, personal correspondence), disagreement over Mieli’s focus on research (Pistolese 1996: 6), and the historic compromise between the PCI and the DC (Author’s interview, July 22, 2005).

¹⁰¹One interviewee mentioned funding from the Bank of Italy, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the city of Milan (Author’s interview, May 21, 2004).

¹⁰²Mitchell (1990) uses the concept of “enframing” (1990: 547). Similarly, to Douglas (1966), symbolic boundary maintenance seeks to turn the liminal and ambiguous into the category of the sacred, removing its ambiguity.

¹⁰³Economists and other social scientists living in the USA had access to significant financial and professional resources and dominated the network, seeing those in the periphery as providing information and data, rather than theory or knowledge (Bockman and Eyal 2002; Fourcade 2006). Scholars of post-colonial studies have shown how the core appropriates knowledge developed in the periphery or on borders. In relation to social science research particularly in the 1950s and 1960s, though applicable at other times as well, Appadurai (2001) has argued that at this time “Theory and method were seen as naturally metropolitan, modern, and Western. The rest of the world was seen in the idiom of cases, events, examples, and test sites in relation to this stable location for the production or revision of theory” (pp. 4–5).

As a result, knowledge from the liminal spaces changed the core of Western capitalism, while maintaining and even reinforcing the hegemony of the core. In its failure, CESES realized the – now transformed – right-wing neoliberal hegemonic project.¹⁰⁴

However, the practices and the people of the liminal spaces continue today.¹⁰⁵ After 1989, the former Soviet Bloc entered a new liminal state as transitional economies and as an entire “ex-world,” full of ex-communists, ex-socialists, ex-Czechoslovaks, ex-Yugoslavs, ex-East Germans, and ex-dissidents (Matvejević 1996: 9). Mediators seeking a new democratic socialist convergence are appearing, as can be seen in the World Social Forum and *Constellations*, a journal connected with the former Praxis Group in Yugoslavia.¹⁰⁶ We can even see a revival of the activities of CESES. In 1989, 1 year after CESES closed, former CESES participants created the European Association for Comparative Economic Studies (EACES), with 40% of its members from Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.¹⁰⁷ Participants in CESES activities also have played a central role in the formation of the International Association for the Economics of Participation (IAFEP), an international association of scholars engaged in research and teaching on worker ownership and participation, and its journal *Economic Analysis: A Journal of Enterprise and Participation*, continuing their interest in worker self-management.¹⁰⁸ *SPS. Storia Politica Società* is seen by its founders as a continuation of *Controcorrente*.¹⁰⁹ Reflecting the current interest in liberal socialism in Italy, Gino Bianco (2006) has also published a new work on Andrea Caffi called *Socialism and Liberty*.¹¹⁰

We can see right-wing activists as a reactive force that exploited the creative struggles occurring in Cold War liminal spaces.¹¹¹ CESES was not the only institution of its kind but part of “a Galaxy without borders.” Many institutions brought together individuals interested in convergence between East and West, South and North, to talk about socialism,

¹⁰⁴Ferguson (1994) and Zimmerman (2005) discuss how colonial ideologies failed but in their failure succeeded in creating their desired outcome.

¹⁰⁵As Mitchell (2002) writes, “the violent, the actual, and the exceptional – all of which the law denounces and excludes, ruptures itself from and supersedes – are never gone. They make possible the rupture, the denunciation, and the order” (p. 79).

¹⁰⁶Burawoy (1992) predicted that “[b]y digging an ever-wider chasm between ideology and reality, between promise and actuality, capitalism will once more fertilize the socialist imagination” (p. 785).

¹⁰⁷In 1984, with the end of the CESES international conferences, CESES participants formed the Italian Association for the Study of Comparative Economic Systems (AISSEC). The first leaders in EACES were overwhelming CESES participants: Vittorio Valli, Bruno Dallago, Alberto Chilosì, Silvana Malle, and D. Mario Nuti. Vittorio Valli was the first president, and many other CESES participants became future presidents. <http://eaces.gelso.unitn.it/eaces/briefhis.htm>.

¹⁰⁸The IAFEP was originally created in Yugoslavia in 1978 as the International Association for the Economics of Self-Management. Its journal, *Economic Analysis and Worker's Management*, existed at least from 1998 to 2000 with the following CESES participants on its international editorial board: Alberto Chilosì, Bruno Dallago, Mario Ferrero, and D. Mario Nuti. <http://ocean.st.usm.edu/%7Ew300388/jep.html>.

¹⁰⁹Back cover of *SPS*. The journals have the same format and some similar participants.

¹¹⁰Just some of the many Italian books on liberal socialism are Ciuffoletti (1999), Fiori (1999), Papa (1999), Pugliese (1999), Rosselli (1994), Sbarberi (1999), and Urbinati and Canto-Sperber (2004).

¹¹¹Hardt and Negri (2000) argue that “[t]he multitude is the real productive force of our social world, whereas Empire is a mere apparatus of capture that lives only off the vitality of the multitude...” (p. 62). Similarly, Lotringer (2004) writes, “Capital affords us to project ahead, work it from within, knowing all too well that it will be quick to instrumentalize any creative move, turning it into binary oppositions, however radical they claim to be, proven recipes that failed repeatedly because they have become inadequate to think the complexity of the contemporary reality” (pp. 17–18).

human rights, social justice, and many other topics.¹¹² Through these discussions, people sought to understand not only capitalism but also what socialism might be if it was not necessarily Soviet socialism. They returned to the texts of Marx, Gramsci, and others, and they talked across borders with those who knew “the code” and shared a similar passion about socialism. The knowledge about socialism and capitalism that developed out of liminality now appears as nothing more than neoliberal ideology, but only because the “narrow window of the neoliberal imagination” makes invisible the liminal discussion and the alternatives, leaving only hegemony in view (Mitchell 1999: 32). The “narrow window of neoliberal imagination” also allows a restricted view of Sovietology, judged merely on its failure to predict the end of Soviet socialism. I seek to reconnect the liminal spaces that have since been divided into dichotomies – a dualistic world of power – to reconnect the history of neoliberalism with what has been excluded and reorganized from its history: socialism, Eastern Europe, and the transnational left.¹¹³ Those in transnationally connected liminal spaces again seek to understand the post-1989 convergence, what post-communism is, what neoliberal capitalism is, and what socialism might be.¹¹⁴

Acknowledgments I am grateful to Nancy Hanrahan, Mark Jacobs, Gianni Salvini, and the reviewers and editors of *Theory and Society* for their insightful comments. I am also grateful for the support of Peter Stearns and the Office of the Provost at George Mason University. I owe special thanks to Andrew Zimmerman for many discussions that greatly improved this article. Earlier versions were presented at New York University’s “How Neoliberalism became a Transnational Movement” conference, the Marxist Literary Group conference in 2005, and George Mason University’s Sociology and Anthropology Department. This project greatly benefited from the assistance of the European Reading Room at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. and the Confindustria Historical Archives located in Rome, Italy. Many thanks to the Italian scholars who kindly agreed to be interviewed for this project.

¹¹²Other Sovietological institutions had these qualities and included regular CESES participants, such as the University of Glasgow’s Institute of Soviet and East European Studies where Alec Nove worked and the University of Paris-I’s Center for International Economics of the Socialist Countries directed by Marie Lavigne. There were many other institutions, such as the Korcula Summer School, the Inter-University Center in Dubrovnik, the International Economic Association, and many more.

¹¹³This approach is similar to that of Callon (1998), Latour (1988), Mitchell (1990, 2002), and Ross (2002) who seek to discover the heterogeneous networks that create knowledge. However, Hardt and Negri (2000) have recognized that the current paradigm of power has moved beyond binaries and essentialisms also to support hybridity, fluidity, and difference, and thus thrives on criticisms of dichotomies (p. 138).

¹¹⁴Following Turner (1967), this heterogeneous, liminal space can be seen a “realm of pure possibility” and might become a source for innovations and future structure. As Moncada and Blau (2006) argue, the “billions of poor, traditionally living on what they grow, find, or catch, possess rare knowledge of how societies function and self-govern – as cooperatives, participatory democracies, collectives.... From them westerners will, we venture, learn more than we can now imagine” (p. 121).

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Johanna Bockman is Assistant Professor of Global Affairs and Sociology at George Mason University. Her research interests are academic professions during the Cold War, the history of capitalist and socialist economics, and the history of neoliberalism. She is currently working on a book manuscript titled, *Goulash Communism: Hungarian economists, market socialism, and capitalism*.