

**A Welfare State for Middle Class:
Christian-Democratic and Socialist Parties in France and Italy, 1945-1958.**

Abstract

In the history of *welfare state*, the publication of the Beveridge Report in 1942 represents one of the biggest steps toward the creation of a complete social security system for all the citizens of a state. Influenced by ideas and purposes of such report, political parties in France and Italy tried to imagine a more efficient and inclusive *welfare* system for their own countries, with the aim of extending the benefits of social legislation to middle class – especially non-salaried middle class workers (peasants, craftsmen, shop owners). For both Socialist and Christian-Democratic parties, the middle class was problematic for two main reasons. Firstly, from an ideological point of view, it proved the fallacies of Marxist theory about social evolution towards two major classes – proletariat and bourgeoisie; at the same times it highlighted the need of a more precise definition of the ideology of “inter-classism” professed by Christian-Democratic parties. Secondly, the vote of non-salaried middle class workers was of fundamental importance for parties engaged in the election game. The aim of this research is to analyse the way by which French and Italian Christian-Democratic and Socialist parties tried to adapt their ideology and politics to the needs and requests of non-salaried middle class. In this process, the extension of *welfare state* benefits was seen as a major element for the social and political integration of this group of citizens. To this end, the research takes into account the position regarding the issues of *welfare state* and middle class adopted by four parties – Mouvement Républicain Populaire (MRP), Democrazia Cristiana (DC), Section Française de l’Internationale Ouvrière (SFIO), Partito Socialista Italiano (PSI) – in their congresses, in the party press, and finally in the bills and in Parliamentary debates.