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From the PCI to the PDS

*The long march of the
Italian Communist Party*



Livio Maitan



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Introduction: the time for a balance sheet



N°15

This is not the first time that Italian workers' movement has had to make a balance sheet.

There should have been one made in 1948 after the victory of conservative forces in the 18 April election, which marked the defeat of the policy of anti-fascist unity and the strategy of gradual democracy.¹ The analytical premisses of this policy turned out to have been mistaken. Nationally, the hegemonic groups within the ruling classes and their party, Christian Democracy (DC), were more and more decided to impose their choice of rebuilding the country on the ruins of war by restoring the traditional state with its institutions and modes of functioning and traditional capitalist mechanisms. After the transitional period of the emergency, they had no intention of establishing systematic collaboration with the workers' parties by associating them with the government. At an international level, after Churchill's 1946 speech at Fulton on the "Iron Curtain", the imperialist powers had started the Cold War, rapidly dropping the illusion of the possibility of a lasting agreement between the "democratic" countries for the unification of a free and peaceful world. In June 1948, the first striking demonstration of the crisis of Stalinism — the break between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union — should have stimulated some critical thinking, particularly as, up until then, Yugoslavia seemed to Italian Communists to be the best model, after the USSR, of a socialist country.

Another major occasion occurred in 1956, after Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin's crimes and the birth of mass anti-bureaucratic movements in Poland and Hungary (not to mention the similar events which had already taken place three years earlier in East Germany). On this occasion the Italian Communist Party (the PCI) suffered an unparalleled shake-up and had sketched out a self-critical look back at its vision of the Soviet leadership. But in general it did not go further than accepting Khrushchev's perspectives, that is to say a self-reform of the bureaucracy. When the Soviet army intervened in Hungary, it accepted the official position and explicitly approved the repression against the insurgents.

A complete balance sheet — from a national and international point of view — would have had to take into account the Czechoslovak experience of Soviet repression and the political and social crisis shaking Italian society, as well as that of the other capitalist European countries, and disturbing the relative equilibrium established at the end of the 1940s. But this balance sheet was not made after 1968-69 either. There were then other rectifications and corrections, with clearer positions about the USSR than previously, but

there was never a total balance sheet of the analyses, perspectives and orientations.

It needed the 1989 earthquake, preceded by ten years of the party's decline, to decide to put a whole historical experience into question. It should be obvious to everybody that the balance sheet necessary should have an international and not simply national aspect. It should start from a complete rethink, from a historical reconstruction capable of avoiding apologetic or justificatory temptations. It is no more and no less than the balance sheet of several decades of "building socialism" in the bureaucratized transitional societies, and first of all of the tragic experience of Stalinism since the end of the 1920s and in the 1930s and 1940s. At the same time, not to go further back, it is the balance sheet of fifty years of history of the workers' movement and of the Communist parties in the industrialised capitalist countries. The ravages were so deep, the failures so striking, the contradictions so heartrending, the ideological and moral aberrations so serious, that the arguments calling on so-called realism with which the PCI has accepted the current reality as inevitable for several decades, excommunicating all those who challenged its analyses and perspectives, its tactical or strategic choices, its leadership and organizational methods, well these arguments no longer stand up! The results of the work of the so-called realists appear today in a dramatic light and this makes it possible for the ruling classes to intone the funeral march of communism and socialism by proclaiming the everlasting nature of the existing order.

There is now a colossal job of work to do. It is a very difficult task of recomposition and rebuilding, if not of restarting from scratch. A balance sheet of the past is an indispensable starting point. The goal of this essay is to contribute to it through a critical reconstruction of the itinerary of a party which, after having played a leading role for fifty years, has been affected by a crisis which has led it to put into question not only its past but also its very reason for being and future.

* This work by Livio Maitan was originally published in Italian entitled *Al termine di una lunga marcia: dal PCI al PDS*, published by Erre Emme of Rome. This version is based on the French edition.

1. In an article in *Rinascita* which will be referred to later, Palmiro Togliatti noted the "failure of the compromise of the anti-fascist front" from August 1946 (Pietro Secchia uses a similar time scheme).

2. At the end of the war, the PCI leaders strongly denied the creation of two blocs with their zones of influence. During the discussions I as a Socialist Party activist had with them at the time, I was very often called not very pleasant names simply because I mentioned the Yalta summit where Europe had been divided into zones of influence.

The history of the PCI 1921-1948

- 1921** : In January the founding congress of the Communist Party of Italy (PCd'I) takes place in Livorno. The new party, of which Amadeo Bordiga was national secretary, brings together 58,783 members and the majority of the Young Socialist organization. Some 100,000 "unity communists", led by G. Serrati, and 14,000 reformists led by F. Turati stay in the PSI.
- 1922** : Second Congress of the PCd'I in Rome. The Communist International criticizes the Bordigist orientation of the Italian party, which rejects the united front tactic in the fight against fascism. October: "the march on Rome". The fascists take power and Mussolini is named prime minister.
- 1923** : The Comintern removes Bordiga from the leadership of the PCd'I, despite the fact that he still represents the majority of the party.
- 1924** : Assassination of Matteotti. The anti-fascist opposition withdraws from parliament into the Aventino, a sort of anti-parliament. The Socialists favourable to the Third International (Serrati) join the PCd'I. The Fifth Congress of the Comintern takes place in Moscow.
- 1925** : Attempt on Mussolini's life which unleashes a wave of repression. Evolution from fascist "movement" to "regime" and definitive introduction of the dictatorship. The anti-fascist parties are banned. Conference of the PCd'I in Como, where the Bordigists are still the majority. Start of a campaign against "Trotskyism-Bordigism".
- 1926** : Third Congress of the PCd'I in Lyons, where the famous theses on the Italian revolution written by Gramsci are approved. Gramsci writes a letter to the CPSU where he raises doubts about the way in which the fight against the Left Opposition is being carried out. This letter is hidden by Togliatti. Gramsci is arrested shortly after the end of the congress.
- 1928** : Sixth Congress of the Communist International, which marks the start of the "third period" and foresees a new revolutionary wave on a world scale.
- 1929** : The Lateran Accords between the Catholic Church and the fascist regime. Stabilization of the Mussolini dictatorship. Discussion within the Political Bureau of the Italian CP on the forms of the "turn" (re-establishment of an underground centre in Italy and preparation of the revolution which is considered as imminent).
- 1930** : Birth of the Left Opposition in the CP, under the leadership of Leonetti, Ravazzoli and Tresso, who are immediately expelled from the party. We now know that Gramsci, who was in prison, was against the "turn" and shared the positions of the "three". Bordiga, in exile in Ponza, is in turn expelled from the party.
- 1931** : Fourth Congress of PCI in Cologne.
- 1933** : Hitler takes power in Germany.
- 1935** : Seventh Congress of the Communist International which abandons the "third period" policy and adopts the strategy of the popular front. The PCI re-establishes an alliance with the PSI in the emigrant/exile community.
- 1936** : Conquest of Ethiopia by Italian fascism. The "Anti-Comintern Pact" between Italy, Germany and Japan.
- 1937** : Death of Gramsci.
- 1936-1939** : Spanish Civil War. Italy intervenes with Germany on Franco's side. Several thousand Italian communist and anti-fascists (about 3,350) join the International Brigades to defend the Republic. Togliatti is the main figure responsible for the Comintern's policy in Spain.
- 1939** : German-Soviet pact. Terracini opposes it (he is expelled from the party).
- 1940** : Italy enters the war on the side of Nazi Germany.
- 1943** : Occupation of Southern Italy by Allied troops. Decomposition of the Italian army. July: fall of Mussolini who, protected by the Nazis, takes refuge in Salò and founds the social republic. The Germany army occupies the North and Centre. In March a strike wave at FIAT in Turin marks the start of the Resistance. Formation of the first maquis. Dissolution of the Communist International in the name of collaboration between the Soviet Union and the Allies.
- 1944** : Togliatti leaves Moscow and returns to Italy, in Salerno. He imposes the famous "turn" on the PCI which means that it should support governments of "national unity" (including with representatives of the monarchy) and put off the perspective of socialism in the name of the "anti-fascist revolution". The PCI enters the government of national unity led by the monarchist Badoglio. Start of the policy of "gradual democracy". Tresso is assassinated by a Stalinist maquis during the liberation of the camp where he was interned in the South of France. In several towns dissident communist groups are formed which are gradually reabsorbed by the PCI (the biggest are the Communist Federation of Naples, the Bandiera Rossa movement in Rome and the Stella Rossa movement in Turin, as well as others in Genoa, Legnano, Foggia, etc.).
- 1945** : End of the war and execution of Mussolini by the resistance. Liberation of the country by the advance of the Allied troops combined with popular insurrections led by the Committees of National Liberation (CLN). The PCI is the clearly majority and hegemonic force in the Resistance. Fifth congress of the PCI. Togliatti minister of justice.
- 1946** : Proclamation of the Republic.
- 1947** : Start of the "Cold War". The PCI is excluded from the government. Formation of the Cominform (Information Bureau of the Communist Parties, under the control of Moscow). The PCI announces 2,252,716 members.
- 1948** : Break between the USSR and Yugoslavia. Togliatti participates actively in the hysterical campaign of denunciation of the "fascist" Tito. Defeat of the electoral alliance between the PCI and PSI; the Christian Democracy imposes its hegemony (beginning of centrism). Attempt on Togliatti's life, followed by a popular reaction which leads to an insurrectional-type movement, but which the PCI manages to control.

1. The Communist Party in the Italian political and social context

In the 70 years since its foundation, the Italian Communist Party has been an essential component of the workers' movement. Since the 1940s it has been clearly hegemonic, with a leading role in the political struggle in the country.

The historical context

To understand how this was possible, we have to briefly recall the overall historical framework. This was a society which experienced unequal capitalist development and whose parliamentary institutions made possible only a partial expression of the interests and aspirations of the population. Thus the context was marked by many conflicts and frequent social explosions. From the beginning of the century the workers' movement developed strongly and the Italian Socialist Party (PSI) developed a profile that was in a number of ways different from that of classical social democracy.

During the years immediately following the First World War, Italy was shaken by a social and political crisis a lot deeper than that of other Western European countries (except of course Germany). There was a radicalization and politicization of wide sections of the working class, important layers of the peasantry and sections of the petty bourgeoisie. This emphasized further certain specific characteristics of the Italian workers' movement, including the Socialist Party. There were, among other elements, the formation of a strong communist tendency and a majority maximalist component, which drove the reformists led by Filippo Turati into a clearly minority position.

This context of revolutionary or pre-revolutionary crisis which, despite its potentialities, was not exploited in a favourable direction, explains why the fascist phenomenon emerged for the first time in Italy.

On the other hand, it was the twenty years of Mussolini's dictatorship which determined the type of struggle and mobilizations which developed as the regime exploded. We should remember for example that in March 1943, and the following year, there were mass strikes, which were practically unique in the anti-fascist resistance in Western Europe. During the days of the armistice, the political maturation of broad layers of the population combined with the decomposition of the army, creating the conditions for a vast underground movement and armed resistance of considerable strength.

While not making any concessions to apologetic interpretations, we should add that the sharpness of the struggle in this period as well as popular participation

had a lasting impact on the social and political context of the following decades. Thus a whole period of post war reconstruction was marked by sharp and lasting social and political conflicts, which were expressed in big mobilizations, certain of which — for example that of 18 July 1948 after the attack on Togliatti — had an insurrectional character. Even after the ruling classes and their governments had succeeded in imposing a relative stabilization, the workers' movement was able to maintain its organized strength without suffering any defeat comparable for example to that in France represented by De Gaulle's rise to power and the installation of the Fifth Republic.

In 1968-69 a new political and social crisis developed. This is not the place to rediscuss the causes and expressions of this crisis.¹ In Italy there was not a concentrated revolutionary explosion like that of May 1968 in France. But the crisis touched more deeply the political, administrative and even judicial institutions; relations in the workplaces; and was marked by an unprecedented political radicalization. This crisis, which was once again a rather exceptional variant in capitalist Europe, continued with its ups and downs for more than five years, with continuing effects in the following period.

To sum up, it was in this context, between the end of the war and the 1970s, that the workers' movement was able to build, strengthen and maintain such strong political and trade-union organizations (as well as a vast, organized network of the cooperative movement), exercise considerable cultural influence, occupy solid positions at all levels of institutions, even though its main component (the PCI) remained excluded from government.

It is this context which explains, in the last analysis, the growth and consolidation of the Communist Party, a party which for decades stayed the strongest among those in capitalist countries and was able to avoid the same sort of catastrophic decline as that suffered by the French or Spanish Communist Parties.

Different stages in the development of the PCI

Nevertheless, in order to avoid any mechanistic

1. Among these factors should be emphasized the increased weight of the working class and the eruption of the new political and social force represented by the student movement (on this see what I wrote in *PCI 1945-69: stalinismo e opportunismo*, Samonà e Savelli, Rome, 1969, p. 311; *Il partito leninista*, Samonà e Savelli, Rome, 1972, *Dinamica delle classe sociali in Italia*, Samonà e Savelli, Rome, 1976).

interpretation, we should also look at the subjective factors which existed, and indicate more concretely how the PCI was able on each occasion to exploit the potential that existed in the objective situation in its own favour. Therefore we should look briefly at certain stages in its development.

The Italian Communist Party was created when the ascending phase of the revolution was beginning to slow down and the ruling classes were going onto the offensive. In this sense it is not wrong to say — as has already been said in different ways and from different points of view — that it was created too late. Too late to exploit the social and political crisis of the post-First World War in favour of the working class, and too late to have the time to build a weapon capable of effectively combating the rise to power of fascism. Its difficulties were aggravated by the fact that the conceptions and analytical methods of its first leading group, under Bordigist hegemony, were a serious obstacle to its understanding of fascism, which was then an unknown phenomenon.²

Nevertheless, the party had quite considerable forces available at its creation and, despite the blows it suffered, it maintained quite a solid organization through the first years of the new regime, even increasing its numbers after the assassination of Matteotti in 1924. It had in particular considerable influence in certain factories, among the biggest in Italy. But above all, it was the only political organization to succeed in maintaining political activity within the country after the consolidation of the fascist dictatorship, even during the most difficult periods.³

We will see later the price it had to pay for the mistakes made around 1930. But nevertheless, thanks to its organic link to the exploited classes and above all with the significant proletarian sectors, to the militants it had formed in its first years of existence, to the sometimes mass influence won among emigrants (particularly in France but also in Belgium, Luxemburg and Switzerland), to the force and authority it drew from its membership of the Third International and its reference to the Russian Revolution, the PCI — unlike

all other parties and movements and particularly the Socialist Party — benefited from a substantial continuity during the twenty years of dictatorship. This continuity made it possible for its members, despite the weakness or frequent absence of links with the Party centre, to make a decisive contribution to the above-mentioned strikes of spring 1943.⁴

We know the role played by Communists in the Resistance, which lies at the root of their exceptional growth during these two crucial years of 1943-45. This growth, which was greatly helped by the prestige enjoyed by the USSR at the time, was possible because the PCI entered into the struggle with an accumulation of leaders and militants incomparably superior to that of all the other organizations. From July 1943, the number of active members was increased by the arrival of those who had been imprisoned or deported to the islands and the return of those who had been in exile. A significant group of these had had military experience during the Spanish Civil War which turned out to be very useful.

It was thanks to this backbone that the PCI was able to make by far the most important contribution to the underground movement, to the mass mobilizations such as the strikes of spring 1944, and to the fight of the maquis. This led to a flood of new members who were to play a central role in the party's activity and internal life during the following years.⁵

The PCI's growth after the war

At the end of the war, the PCI already had a predominant influence in the working class, and was scarcely less strong electorally than the Socialist Party.⁶ Its members were in the front line of building workers' and peasants' trades unions, as well as other mass organizations.

In the years that followed, the relationship of forces within the workers' movement evolved more clearly in its favour. We will see later what judgement we should have on its orientation and its contradictions in this period. It is enough here to recall that, to the extent to which the PSI grew weaker as a result of its political

union current had 288,000 in the trades councils (*Camere del lavoro*) and 136,000 in the sectoral unions. The social composition of the new party was 98% proletarian. In the first elections in which it participated, in April 1921, it won 291,952 votes and 15 seats (the PSI had 1.5 million votes and 122 seats). In the autumn of 1924, there were 25,000 members and a few thousand more the following year, while in 1926 they were only 16,000. Finally, in the elections for the internal commission in Fiat in April 1925, the PCI list got nearly the same number of votes as the FIOM, supported by the two Socialist parties.

4. At the beginning of 1943, there were only 89 members in Fiat Mirafiori, about 30 in Lancia, about 60 in Viberti, about 70 in Aeronautica, and overall about 1000 members in Turin, almost all workers. This figures may seem modest in relation to the number of members that the PCI had in the years that followed. But those who know what underground work means and know the determining role that even small nuclei can play in big factories when conditions change, can only make a different assessment and understand the work which had been undertaken to arrive in 1943 with such a potential.

2. It is worth recalling what was said by the Italian Left Opposition at the beginning of the 1930s:

This party was formed too late to exploit victoriously the revolutionary wave unleashed in Italy at the end of the war (1919-20), but it represented the only guarantee of success in struggle for the future of the Italian proletariat, to prevent all being lost, to create the conditions for a future victory over the bourgeoisie. The condition was not only to give a correct theoretical solution to the problems of the proletarian revolution, but also to have an appropriate policy to win the broad masses to accepting the solutions presented by the Communist Party. It was this policy that our Party essentially lacked in its "infant" phase, under the Bordigist leadership. (*Bollettino dell'Opposizione italiana*, No 13, February 1933).

3. In the Livorno Congress, some 60,000 registered members supported the Communist motion, to which should be added 35,000 votes from the total of 43,000 cast by the Youth Federation. The maximalists had about 100,000 and the reformists 15,000. The Communist trade-

inconsistency, of its growing tailendism of the Communists and finally the split by Palais Barberini (which gave birth the Italian Social Democratic Party (PSDI) of Giuseppe Saragat), the PCI more and more appeared to the masses as the only force capable of opposing the restorationist offensive of the ruling classes and to the imperialist military and political bloc of the Atlantic Alliance (Nato). Two particularly symbolic episodes are worth mentioning: the battle (within and outside parliament) against signing the Atlantic Pact in 1949 and, four years later, the democratic fight against the *legge truffa* (crooked-law).

In the new phase which opened in the 1960s with the arrival of the centre left governments, marked by the PSI's entry into governments that were incapable of even carrying out the very moderate reforms that they promised, the PCI could only appear as the only credible opposition force and the most effective weapon for defending the interests and aspirations of the popular masses.

A challenge to this role only developed from 1968-69 onwards, with the rise of the big mass movements of students and workers. For this first time in its history, the party was under challenge and widely attacked from its left. But thanks to the undoubted tactical flexibility of its leading group and the skilful transformism shown by its trade-union leaders, it succeeded quite rapidly in adapting to the situation by taking over the demands of the new movements and influencing broad sectors of them.

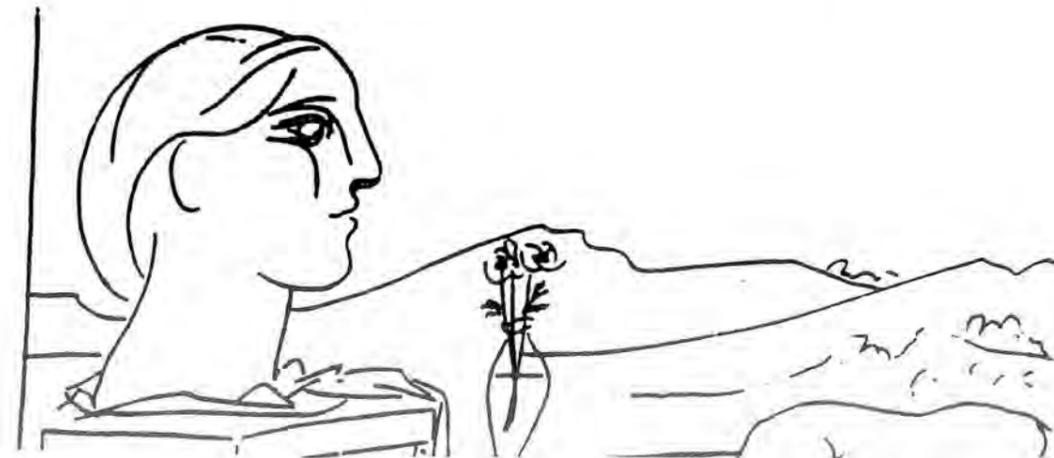
When the most difficult period of the social and political crisis ended and the problems of the 1974-75 national and international economic crisis loomed over the horizon, faced with which the far left was largely disarmed (which is one of the factors that started its decline), when the broad masses again entered an electoral-institutional perspective, the PCI again appeared as the only effective instrument. We thus arrive at its electoral successes of 1975-76, while internationally it was the time of Eurocommunism, which appeared as a systematic effort to give struggles and political perspectives the international dimension

they needed. It was in this situation that, under the leadership of Berlinguer, the PCI achieved the highest point of its trajectory.

In short, its strength was the product of activity over more than fifty years, practically without any solution of continuity. It was due to deep social roots in the working class, in broad sections of peasants and in certain layers of the petty bourgeoisie (modern and traditional) that it could develop and consolidate thanks to its political and organizational role. It is due also to the multiform influence it had over national culture, thanks to a vast network of intellectuals in its ranks and around it (particularly in this domain the party could exploit, although abusively, the prestige of Antonio Gramsci). It was also thanks to the constant good use made of those who used to be called professional revolutionaries, that is those men and women for whom the struggle against existing society was the reason for living, who were totally devoted and formed an element of strength that no other political force had at all (we will see what were the negative aspects of the existence of the apparatus, which at least tended to be monolithic, which was formed from this layer). Finally, the PCI's strength was due to the systematic use — with results that particularly in local administrations had positive aspects — of the institutional framework where the electoral weight, as we had already mentioned, a very

5. It is estimated that, in the 45 days between the fall of Mussolini and the signing of the armistice with the government's allies, some 3000 activists had been freed. This made it possible from 1943 to bring about the regroupment between the "three components" of the party; the ex-prisoners, the activists from the emigration and the recently recruited youth (cf Paolo Spriano, *Storia del Partito comunista italiano*, Einaudi, Turin, 1973, Vol IV, p. 344; for the figures on members in the factories, *ibid*, Vol V, pp. 225-226.)

6. On 2 June 1976, the PCI won 4,356,686 votes against 4,758,129 for the PSI. At the Liberation, that is to say at the end of the period of clandestinity for a whole area of the country, it had 90,000 members in the North and 311,960 in the rest of the country. During the Fifth Congress, the first in the post-war period, it announced 1,770,896 members. The highest point was reached at the Seventh Congress in 1951, with about 2.5 million members



2. The international context

In our summary of the historical trajectory of the PCI we have in general ignored the international factors, except for a few references. It seemed necessary to take this approach at a time when there is the blossoming of so many simplistic historical reconstructions which reduce everything to the crimes of Stalin, and Togliatti's complicity. But a complete analysis and assessment must naturally include the full international dimension, while refusing not only the summary condemnations but also the apologetic interpretations which have prevailed for years and which have not yet been completely abandoned.

The PCI and the Communist International

From the beginning — this also appears in the works of Paolo Spriano its main historian¹ — the formation and the evolution of the PCI were very largely determined by the direct or indirect interventions of the Third International.

In the first phase of the party's existence, the International tried, not without difficulty, to use its weight to counterbalance Bordigist conceptions and orientations. This aimed particularly at getting the concept of the proletarian united front accepted, and encouraging collaboration with the PSI. Another goal was reunification with the maximalist current which had predominated at the Livorno congress.

Later, international pressure and interventions contributed to the formation of a new leading group which broke with Bordiga.² In the same way, without the international discussions and experiences there would not have been the Lyons Congress theses in 1926, which marked a very important turning point in the development of the party.

There was a broad discussion in the revolutionary left on their assessment of these theses as the Bordigists considered them as a step on the path that would inevitably lead to the policy of popular front and national unity. In our opinion this was just as mistaken

an interpretation as that supported for years by the official leadership of the party which, fundamentally, went in the same direction. The only difference was that this path was considered negative by one side and positive by the other. In reality, the Lyons theses were a valuable contribution to the analysis of Italian society and its dynamic and for developing a revolutionary strategy. Gramsci's contribution to their elaboration was decisive.

However, another aspect should not be forgotten. The discussion on strategy and political orientation in Italy took place in the very ambiguous framework of the so-called "Bolshevization" of the Communist Parties. Started by the Fifth Congress of the International, "Bolshevization" tried to answer a demand for political homogenization and for changing the methods of organization and functioning inherited from the old reformist parties. But, under the influence of Zinoviev — who was then president of the International — among others, it undoubtedly marked the beginning of a period of bureaucratization. Even during the preparation of the Lyons congress some not very democratic methods were used. On this, the Bordigists' complaints were not completely unfounded.³

In any case, international constraints took on a qualitatively different character after the consolidation of Stalinism. This fact can no longer be challenged by anybody. As it is not the purpose of this study to deal with all the ups and downs of this period which has already been widely dealt with by different historians, we will only touch on the problems which arose at the most significant moments.

3. At the Third Congress of the Communist International, Zinoviev defined Bolshevism in the following terms:

For us, Bolshevization means that the parties accept what was in general contained in Bolshevism and what Lenin said about an "infantile disorder". Bolshevization of the parties means for us implacable hate for the bourgeoisie and the social-democratic leaders, the possibility of all manoeuvres against the enemy. Bolshevization is the inflexible wish to fight against the hegemony of the proletariat against the counter-revolutionary leaders and the centrists, against the pacifists and all the excrescences of bourgeois ideology. Bolshevization means creating a strongly structured, monolithic, centralized organization, capable of harmoniously and fraternally resolving the differences in its ranks.

As Lenin taught us, Bolshevization is Marxism in action. It is faithfulness to the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat and to the ideas of Leninism. Bolshevization means also not mechanically imitating the Russian Bolsheviks, but keeping what was and remains essential in Bolshevism.

1. Paolo Spriano often has a tendency to justify particularly the actions of Togliatti. But the value of his work is that he gives facts and material which make it possible to arrive at different conclusions from his.

2. Even in the period before Stalinist bureaucratization, authoritarian methods were not always avoided. In the case of the Italian CP, during the session of the enlarged executive of June 1923, the Comintern intervened for the first time to impose the composition the leadership of a section (an executive of 5 members, 3 for the majority, 2 for the minority).

From the 1930 turn to the popular fronts

First of all, we should look at the 1929-30 "turn", linked to the "third period" conceptions of the Communist International. This turn was based on the forecast of generalized revolutionary crises in the short term, and obliged the CPs to abandon the policy of united fronts with the social-democratic parties, which were now denounced as "social-fascists". The most bitter fruits of this policy were harvested in Germany, where the Communist Party's orientation contributed in large part to the tragic defeat of the workers' movement in the rise of Hitler.⁴ But the Italian party also paid the price of a turn made under orders from Moscow.

On this there is an interpretation put forward by two people as different as Giorgio Amendola and Pietro Secchia which says that the "turn" — *svolta* — was decided in Italy by special factors and was implemented in a particular way. There is a kernel of truth in this in that the turn did seem to answer a need for a certain radicalization of the struggle, which was one of the main concerns of the youngest layer of the leading group, and for restarting organized work within the country, leaving behind the quarrels of the emigrant community. It should be added that certain Stalinist formulations, for example "social-fascists", seemed to be on the same wavelength as formulations already used by Bordigism, one of whose features had always been the rejection of any unity with the Socialist Party.⁵

This does not deny that the turn was decided internationally, in line with the demands of the Soviet leadership, and imposed on all the sections by any means necessary.⁶ We could ask the following question: if there had not been a decision of the Communist International, would the PCI have arrived nevertheless at the analyses and policies of the "third period"? The answer can only be no. For example, it is difficult to imagine that, without the pressure from Moscow, *l'Unità* would headline that the time had come to move to "proletarian violence" and add that it was necessary

4. As we know, the polemic against Stalinist orientations of the third period was at the time the leit motif of Trotsky's criticism, whose correctness and farsightedness were almost universally recognized, but unfortunately only decades later...

5. It should be added that the category of social-fascism was not a purely Stalinist discovery. During the Fifth Congress of the Communist International, Zinoviev stated:

The essential fact is that social-democracy has become a wing of Stalinism.

While not abandoning the idea of the united front, he prioritized the united front from below. Togliatti, during the Como conference, referring to Zinoviev, called the "unitarians", that is the reformist socialists, a "wing of fascism". The sectarian attitude to the socialists was not overcome even at the Lyon congress.

6. See on this the records of the Central Committee of the PCI of March 1930, as well as many writings of Alfonso Leonetti (including *Un comunista*, Feltrinelli, Milan, 1977, pp.157-176).

to "get ready to fire against fascism and capital". This was in Italy in 1930 where Mussolini had just consolidated his dictatorship!⁷

Secchia and Amendola's argument, that the turn was the condition for maintaining continuity in action with everything that flowed from that, is specious and clearly apologetic. In fact, those who criticized the turn were not opposed to restarting work in the country. But this new start could be seen differently, as the rejection of adventurist perspectives and practices which had catastrophic consequences, first of all the arrest and prolonged imprisonment of a large number of members.⁸

The next turn was to introduce the policy of popular fronts, called by Spriano a "sudden change" in summer 1934. The pact on unity in action between Socialists and Communists was signed on 17 August 1934. Once again it was not an autonomous initiative of the PCI but a decision taken in Moscow. From the time he had to note the failure of his German policy, Stalin had begun to worry about the danger of war brought by the Nazi rise to power and consider a change in Soviet foreign policy. This new policy began to take shape in 1934 and took final form in May the next year in a joint statement with the French prime minister, Laval. The result for the Communist International was the policy of popular fronts adopted at the Seventh Congress. From now on the Communist Parties sought alliances not only with the Socialist Parties but also with bourgeois parties (in France for example with the Radical Party), and did not rule out their participation in coalition governments. For a judgement on this policy we can quote the historian Spriano himself who was definitely not a leftist:

The concern with encouraging popular front governments was the fundamental reason for sacrificing revolutionary demands, first presented as the guarantee that these governments would not be a simple re-edition of the social-democratic governments, substantially bourgeois, and then abandoned — as for example in France — with the result of seriously compromising the popular nature of these front governments and distancing them from the masses.⁹

But for Stalin and the Comintern leadership, all this was quite secondary. The priority was the diplomatic interests of the USSR.

The PCI leaders have always claimed that the policy adopted during and after the Second World War had its origins fundamentally in the turn to popular fronts and the decisions of the Seventh Congress of the International. They insisted on this to prove their coherence as well as the non-conjunctural character of

7. In the call for the Cologne Congress (1931) we read:

The elements of a revolutionary crisis are accumulating. In the present situation the task of the party is to act to speed up the maturation of a revolutionary crisis.

The plenum of the Communist International spoke of "the rise of a new revolutionary wave" and "the maturing of a revolutionary crisis in certain countries".

8. Amendola himself wrote "It had to be recognized that the 'turn' did not achieve its goals." (*Storia del Partito comunista italiano 1921-43*,

their strategy. In reality, things were not so simple particularly as there was the German-Soviet pact which, despite its temporary nature, represented a break in continuity. In any case, the reference to the policy of united front is not a valid argument for proving the specificity and autonomy of the PCI, which, quite the contrary, had once again adopted an orientation dictated by the International leadership according to the needs of the Soviet Union and its ruling group.¹⁰

From Salerno to the Twentieth Congress

Much has already been written about a third turn, that called the "Salerno turn". If one wants to refer to this turn to assert that at that time — in 1943-44 — the PCI had already adopted a democratic/institutional perspective and abandoned any revolutionary/insurrectional perspective, then this argument is undoubtedly pertinent.¹¹ But this does not imply that there was a specific and autonomous choice. In fact, the line applied in a more and more systematic manner after Togliatti's return to Italy was shared by all the Communist Parties in Western Europe — and in its general lines not only in Western Europe — and had been decided by the Soviet leadership and the Communist International just before its dissolution.¹²

Amendola insists on the fact that Togliatti's propaganda from Radio Moscow was already oriented to anti-fascist unity before his return, but this only

10. We will not here take up another aspect of the problem: the line of popular fronts did not and could not have in Italy the same practical consequences as in France or Spain. The Popular Front was presented as a project of unification of all the opposition currents against fascism, including a critical, or supposedly so, fascist current. During the Central Committee of the end of October 1935, Ruggero Grieco stated in his conclusions: "We will be the leaders of the Popular Front if we are capable — as Ercoli said — of combining the anti-fascist opposition with the fascist opposition."

The slogan of "national reconciliation" and "a programme of peace, freedom, and defence of the interests of the Italian people" was then launched. There was a statement of preparedness to fight alongside critical fascists for the implementation of the fascist programme of 1919. In a resolution of the end of September 1936, it was even stated that "the fascist trade unionists can even be an instrument of struggle against the bosses and this should be considered as workers' trade unions in the current conditions in Italy." Such positions provoked, as can be imagined, strong polemics with the anti-fascist opposition, with repercussions within the party itself.

11. In recent polemics, people have thought it a good idea to reproach the PCI with a supposed incoherence because, during the resistance, it called for insurrection. This argument is quite specious: this was an insurrection against fascism but not for an overthrow of capitalism, and implied the collaboration of all anti-fascist forces.

12. In its last resolution (15 May 1943), the Communist International stated, among other things, "In the countries of the Hitlerite bloc, the fundamental task of the workers and toilers and all honest people is to contribute to the defeat of this bloc. In the countries of the anti-Hitlerite coalition, the sacred duty of the broad popular masses... is to support by every means the military effort of these countries."

proves the opposite of what he wants to say. At the time Togliatti was not linked to the leadership in Italy — which as a body hardly existed — and could therefore not be the spokesperson for a line that had been developed independently by his party. In addition, anyone who has even the vaguest idea of the functioning of the Soviet regime at the beginning of the 1940s cannot seriously think that its leaders would have given a foreign communist the means — in this case a powerful radio transmitter — to express his ideas independently of the orientations of the Kremlin. It is just as inconceivable that Togliatti would take a decision to return and introduce a new line which provoked disarray in wide layers of the party completely independently and without any approval from higher up.¹³

More generally, the choice of the national road to socialism cannot be claimed as an expression of originality and autonomy. It is enough to remember that Stalin himself, before the start of the Cold War, during a conversation with a delegation from the Labour Party, and shortly afterwards in a meeting with the leader of the Czechoslovak CP Gottwald, had envisaged the possibilities of different roads to socialism. This possibility had a favourable reception from several Communist leaders. We should also remember that after the creation of the Cominform in 1947 and the criticisms of opportunism made by Jdanov during the founding meeting in relation to the PCI and PCF, the party adapted to the new climate and without substantially changing its policy — which the Soviets themselves did not ask — discreetly abandoned the theme of national roads to socialism which was only taken up again five years later during the 1956 Congress.¹⁴

In reality, this congress represented another decisive stage in the history of the PCI. It was the texts of this congress and not the three previous ones of the post-war period, which systematized the conception of an "Italian road to socialism".¹⁵ This systematization had been prepared by the previous congresses. But, once again, the turn was inspired by the leaders of the CPSU. In fact, in February of that year the Twentieth Congress took place, where Khrushchev introduced the idea of a peaceful and institutional transition to socialism in the

13. The dramatic experience of Greece is a confirmation in negative of the general orientation of the Communist parties. In fact, Stalin openly condemned the movements with took place there and which led to a confrontation between the partisan forces and the British army.

14. In July 1948, Togliatti declared:

There can only be one single guide: in the field of doctrine it is Marxism-Leninism, among the real forces it is the country which is already socialist and in which a Marxist-Leninist party forged by three revolutions and two victorious wars plays the leading role.

15. The first post-war congress, the Fifth, took place during the last days of 1945 and the first days of 1946; the second, the Sixth, in 1948, and the third, the Seventh, in 1951. On the particular nature of the Fifth Congress, see *Archivio Pietro Secchia 1945-73*, Annali Feltrinelli, Milan, 1979, p. 212.

industrialized countries. It was in the wake of Khrushchev — to whom Togliatti explicitly referred in his report — that the ideas and orientations of the Eighth Congress of the PCI were developed. More generally, it was only after the celebrated Khrushchev report on Stalin's crimes and the "thaw" in the USSR that the PCI started — with prudent gradualism and not without contradictions — a partial process of critical revision of Stalinism and even its own past.

Between the Salerno turn and the 1956 Congress there was an event which we have already mentioned and which had heavy consequences for the communist movement: the break between Moscow and Yugoslavia in 1948. The PCI leadership did not hesitate for a moment: forgetting everything it had written about Yugoslavia and about Tito, it associated itself unreservedly with the open campaign against Yugoslavia. This campaign was marked by the use of classical Stalinist epithets.¹⁶ After Stalin's death, when Khrushchev recognized the "mistake" which had been made, the PCI went along with Moscow's choice with the same zeal. It reacted in the same way in 1956 in approving the Soviet intervention in Hungary.

Stalinist organizational practices

As we will see later, in its organizational functioning the PCI suffered less than the other parties from the Stalinization process. But this does not mean that even from this point of view this was fundamentally a Stalinist party.

For example, it only had really democratic internal discussion for a very limited period, during the first years of its existence.¹⁷ Then the move to underground activity encouraged the concentration of power at the top and a functioning of the apparatus with very rigid watertight compartments. Up to the end of the 1920s, discussions continued, but they only concerned smaller and smaller leading bodies which were reconstituted by coopting rather than electing new members.

Already during the struggle against the Bordiga tendency, before and after the Lyons congress, disciplinary measures of a bureaucratic style had been adopted. At the beginning of the 1930s, at the time of the crisis provoked by the turn, the party crossed another step in the road to bureaucratization: the minorities were expelled by administrative measures

16. I was at that time in Venice and in contact with the leaders of the Communist Federation. The announcement by radio at the end of the evening of the Soviet Union's break with Yugoslavia caused disarray within the party. But the following morning, when the headquarters of the regional Federation was opened, Tito's portrait had already disappeared.

17. It should be added that Bordiga did not have a democratic conception of the functioning of the party either. His idea was that it would have been preferable to talk about organic centralism rather than democratic centralism. It was not a purely terminological question because Bordiga declared himself favourable to "a military-type discipline". The Bordigist left was also in favour of the most centralization possible within the International.

and attacked in a huge campaign of calumnies.

At the time of the Moscow trials, the anti-Trotskyist campaign was also launched in Italy, where the Trotskyist movement hardly existed (there was only a small nucleus of comrades, almost all emigrants). This campaign took place even in the prisons and the deportation camps. Those who did not share the party line or even only certain of its aspects (to say nothing of the CPSU and Comintern line) were harshly attacked, isolated and expelled by summary methods (the most striking case is that of Umberto Terracini).¹⁸

After Lyons, there was only one congress in twenty years: that of Cologne in 1931. There was no discussion on the turn of the previous year which had nevertheless led to the expulsion of half the Political Bureau. Nor should it be forgotten that in 1939, when the Comintern decided to dissolve the Central Committee of the Italian Party and to create an "ideological" or "reorganization centre" in Moscow, designating its new secretary without consulting or informing anybody, that the PCI did not have the slightest reaction. It lined up with Moscow in the same way as did the other Communist Parties internationally.¹⁹

This measure did not have the same tragic consequences as did similar measures in other Communist Parties, for example in Poland, which was literally destroyed (an episode in which Togliatti is certainly not completely innocent). But it could only worsen the leadership crisis which existed at the time and we can legitimately ask whether, with a more democratic solution to this crisis, would the party have been able to face the crucial test of the war in more favourable conditions?²⁰

During the period opened by the crisis and the fall of fascism, some very vigorous discussions started within the party, which remained nevertheless strictly limited to the leading groups, that is to say the two centres in Milan and Rome, without any participation from the organizers and thus even less from the rank and file.²¹ After Togliatti's return and the meeting of the National Council which had approved the Salerno turn, the new line was rapidly imposed. To use Spriano's words: it was the end of the regime of free discussion.²²

The Togliatti cult then developed in more and more open forms, while the most important decisions were

18. According to certain testimonies by former deportees in the islands, ex-members, above all during the last years, were correctly treated by their comrades who remained in the party. We do not have any reason to cast doubt on these testimonies. But there are others, more numerous, which state the contrary: those who had left the party or had been expelled were the victims of real persecution campaigns. Similar attitudes were also widespread during the Resistance (for example in relation to militants of Stella Rossa in Turin and Bandiera Rossa in Rome).

19. This secretary was Giuseppe Berti.

20. Amendola, whose book reeks of justifications, writes: The PCI arrived at the testing period of the war in conditions of severe organizational weakness and political confusion. (op. cit. p. 369)

21. Spriano, op. cit. V, p. 79.

22. Spriano, op. cit. V, p. 326.

reserved to the limited group of main leaders. When there were different points of view, they were discussed in this nucleus without ever being communicated not only to members but even to other leadership bodies. In a letter to Togliatti in November 1954, Pietro Secchia, who had nevertheless a conception of democratic centralism a lot closer to that of Stalin than that of Lenin, described the decision-making process in the following terms:

Since 1945, many decisions on very important questions for the political orientation of the party and for its practical action have been taken individually. It has even happened that they were not discussed in advance, but simply once they were taken. And even when they were discussed in advance; the discussions were very rapid and held in such a way that the personality had an overpowering weight and the other interventions could only approve the proposal.

Still according to Secchia; several comrades stated at one point that the Central Committee "was only a meeting of activists called from time to time to distribute tasks".²³

Things only changed very partially after the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU, despite the very lively discussions at all levels in 1956. Nor was this bureaucratic functioning abandoned in the Berlinguer

period. Positions taken and crucial decisions of this period — such as for example the announcement of the historic compromise, or later the abandoning of the policy of national unity — were not preceded by any discussion in the leadership or the Central Committee.²⁴ In reality the old conceptions and former methods were only abandoned in the 1980s. However, this did not mean a real democratization but rather the replacing of Stalinist and post-Stalinist methods by methods more typical of social-democratic parties.

23. Archivio Pietro Secchia 1945-73, Feltrinelli, 1978, p. 673. A substantially similar judgement, even if expressed in more moderate terms, is that of Pietro Ingrao, *Le cose impossibili*, Editori Riuniti, Rome, 1990, p. 76.

24. Luciano Lama asserted that, while a member of the leadership, he read in the party journal, *Rinascita*, Berlinguer's theses in the historic compromise, and learnt from *l'Unità* that the party was now moving towards a policy of democratic alternative (*Intervista sul partito*, Laterza, Bari, 1982).

3. From Livorno to social-democracy: an unprecedented course

We have already underlined the importance of the 1956 congress in the trajectory of the Italian Communist Party. We will now attempt to summarize this evolution from a more general point of view. The PCI incontestably represents the extreme case of a political phenomenon which was very difficult to foresee, at least in its full implications, until the mid-1950s: the transformation of a party — which was formed as a revolutionary party in opposition to reformism and then became a Stalinist party — into a neo-reformist party of a social-democratic type.¹

The contradictions of Stalinist parties

First of all, let us reconsider the notion of a Stalinist party. During the 1930s, the Stalinist Communist parties developed a specific ideology, that is to say their own conception of the socialist society and its particular features, as well as their own conception of the party and its functioning, of the relationship between the party and the mass organizations; the role of culture, etc. This ideology was periodically subject to changes and adaptations. But what fundamentally marked these parties was a lot less the ideology than their acceptance of the hegemonic role of the USSR, the "socialist motherland", its single party and its unchallenged leader. In other words, the subordination — first by the Comintern then by other mechanisms² — of the interests and needs of the workers' movement in different countries to the interests and demands of the Soviet state or, more concretely, of its ruling caste.

It was because of this subordination that they stopped being revolutionary parties in the strictest sense of the word. However, they retained a genetic difference from reformist parties of a social-democratic type, whose opportunist and bureaucratic deformation had been basically determined by the economic, social and political constraints arising from their insertion in the institutional framework and mechanisms of capitalist society.

Once these elements of definition are sketched out, it should be added that the interests and demands of the Soviet bureaucracy could not be the exclusive component of the policy of a Communist party, or at least of a party which had gone beyond the dimensions of a propaganda group by establishing real links with social layers and mass movements. Two other factors played a role: the need to take into account the needs of the movements in which they worked; and the interests of the leading groups and national apparatuses which did not necessarily coincide with those of the Soviet state and party. These three factors combined in different ways at different times.

In the case of the PCI, this difference can be clearly understood. In the 1930s, the first factor was by far the determining one in all its aspects (material aid, the strength which the party drew from its membership of a world movement led by the first "socialist" state in history, etc). However, as soon as the party began to grow and acquire a substantial mass base to finally become the hegemonic organization within the workers' movement, the weight of the two other factors gradually increased. The turn was represented by the 1956 events: from this date, the "national" interests tended to prevail over the international factors, even if the link with Moscow was not broken (which it would only be finally twenty years later). Even after Stalin's death, when Stalinism no longer had many followers, when the USSR no longer appeared as a model of socialism and its leadership was challenged not only by revolutionary forces but also by the leading bureaucratic groups of other countries, the umbilical cord was maintained, because the reference to "socialist countries" and the "communist movement" could be put forward as an element of the party's strength.³ However, when Moscow's policy risked having serious negative effects for its own battle — as was the case with the invasion of Czechoslovakia or the intervention in Afghanistan — the PCI did not hesitate to take its distance with explicit statements of condemnation.

In reality, the fundamental and inherent contradiction of the Stalinist parties — including the PCI — became clear in the second half of the 1920s and particularly from the beginning of the 1930s: they had to submit to the determining influence of the Soviet

1. To be precise, Trotsky had already indicated the tendency of Communist parties to become reformist or neo-reformist national communist parties before the war, in particular in an article written after the Munich agreement (see Leon Trotsky, *Writings*, Pathfinder Press, New York).

2. In referring to the period following the dissolution of the Cominform, Luigi Longo wrote:

The CPSU remained the reference and the "hierarchy" to respect even in the new dynamic of the Communist movement. From this point of view the logic of the Third International survived (and in 1948 was again explicit with the formation of the Information Bureau, by shaping the behaviour of all or almost all Communist parties." (*Opinion sulla Cina*, Milan 1977)

3. Again in 1968, we could read in a report by Berlinguer:

We are and we will remain an internationalist party; we are and we will remain a movement in which there is the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries, in which there is Cuba and Vietnam, and we want to keep open the possibility of China.

Primo quaderno / 8 febbraio 1929

Note e appunti.

Argomenti principali:

- 1) Teoria della storia e della storiografia.
- 2) Sviluppo della borghesia italiana fin - 1870.
- 3) Formazione dei gruppi intellettuali italiani: - svolgimenti, atteggiamenti.
- 4) La letteratura popolare dei romanzi d'appendice, e le oscillazioni della sua persistente fortuna.
- 5) Cavalcanti Cavalcanti: la sua posizione nell' ^{stato nuovo} ~~comune~~ e nell' arte della Rivoluzione Comunistica.
- 6) Origini e svolgimenti dell' Azione Cattolica in Italia e in

leadership through the bureaucratized International but, at the same time, they could not ignore their national context. During this whole period, this was more a potential than a real contradiction and it was not easy to understand its full scope, particularly as the cases where it had already been demonstrated, for example in China, the parties interested were concerned not to express it openly but rather to hide it behind stereo-typed politico-ideological formulae which hardly corresponded to real practices.⁴ It was only after the explosion of the crisis of Stalinism and the events of the 1950s and 1960s, on the basis of the testimonies of surviving protagonists or historical studies, that we were able to know what previously had only been suspected: that is to say that despite all the pretence of unanimity this contradiction had had an effect from the outset in provoking conflicts.

1956, both for the scope of its events as well as its symbolic value, marks a breaking point. In particular this contradiction was to be demonstrated in the PCI in different forms: it was the contradiction of a party which for decades had no longer been a revolutionary party and which was now ceasing to be a Stalinist party, yet without becoming a social-democratic party, because it explicitly refused to be so characterized and it could not act coherently as a reformist party in the context of a society where it had achieved a considerable specific weight. This is how the reasons for its inability to achieve the strategic goals which it had fixed for itself and to overcome the obstacles that the ruling classes imposed so determinedly against its legitimization as a governing power should be understood in the final analysis.⁵

The new phase was marked by different and even contradictory developments on which we cannot spend a lot of time. It is enough to point out the main feature: from now on the PCI's policy was no longer conditioned — except partially or indirectly — by the USSR and the so-called communist movement which was already on the road to gradual disintegration, but above all by national factors. The decline in prestige of the USSR and the "socialist world" and thus of their drawing power, not to mention the irreversible collapse of the Stalinist myth, contributed to strengthening this tendency. But this is not the essential.

The origins and stages of social-democratization

4. The most pertinent example is that of China in the 1930s, when the Maoist leadership implemented a line that was noticeably different from that of the other Communist parties and acted independently of the Comintern, while not announcing any ideological differences nor publicly expressing its differences (in fact rather participating in the cult of Stalin and the USSR as the homeland of socialism).

5. For these analyses and assessments, see *Teoria e politica comunista nel dopoguerra*, Schwartz, Milan, 1959, which was further developed in *PCI 1945-1969: stalinismo e opportunismo*. Unlike analyses developed later, I wrote here that "the PCI cannot and could not be a reformist party". This turned out to be mistaken, above all, I think, because of the development of the international situation.

Traditional social-democratic reformism developed above all in the decades before the First World War. In western and central Europe these years were marked by economic growth and relative stability of bourgeois democratic institutions. In this context — which did not see any revolutionary or pre-revolutionary crises despite the explosion of social and political conflicts sometimes very sharp — the workers' movement goal was above all to win some partial economic, social or political demands. The successes in this domain — although limited — were at the root of the growth of the socialist parties, trade unions and other mass organizations. But at the same time what we call the dialectic of partial successes operated. As broader and broader layers of the exploited classes won by their struggles and organization a whole series of democratic rights and other non-negligible improvements in their standard of living, their concern was that these gains should not be put into question and they thus tended to subordinate the revolutionary struggle for the overthrow of capitalism to the defence of partial gains. This was the objective basis for the growth of reformism and the reason for its lasting influence despite the catastrophic defeats suffered at crucial moments by the reformist parties.

After a first rather difficult period of reconstruction, Italy enjoyed a prolonged economic boom which was unprecedented in its history. This was accompanied by a process of modernization which nobody had foreseen in the forms which it took. This growth took place in a context of relative political stability and in the framework of new parliamentary institutions which were not only more advanced than those of pre-fascist Italy but also than those of other countries of Western Europe.⁶ In general, while retaining certain specificities — particularly in the South (Mezzogiorno) — Italian society fell more into line with the rest of capitalist Europe, whatever the thinking of those who based their analyses and political strategy on the idea of a so-called backwardness of the country.

Through the strengthening of the specific social weight of the working class and, more generally, of the workers, conditions were thus created that were more favourable to the outbreak of workers' and popular struggles for very important economic demands and democratic rights. In fact, struggles developed uninterruptedly at different levels, often with real results. The workers' parties, and above all the Communist Party, were able to consolidate and extend their positions in the institutions, by winning the administrations of a large number of towns, provinces and even regions. This situation continued for decades and was not changed by the social and political crisis of the 1960s and early 1970s. We should especially

6. While not sharing the acritical praise of the 1947 constitution there is no doubt that, at the level of capitalist democracy, it is, along with that of Weimar Germany (1919), one of the most advanced. In post-war Italy, democratic rights, particularly electoral ones, were guaranteed more than elsewhere.

note that it was a much longer period than that of the rise of reformist parties before 1914, not to mention the inter-war period.

It is therefore perfectly understandable that a party which, since the mid-1930s, had given up any revolutionary perspective, which no longer gave even its organizers, not to mention its rank-and-file members, the education which it had given them at the beginning, which considered the republican constitution as the necessary and sufficient framework for the transition to socialism and envisaged this transition in the form of "successive approximations", had an increasing tendency to act as a reformist party, finally transforming itself into a social-democratic party.

We cannot here lay out all the stages of a process which took more than three decades to arrive at its final conclusion.⁷ It will be enough to sketch out in summarized form a division into periods which inevitably implies some arbitrary and schematic elements.

1. A first period from 1956 (Twentieth Congress of the CPSU and Eighth Congress of the PCI) to August 1968. The party developed a critique, which was in fact quite timorous, of Stalinism, without questioning its links with the USSR. But when the Warsaw Pact armies crushed the Prague spring, for the first time it openly criticized Moscow's policy.

2. A second "Berlinguerian" period from the beginning of the 1970s to the "wrenching break" during Jaruzelski's coup d'état in Poland (December 1981). The PCI definitively took its distance from the USSR and "socialist countries". Already before this it had recognized Italy's presence in Nato. Its evolution was inspired essentially by the concern to make credible first its historic compromise project (1973) then later its national unity policy (1976) and then its democratic alternative (from 1979) and its Eurocommunist project at an international level. However, it still made an effort to differentiate itself theoretically and politically from the social-democratic parties (it was with this aim that Berlinguer projected the idea of a "third way").

3. A third period symbolized by the first two congresses which took place after the death of Berlinguer (the Seventeenth and Eighteenth) which noted the failure of the Eurocommunist project, letting drop any remnant of the "third way" and asserting that the party was now an "integral part of the European left" (its youth organization joined the Socialist International as an observer).⁸

7. We already did this in the works cited above and in *Destino di Trockij*, Rizzoli, Milan, 1979.

8. The PCI leaders on several occasions made a point of defining the difference between their party and social-democracy. But these were most often changing and quite partial if not totally fictive definitions. In September 1978, Berlinguer stated that "the common feature of the social-democratic parties remains their renunciation of breaking with capitalism and transforming the basis of society in a socialist direction".



On this it is useful to recall the significant features of the most typical social-democratic parties:

- A gradualist conception of the transition to a new society (while this final perspective is retained);
- an ahistorical conception of democracy (democracy as a permanent universal value, over and above the concrete historical forms of the society) and a theoretical and practical conception of the existing framework of capitalist parliamentary and presidential democracies;
- a strategy of partial conquests which is based on a combination of parliamentary action and action of mass organization, with the first taking precedence;
- a perspective of rationalization and "democratization" of the existing society;
- a perspective of transformation of international relations above all through international organisms such

About two years later, in an interview in *La Repubblica*, he explained that "the social-democrats have worried a lot about workers, the workers organized in trade unions, but almost never about those on the fringes, the sub-proletariat and women." On the third way and the third stage, this is what Berlinguer said in January 1982, "The third way is a specific position in relation to the Soviet model on the one hand and social-democratic type experiences on the other. The formulation "third phase" on the other hand, refers to the historical experience and thus to the two previous phases of development of the workers' movement. However, it is obvious that the search for a third way would be impossible if there was not a third phase and if we did not intend to follow it.

as the League of Nations in the inter-war period and the United Nations today, with the aim reducing arms and guaranteeing peace, without nevertheless putting into question the fundamental orientation of the foreign policy of their respective countries.

- A conception of building and consolidating the workers' movement on the basis of presence in the institutions and convergence with the trade unions engaged in co-management of the enterprises and of cooperatives that respect the mechanisms of the system;

- a conception which transforms the party into an electoral tool and increasingly subordinates the choices of the workers' movement to several centres or pressure groups (parliamentary groups, local administrations, leading groups in the trade unions and cooperatives, intellectuals who organize cultural life, etc.) with a more and more marginal role for organized activists.

Traditionally, the social-democratic parties have established and maintained many links with broad layers of society. But their inherent weakness has resided in the fact that the representation of these layers has been in a sectoral and partial fashion, sometimes in a clearly corporatist way. This is the result of an optic of adaptation to the existing society and of giving up any anti-capitalist orientation. As a consequence, even though social-democrats still wield considerable weight and play a hegemonic role in several countries in capitalist Europe and lead struggles which have made it possible for their social base to win partial gains, they still also bear the responsibility for decisive defeats of the workers' movement.

Towards the mid-1960s, it was already clear that the PCI acted as a neo-reformist party, was inserted into the institutional framework with a primarily electoralist perspective, and aimed essentially to strengthen its traditional tools such as the local administrations, the trade unions and the cooperatives. The logic of such an evolution implied a whole series of consequences: a reduction in the percentage of members compared to voters, who tended to participate only occasionally; a preponderant weight of petty-bourgeois and intellectual elements rather than workers and other members from popular layers; activity in the factories limited to electoral campaigns and the support of certain union struggles; a growing marginalization of young people within an organization which had lost all inspiration from ideals that were in the least revolutionary. From all the evidence, these distinctive features of a social-democratic party applied still more to the PCI at the end of the 1970s and in the first half of the 1980s.

A historical paradox

This transformation for which we have indicated the structural roots, should be situated more concretely, over and above the subjective choices of the leading groups, in the evolution of the national and international situation, several aspects of which it was difficult to foresee not only at the end of the war but also at the end of the 1950s.

In fact, on the one hand the world capitalist system

— also helped by the majority organizations of the workers' movement which gave up challenging it and allowed it to overcome the most critical moments (for example the post-war crisis and that of 1968-75) — managed first to develop a dynamism thanks to the long wave of economic growth which lasted for about a quarter-century, and then to win to a great extent that battle for reconstruction in the first half of the 1980s. All this ensured a relative institutional stability for the industrialized countries of Western Europe, North America and Japan. On the other hand, the bureaucratized transitional societies, incapable of introducing substantial reforms, entered a phase where their leaderships became not simply a relative but an absolute break on the growth and organization of productive forces. At the same time, their institutions blocked the needs and aspirations of broader and broader layers of society, which was to rapidly lead these societies against a catastrophic decline.

All this inevitably had deep repercussions on the action and consciousness of the workers themselves and on their political and trade-union organizations, particularly if we note that, apart from short period and in any case only in partial forms, the counter-tendencies has difficulty in asserting themselves (the rapid decline of the far-left formations of the 1960s and 1970s reflect this limit). The tendency of the PCI to draw nearer to and then to identify with social-democracy, a tendency whose origins as we have seen was in the 1956 turn, was strengthened.

The result of this process was a sort of historical paradox. The PCI transformed itself into a party of a social-democratic type at a time when the most representative social-democratic parties were noticeably different from what they had been at their highest point. We do not need to recall that already in the inter-war period, some of these parties had been — to use the pertinent formula of Léon Blum — "loyal managers of capital". But the novelty of the last decades — whose precursor was for very specific reasons the Swedish experience — resides in the fact that the social-democratic parties assumed responsibility for government in capitalist countries for long periods and sometime even became the only instrument possible for running the system. This was the case of the Spanish state where — from the beginning of the 1980s — the bourgeoisie was no longer able to form a hegemonic party and had to use — not without reason from its point of view — the PSOE of Felipe Gonzalez. This was also, with some differences, the case of France, which has had a socialist president since 1981.

This has brought about a change in the very composition of these parties. Wage-workers are still the big majority of their electoral base, but this is no longer the case for their members. As for their organizers and leaders, they are usually of petty-bourgeois if not bourgeois origins. In addition the parties as such are more and more inextricably involved in the state apparatuses and the local administration as well as different public and private economic organisms. Their main contradiction can be synthesized in the following

terms:

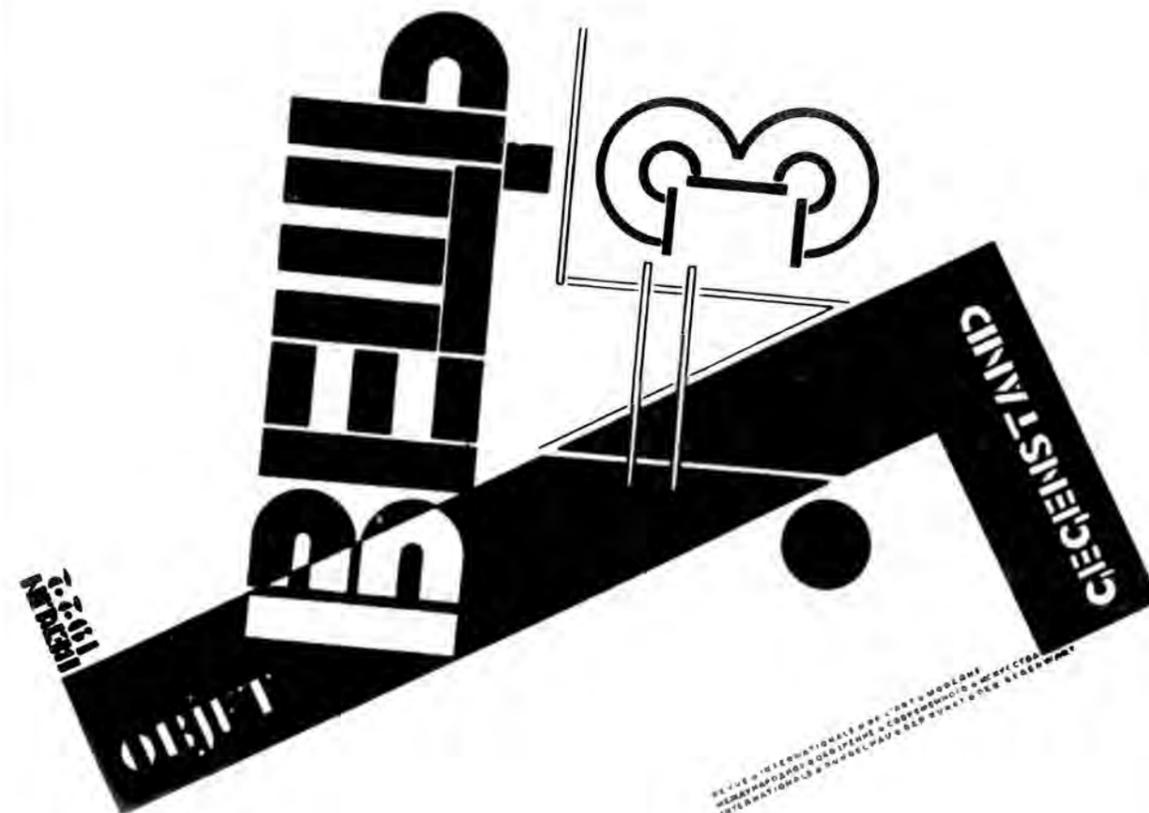
On the one hand if they do not want to completely give up their identity and lose their social base — or more prosaically, their electoral base — they cannot completely ignore the needs and interests of the working class, of other popular layers and sections of the petty bourgeoisie also hit by the long wave of economic stagnation.

On the other, as managers of the government — or even as responsible "candidates" for this — they accept the current framework of the system, with its economic imperatives, committing themselves to make their own electors carry the burden of the policy of centralization, concentration and austerity.

Having been excluded from government since 1947, the PCI has not yet been hit by the full scope of this

contradiction. Its contradiction lies more in the fact that for many years it put forward a reformist perspective without being in a position to put it into practice. But it has started in its turn to pay the price of the social-democratic approach, particularly in the "national unity" period when it supported the governments led by Christian Democracy and became the advocate of an austerity policy, playing the role of a brake on struggles, either directly or through its trade-union leaders. Thus its identity has been increasingly effaced.

It was in this context that, under the impact of the international events of 1989, Occhetto put forward in November 1989 the proposal for a radical transformation of the party and a change of name. He thus marked the opening of the most serious crisis in the history of the party.



4. Were different choices possible?

In a critical moment for the future of the Communist Party, and more generally of the workers' movement, we can legitimately ask the question: were the choices made during the 1970s, on both the national and international level the only ones possible, or could other things have been done with very different results?

Let us say first of all that the classic objection that it is useless to rewrite history on the basis of "might have been" does not seem valid to us. From the political point of view, there could not be any critical or acritical thinking if we thought that what had happened had been inevitably what had to happen. This attitude is a sort of self-justifying fatalism which we cannot accept.

But this objection does not stand up from a historical point of view either. It goes without saying that a historical reconstruction should above all try to explain events in their most intimate connection, to explain their genesis and to grasp their dynamic. But this does not give us the right to forget that, in a given situation, there are potentialities and possibilities of different developments that should be taken into account if we want to analyse the situation in all its aspects and particularly if we want to examine the role of its protagonists whose action is not determined in advance.

In the case of the Soviet Union, and the international communist movement, this problem of method was posed in the mid-1920s. We have always rejected, on the basis of concrete analyses and arguments, the idea that bureaucratization was inevitable and thus that there was a justification for Stalinism.¹

We should note that the leaders of this party several times put forward the hypothesis that a different development of events would have been possible if different choices had been made by the forces concerned. For example, in his *Interview on Anti-fascism*, Giorgio Amendola explained the Italian situation on the eve of the rise of fascism thus:

If the forces of the workers' movement had been capable of carrying out a policy of unity with democratic forces, if they had encouraged the formation of a Nitù government, it is obvious that the results could have been different.²

Another example, speaking of the potentialities existing in the situation existing at the end of the war and particularly of De Gasperi's policy, Togliatti wrote:

1. We have already taken up this question in different introductions to Italian editions of the works of Trotsky, as well as in, for example, *Trotsky oggi*, Einaudi, Turin, 1958 and in *Destino di Trockij*.

2. Laterza, Bari, 1976.

Left to itself, the big bourgeoisie could only act in this way in the reconstruction because it corresponded to its class nature. But could we have forced it to act differently?³

According to Togliatti, it was possible that a section of the ruling classes could ally with the big bourgeoisie to prevent the big bourgeoisie doing everything it wanted. If this possibility was not brought to fruition, the reason lay, according to Togliatti, in De Gasperi's policy. This remark had already been made in August 1946 — in an article which we have already quoted and which we will come back to — which mentioned two "possible perspectives" for the policy of an anti-fascist bloc.⁴ It is still more interesting to remember that the line developed by the leading Communist group was challenged several times and at several levels and that different choices, although they were never diametrically opposed, were proposed or sketched out.

It is not necessary here to recall certain well-known episodes that have already been mentioned, such as the opposition and criticisms expressed in 1929-30 in relation to the turn, not only by three members of the Political Bureau — Pietro Tresso, Alfonso Leonetti and Paolo Ravazzoli — but also by Antonio Gramsci himself and other leaders who were then in prison, such as for example Umberto Terracini. There were also criticisms and opposition to the German-Soviet Pact in 1939, which profoundly shook the members of the party. Terracini again took a critical attitude that he would pay for — paradoxically at the moment when the USSR was already attacked by the Nazis — by expulsion from the party.

Anti-fascist unity: Reservations and oppositions

In the context of this study, it seems to us more useful to recall the resistance and criticism if not the real oppositions which occurred between 1943 and 1945 and, in certain aspects, in the following period.

The policy of anti-fascist unity had already raised objections and reaction before 25 July 1943.⁵ The poli-

3. *Rinascita*, October 1955

4. The method of judging the protagonists by taking into account the alternatives which were possible was also used by Giulio Andreotti in relation to De Gasperi: "If there had not been collaboration between DC and the PCI, there would have been in Italy either domination of the latter or prolongation of the military occupation for another decade." (*De Gasperi e il suo tempo*, Milan, 1956).

5. For the resistance at the base see for example, Spriano (op. cit. IV, p. 225). The same author talks of reticences, even of open criticisms in relation to the perspective of national collaboration, particularly con-

cy of collaboration with the other parties in the Committees of National Liberation (CLN) during the Resistance had also encountered strong opposition and was subject to different interpretations. This did not only concern current and former rank-and-file activists, but also the leading bodies with a differentiation between the nucleus in the Centre-South and that in the North which was more directly linked to the Resistance and the partisans movement.

Amendola tries to grasp a common element among these different attitudes by explaining that:

The line of national unity elaborated by the Communist International since its Seventh Congress was 'superposed' without too much critical thinking onto the old idea of direct action to install the dictatorship of the proletariat.⁶

This remark seems fundamentally correct as does another remark concerning the differences on the role of the CLN.

On the one hand there were those who accepted the limitation of this role to developing and applying a common policy to all the parties who participated, and on the other those who wanted to strengthen the presence of mass organizations within the committees in order to "ensure a real hegemony of the working class". Amendola writes:

Pushed to its furthest limits, this line led, despite its democratic premises, to a split in the CLN and to opposition to the government in Rome and to the allies. It was a line which followed the orientation indicated by the Yugoslavs. The Yugoslav example was the subject of many discussions between us.

Spriano talks of a Longo-Secchia line that aimed to "transform the CLN into bodies of workers' power" particularly through "strengthening their democratic features and moving from parity representation [of the different parties] to a real representation if not leadership of the masse". The objective should be in the last analysis for the resistance to "take power" before the arrival of the allies. This would have been decisive "for the political orientation and the future development of the Italian people".⁷

Currents or feelings of opposition to the line of anti-fascist unity and collaboration with the parties of the bourgeoisie were expressed several times within the Socialist Party.⁸ Before the fall of Mussolini there was

cerning a radio message of Togliatti (op. cit., V, pp. 121-123 and 131-133). In certain southern regions and not unimportant number of members considered the new line of the party as a betrayal (see the intervention of Velio Spano at the Fifth Congress)

6. Giorgio Amendola, *Lettere a Milano*, Editori Riuniti, Rome, 1974, p. 109.

7. Paolo Spriano, op. cit., V, pp. 372-3.

8. It was under the influence of left militants that, at the beginning of October 1943, the PSIUP came out against collaboration with bourgeois parties and for a "solid bloc of authentically republican forces" and criticized the "patriotic and collaborationist compromises of the PCI".

even the formation of a separate movement, the Movement of Proletarian Unity (MUP), where a leading role was played by men like Lelio Basso, Lucio Luzzatto and Corrado Bonfantini. But even after the MUP joined the unified party which took the name of Socialist Party of Proletarian Unity (PSIUP), there were many who retained an oppositional attitude.⁹ Lelio Basso even left the party with positions that in some ways were close to those of the Roman movement *Bandiera Rossa* (Red Flag).

As for as the more directly PCI influenced sectors were concerned, the openly dissident groups and movements were formed in several towns. For example, the group *Stella Rossa* (Red Star) was active in Turin from the beginning of 1943 which grew to 2000 members (the Communist Federation had 5000).¹⁰ Another group was formed in Legnano around Mauro and Carlo Venegoni, while in Naples activists even organized for a short time a Federation opposed to the officially recognized one.¹¹ But the most important phenomenon was certainly the formation in Rome of the Communist Movement of Italy (*Bandiera Rossa*). Formed during the "forty-five days" (between the fall of fascism and the German occupation) by the fusion of several already-existing groups. This movement had a broad influence in the popular areas of the city and, at the end of 1943, it probably had a greater number of members than that of the PCI Federation which had 1700-1800 members. It seems that the print run of *Bandiera Rossa* was greater than that of *Unità*. At the liberation of Rome it undoubtedly had 6000 members.¹²

The common feature of these groups or movements was the rejection of the policy of national unity which went along with a demand for democratic functioning of the party. In their ranks there were former activists who had been formed in the experience of the 1920s

9. In an article of 1 August 1943, Basso defined the MUP's conception of the new party to be built in the following terms:

1. Freed of the old traditions of the PSI without denying them; 2. built democratically from below; 3. fighting for a socialist solution on a European scale; 4. fighting for the local conquest of political power by destroying the bourgeois apparatus; 5. considering itself a member of the new International which would emerge from the ruins of the Second and Third Internationals; 6. overcoming the limits of the socialist movement which organized only the industrial proletariat and organizing all the labour force (workers, peasants, technicians, white-collar workers, members of the professions and intellectuals who are exploited by capitalism and do not exploit the work of others). (see Spriano op. cit. V, p. 223).

10. See Spriano, op. cit. IV, p. 145, as well as Raimundo Luraghi *Il movimento operaio torinese durante la resistenza*, Einaudi, Turin, 1958.

11. This federation was formed in opposition to the fulltimers of the centre, and its leaders — including Enrico Russo, Emio and Libero Villone, Mario Palenno — were against the alliance with the bourgeois parties and for a democratic functioning of the party.

12. See Silverio Corvisieri, *Bandiera Rossa nella resistenza romana*, Samonà e Savelli, Rome, 1968.

and 1930s, and young members for whom the opposition to fascism also took on the dimension of a struggle against capitalist society. They were inspired not only and not so much by an ideological differentiation but more by the practical consequences of the party's orientation. Their Achilles' heel was the lack of a complete strategic vision, which flowed basically from a mistaken analysis of the evolution of the PCI and above all of the USSR's policy.

The most striking case is that of the Bandiera Rossa movement which, while it sometimes took up some vaguely Trotskyist themes, considered the USSR a socialist country and identified with Stalin without the slightest critical thought. It even reproached the PCI and Togliatti for not applying the orientation of the Soviet leadership which, in its opinion, put forward a revolutionary line.¹³

It is worth remembering that the thesis that the line of the PCI was in opposition to that of the CPSU and Stalin was partially taken up during the 1950s by another communist group — Azione Comunista (Communist Action) — which was also a passing phenomenon. Such an interpretation of Stalin's position was proved false by, among other things, an episode related by Pietro Secchia. During a visit to Moscow, Secchia had expressed some reservations about the party's line, undoubtedly with the hope of being encouraged by the Soviet leaders. But Stalin had not hidden his agreement with Togliatti.

It was this fundamental weakness which made the existence of above-mentioned groups inevitably precarious and condemned them to a rapid disappearance. This was all the more true as the PCI, having attacked them in the most classic Stalinist style by accusing them even of being enemy agents, then used clever manoeuvres to coopt them.¹⁴

Similar considerations could be made in relation to a rather singular — from several points of view — personality. Lelio Basso moved from a criticism of the positions of the PCI and Stalinism to opportunistically accepting them as far as to justify the trial of Laszlo Rajik in Hungary at the beginning of the 1950s. Some 15 years later Basso went back to his judgement of 1943-44, speaking of "a real historic opportunity lost" and adding:

There was a lot at stake. In the final analysis it was a question of deciding if post-war Italy was going to be really "new" and therefore break with the old monarchist and fascist order, build itself on the basis of popular wishes and initiatives manifested at the base, or whether it was going to follow a line of juridical and political continuity with the old state, legitimizing the past and leading to a resto-

13. See for example the articles in Bandiera Rossa and the resolution of the Naples conference (January 1945) which proclaimed the identity of Lenin and Stalin and accused Togliatti of not implementing the line of "international communism and Stalin" (see also the pamphlet *La via maestra*, published in December 1944).

14. In 1947 most members left the Communist Movement of Italy and joined the PCI (although some of the leaders were not accepted). A small nucleus continued to exist until 1949. One of its best-known representatives, Francesco Cretara, later joined the Fourth International.

ration from above. The left parties subordinated all their demands to the war effort and accepted a whole series of compromises which finally encouraged the restoration of the old structures and social forces. It was the famous "Togliatti tum" which was mainly responsible for all that.¹⁵

We can accept this critical judgement as a starting point but at the same time note that the speeches about an alternative remained quite vague, and above all did not challenge the fundamental choice of integration into the system. Basso was equally ambiguous when he dealt with questions of workers' strategy.¹⁶

Similar positions were expressed by Rodolfo Morandi who summarized them in an article that appeared during the Liberation. In relation to the role of the CLN Morandi wrote "Today the supreme authority of the state can only be represented and expressed by a general conference of the Liberation Committees."¹⁷ Later he dealt with the question of what were called at the time "structural reforms" from a rather different angle from the prevailing orientation. In his opinion these reforms should be conceived of as "a rupture of the system". But these statements, as well as many others, remained simply allusions or very vague indications without ever having any practical application or being placed in the context of a more general critique of the action of the national and international workers' movement.

Pietro Secchia and Umberto Terracini

Pietro Secchia should be mentioned among those who envisaged, on important occasions, orientations and points of view which were different from those of the majority of the leading group. The fact that his critical positions were only expressed openly in the notes to his archives, while he had been marginalized for a long time, does not reduce their intrinsic importance; particularly from the point of view which interests us here.

Secchia had already taken a particular position at the end of the 1920s, when, with Longo, he represented a tendency within the youth organization which rejected a correction to the line which was in his opinion reformist. Against the adoption of the slogan for a Constituent Assembly, he favoured maintaining the slogan of a "people's revolution for a workers and farmers government" which the party had previously adopted.

Starting from this critical attitude Secchia had enthusiastically accepted the "turn" of which he could consider himself partly the precursor. Forty years later he still stubbornly defended this interpretation. In his opinion it was imperative for the party to concentrate most of its forces on building the party within the country. From his point of view the criticisms of oppositionists appeared unacceptable (as far as we know he always evaded the problem that among them were many

15. Lelio Basso, *Il Psi*, Nuova Accademia, Milan, 1958, p. 248.

16. In relation to this see our judgement in *Il movimento operaio in una fase critica*, pp. 141-6.

17. *Avanti* of 28 April 1945.

imprisoned activists and Gramsci himself).¹⁸

As a result his judgement largely coincided with that of Giorgio Amendola who, while recognizing the mistaken nature of the party's analysis and the small results obtained, justified, even in his 1978 book, the condemnation of the opposition of the "three" (Leonetti, Ravazzoli and Tresso), explaining that the turn was the condition for the later growth of the party. This is a typical example of the tendency to justification of which Amendola was a master, even when he pretended to play the role of an iconoclast who defied the traditional taboos and raised questions that others preferred to avoid.¹⁹

Secchia several times came back to the problems which were posed in the last stages of the war and the early post-war period. In his opinion, it was above all in this period that the party should have adopted a different line. For example, in 1958 he wrote:

I do not think that we could have made the revolution in 1945. Our country was occupied by the Anglo-Americans, etc. I share completely the analysis made by the party as well as the conclusion it arrived at. It was rather a question of relying more on the mass movements, defending more strongly certain positions and having more effective action when we were in government. In addition, sooner or later, the Anglo-Americans would have to lead and we could have become more intransigent.²⁰

In a 1971 text, he stated:

Already during the Resistance and particularly on the eve of the insurrection, the conflict between the left forces, particularly the PCI, and the moderates, came out clearly particularly on the question of the form of the state and the type of democracy which should be built. The attack against the CLN which represented the new structures of power and which were the pillars of the new democracy was launched just after the liberation and we were not able to respond adequately. We gave in to the blackmail and did not have confidence in the possibility of creating a new state, different from the precious pre-fascist state. We were frightened of a confrontation and of repeating the Greek experience.²¹

In another text, he expressed the same judgement, in a way which poses the problems more clearly:

It is a question of seeing whether, with more decisive action and broader more united struggles by the labouring masses, it would have been possible to prevent the 'restoration of capitalism' with the return to power of monopolist groups and the big industrialists. If it was possible to have more coherent action to promote the economic, political and social renaissance of the country, to reform its structures and create a really democratic regime. All the anti-fascist parties, without exception, should have deepened this study with a self-critical attitude and abandoning any parochialism.²²

18. According to Terracini, the perspective of a possible return to the "democratic method", that is to say of a perspective opposed to that of the tum "went without saying in the ideas of communists of Regina Coeli (the prison in Rome)"

19. Amendola ventured to write a history of the Communist Party, which cannot at all be compared to that of Spriano. His justificationism appears very clearly in relation to Stalinism (in 1978!) and even the Moscow Trials (op. cit. p. 307).

20. *Archivio Pietro Secchia*, p. 192.

21. Pietro Secchia, *Il PCI e la guerra di liberazione*, 1943-45, Annali Feltrinelli, Milan, 1971, p. 581.

22. *Ibid* p. 1061.

For Secchia, a particularly serious mistake was:

To have considered DC as a democratic and popular party, which represented the peasants, the middle layers and the labouring classes. The mass influence of this party did not change either its nature and its class character or the function which it accomplished after the Liberation.²³

Another theme in Secchia's criticism was that of workers' struggles. Referring to the 1947-48 period, he considered that "in trade-union policy and mobilization of the broad masses — particularly in the industrial centres — we could have done more".²⁴ Elsewhere he added "It is certain that there were delays in the struggles to defend the workplace committees and democratic freedoms in the factories."²⁵

Other remarks deal with more specific problems. For example Secchia expressed his disagreement with the party's decision to vote for Giovanni Gronchi as president of the Republic in 1955, and did not hide his scepticism concerning the slogan for democratic control of the monopolies.²⁶ At the time of the struggle against the *legge truffa*, in 1953, he criticized Togliatti's attitude which was in his opinion too moderate and revealed "once again a parliamentarist conception."²⁷

These were not unimportant overall criticisms and always developed from a leftwing standpoint. However, they were more a harder and more uncompromising perspective for implementing the general strategy of the period than a real alternative to the party line. This is confirmed unambiguously by the fact that Secchia expressed his agreement with the central goal of "gradual democracy" even if he proposed a more radical version.

The goal of the Resistance could not be socialism but had to be a new, gradual, democracy, based on new institutions directly representing the popular masses and the structures which were created during the Resistance.²⁸

However, Secchia's fundamental limit did not lie only in his way of approaching strategic questions at a national level, but above all in his inability, even in the last few years of his existence, to settle accounts with Stalinism. Concerning the 1930s for example, he never questioned the arguments with which his party justified the Moscow trials, nor tried to understand the roots and the dynamic of events in the USSR. Even after the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU, he wrote that the USSR "must be at the centre of the Communist movement, because, whether we like it or not, the Soviet Un-

23. *Archivio Secchia*, p. 583.

24. *Ibid* p. 427.

25. *Ibid* p. 268.

26. *Ibid* p. 267 and 269.

27. *Ibid* p. 237.

28. *Ibid* p. 585. To our knowledge, neither did Secchia later challenge the general line of the party. His reservations — expressed cautiously and more indirectly than directly — on the Italian road to socialism appeared at most ideological, without any implications at the level of political strategy.

ion is the vanguard of the socialist world." At the same time, he did not cease to defend an, in the last analysis, Stalinist conception of unity of the world Communist movement.²⁹

We have mentioned the positions of Umberto Terracini in 1929-30 and in relation to the German-Soviet pact of 1939.³⁰ In a document written in autumn 1941, Terracini laid out perspectives for the period which would follow the fall of fascism which was rather different from that envisaged by the Communist Parties.

We should envisage that in this situation (particularly in the defeated countries, Germany and Italy, in which, even before the installation of a new authority, the defeat will break the apparatus of the dictatorship and start a chaotic process of reorganization of old and new political formations), political struggle will start at an increased speed, determined by a growing polarization on irreconcilable positions of forces that at the beginning would agree in a confused fashion on the same platform of basic democracy. It is not excluded that, in a few months, a revolutionary situation would be created capable of once again pushing the bourgeois parties into the camp of open reaction. The result of the struggle will then depend on the ability of the revolutionary forces to exploit the period of freedom and their skilfulness in manoeuvring tactically in a changing transitional situation.³¹

In the appeal he made against his expulsion from the party in February 1943, he reaffirmed:

I think that the formation of the first post-fascist government will escape the direct influence of proletarian forces... This is why we should immediately start activity — with not only a political but also an advanced economic-social programme — to organize the masses, along the line of the experiences of 1919-21 (factory councils) and of 1925-26 (the united peasant committees), in bodies which can help their mobilization for direct struggles and function as the basic nuclei of a revolutionary government. Thus, by exploiting to the maximum the limits of restored bourgeois democracy, we will forge the arms necessary to go beyond it.³²

This is a summary of the elements of an alternative line which we will come back to. There remains the fact that Terracini gave up developing his project: less than a year later, in a letter to Togliatti, he did not hesitate to express his "total agreement with the party line", and reasserted this position in another letter just before the Liberation.³³

Later, Terracini several times expressed opinions

29. Op. cit. p. 429. It is worth noting that when he wrote the passage quoted, Secchia referred to the *New Course* of Trotsky, particularly in relation to "the problem of generations and renewal of the Communist parties" (p. 434). Previously, he had quoted passages from *1905* and *The Revolution Betrayed* (pp. 300-1).

30. Terracini's positions are illustrated above all in his books *La svolta*, La Pietra, Milan, 1975 and *Al bando del partito*, La Pietra, Milan, 1976. On the German-Soviet Pact, Terracini insisted on the distinction which had to be made between the legitimate demands of the USSR as a state and the orientations of the international communist movement. Later, against the official thesis, he defended the idea that, for capitalist countries, the war remained an imperialist war, despite the interest of the USSR in establishing an alliance with them.

31. Umberto Terracini, *Al bando del partito*, p. 44.

32. Ibid p. 126.

33. 12 April 1945, "The party line is my line, without reservations, and my discipline is also unreserved," (p. 185).

different from the leading group of his party. For example in a 1947 interview, he underlined the dangers which flowed from the division of the world into two blocs, which provoked an immediate denial from the party secretariat. Just after the Twentieth Congress, he raised in the Central Committee the problem of the elimination of Bela Kun, and of the dissolution of the Polish Communist Party and he stated in an article that the PCI should eliminate the causes and consequences of Stalinism. Some twenty years later, during the Fourteenth Congress of the PCI, he criticized the fact that Christian Democracy was no longer characterized as a bourgeois party. But none of these positions led him to challenge the general line of the party some of whose premisses were even pushed to the extremes in some of his formulations.³⁴ We cannot say either that he contributed very much to the critique of Stalinism.³⁵

What alternatives?

Therefore possible alternatives were sketched out at almost every crucial point in the history of the party. But they were always partial alternatives, lacking an international strategic dimension. This was the reason for the intrinsic weakness, their ephemeral character and their limited influence.

This does not mean that a different evolution was inconceivable. It was perfectly possible to develop different options and strategy, which would have stimulated a different dynamic to events. But the alternative project would have had to have an international dimension from the start. From a rigorous analysis of what was happening in the USSR and its repercussions within the Communist International, it was possible and necessary to fight against the development and consolidation of the Stalinist bureaucracy before it was too late. It would of course have been a very hard struggle, whose favourable outcome was hardly assured. But today everybody can see the catastrophic outcome of the realistic "choices" which were made.

To go back for an instant. In 1929-30 it was possi-

34. For example, during the Seventh Congress (April 1951), in rejecting the thesis of the Constitution as a compromise, he asserted that if "in making an absurd hypothesis, the PCI had found itself in 1946 alone in writing the Constitution of the Republic... in its general line and fundamental principles it would be identical to that we have today." (*VII Congresso del Pci*, Edizioni di Cultura Sociale, Rome, 1954, p. 298.) Here is another example: during the Ninth Congress, to justify the alliance policy of the party, he had even distorted a passage of the Communist Manifesto, pretending that the phrase "the fall of the proletariat" meant not only a "declassing but also a convergence of interests, a coming together of the classes". (*IX Congresso del Pci*, Editori Riuniti, Rome, 1960, Vol I, p. 297.)

35. During the Eighth Congress of the PCI, he also had used the painful argument that "we didn't know" adding that "what we knew about the functioning of political institutions in the socialist countries was very limited". I saw Terracini's efforts to convince a Jewish group of the capital that the Slansky trial was not a manifestation of anti-Semitism and had taken place according to Czechoslovak "state law".

ble to reject the — obviously false — analyses of the third period and to create the conditions for united action of the workers' movement against the dictatorship of Mussolini (and, in Germany, to oppose the rise of Hitler). It was perfectly possible to organize the work within the country without having to accept the most unrealistic perspectives, the ultimatum and adventurist initiatives. The basis for a relaunch would thus have been created. All this is not only said now, after the event. Indications going in this direction were already put forward at the time, not only by some isolated activists but by cadres, indeed leaders, of the PCI and the Communist International itself.

At other important points, during the Resistance or the post-war period, the line adopted was not the only one possible either. Once again, critiques and different hypotheses were put forward. They had a certain echo in broad sectors of the masses; among activists and organizers of new and old generations, who mobilized not only with the perspective of overthrowing fascism and chasing out the Nazi Army but also changing radically the existing order and building a socialist society.³⁶ Different sources and many historical studies confirm, moreover, that often the line of national unity was accepted as a tactical demand with the understanding that at the right time they had to go further to take on the struggle to conquer power.³⁷

We know the arguments of defenders of the official line. It was absurd to put forward a revolutionary perspective on 25 April, the day of the Liberation, because the Occupation Armies would have intervened alongside the reactionary forces. It was a question of giving struggles a different perspective, of developing all the elements of power and workers' control created during the Resistance, ensuring that the hegemonic role of the working class and its organizations should not be evacuated of all content and wiped out by systematic collaboration with bourgeois parties and by the failure to have independent action, refusing integration into the traditional state apparatus and not collaborating in rebuilding society on a capitalist basis. In other words, rather than trying to suffocate or stamp out class conflicts, it

36. Spriano wrote in his book *I comunisti europei e Stalin*, Einaudi, Turin, 1983,

In each country, civil war, or at least deep divisions and social conflicts accompany the development of the war on the fronts. There are forces who rally to the occupiers, there are passive and resigned social groups, there are also sincere freedom fighters who do not want to collaborate with the communists. Moreover, these latter are fighting for a socialist revolution even if it is not fixed on the agenda by official documents. The interpretation of national unity is subject to an infinite number of variations and nuances. From top to bottom, at the tops of the parties which really act in the underground and in their worker and peasant bases, among the intermediate cadre which become decisive for organizing the armed struggle. (p. 175)

37. The PCI leaders were very conscious of this and this is why they feared the emergence to their left of another party around critical elements, groups and movements which we have already mentioned (fears of this type were expressed for example by Scoccimarro at the end of 1944).

would have been necessary to try to develop them in line with a dynamic which was rooted in reality, to orient them in an anti-capitalist direction, thus encouraging a rise in consciousness of broader and broader mass sectors. Nobody could know when the question of power would be posed. But it was essential to maintain this strategic perspective, independently of any hypothesis concerning the stages and forms of the struggle.

This was not done. Worse, while the PCI waged sometimes very stubborn struggles to defend workers' rights and living standards, it was already timid, if not absent, from the terrain of struggles for important democratic demands. It is enough to think of the enormous concessions that it made in relation to relations between state and Church when it voted the sadly-famed Article 7 of the Constitution, or again its refusal for several decades to wage a battle for the rights to divorce and to abortion, to the point where in the end it had to follow the initiatives taken by other forces.

Similar considerations to those enumerated for the period 1943-45 could also be made about the enormous popular and workers' mobilization which, in reply to the attack against Togliatti, shook Italy for several days with almost insurrectional movements. Certainly, the conditions for a revolutionary struggle for power did not exist. But, once again, it was necessary to make the conclusion that the movement should be blocked, channelled and stopped as soon as possible. Between a protest strike and an insurrection there is a whole range of possibilities which can be exploited. For example, political objectives could have been set such as the purge of fascists who resurfaced; an immediate halt to all charges against Resistance activists for acts of war; the introduction of management councils into the factory; workers' councils in factories and big agricultural properties with a power of control, etc. At the same time economic goals could have been fixed which started from the trade-union struggles underway (end to sackings, re-employment of workers sacked, generalized revision of wage system, etc.). The movement should not have ended before these goals were won. Strike committees directly elected by the workers should have taken the leadership. A possible success would have been a major riposte to the attacks against the workers' movement that had started, by making it possible to create the conditions for an upturn in struggles in a more favourable situation.

One last example, towards the end of the 1960s, Italy was shaken, more deeply and more lastingly than other European countries, by a social and political crisis which took on in 1969-71 features of a pre-revolutionary crisis.³⁸ The PCI approached the situation with its usual tactical adroitness by trying to integrate

38. The crisis of 1969-71 was at the origins of the formation and growth of the far left organizations which, at their high point were able to exercise considerable influence over sections of the masses. In this sense they carry their share of responsibility for the outcome of this critical period. See on this our work *Verifica del leninismo in Italia*, already cited.

the new social movements into its neo-reformist political strategy. Its operation was successful on the only terrain fundamental for it: the electoral terrain. But the big movement stopped after having won some partial gains — which were later worn away one by one — and with a relative change in the relationship of forces electorally. The system did however manage to overcome its crisis and, since the end of the 1970s, the bourgeoisie was able to carry through its systematic operations of restructuring and restoration with results that ten years later cannot be challenged.

In this case as well, the policy followed has not been the only one possible. It would have been possible to create a dynamic of struggles aiming to deepen the crisis of the system, to develop democratic grass-roots bodies, rather than trying to institutionalize those which had appeared, to put forward a project for rebuilding Italian society on an anti-capitalist basis. With such a perspective it was possible at the time to create a large front of social forces — and not only of the working class — by encouraging an increased mass consciousness of the need for revolutionary solutions. In addition, in this context the traditional argument of a military intervention by imperialism could no longer be put forward.³⁹

A balance sheet of failure

The implementation of alternative strategy and orientations would not automatically have assured a historic victory of the working class and its movement. There were not and still are not easy solutions. But we can nevertheless note that all the supposedly realistic strategic perspectives that PCI leaders successively put forward failed.

In the period 1944-45, the strategic perspective was that of "gradual democracy". The aim was, to use Togliatti's formula:

To destroy fascism, to uproot it and to renovate our country in such a way that a similar regime could never recur... Gradual democracy will organize a government by the people for the people and, in this framework, all the living forces of the country could have their place, advance in order to satisfy all their aspirations.⁴⁰

39. Contrary to the opinion of those who used it, the argument of the inevitability of a US intervention was not so decisive at the end of the war either. The Washington leaders would have had difficulties, at that point, in convincing the American people that they should get involved in a new military action. In addition, a perfectly orthodox CP leader like Emilio Sereni had himself asserted in April 1945 that it was not certain if the Communists took power in Northern Italy that it would have been repressed by the Anglo-Americans (see Spriano, *I comunisti europei e Stalin*, p. 216).

40. P. Togliatti, "Politica comunista", *l'Unità*, Rome, 1946.

41. The formula of gradual democracy was also used in the countries of Eastern Europe under the influence of the Soviet Union. But gradual democracy was quite rapidly presented in these countries as the first stage of the dictatorship of the proletariat (or rather as the introduction

In other words, it was supposed to represent the most advanced stage democracy could reach in a capitalist society.⁴¹ On the strictly political level, the success of this strategy required, according to the PCI leader, the concretization of two perspectives, "the democratization of the country as a whole" and, still according to Togliatti, "the democratization of Italian conservatives themselves".⁴² This did not happen and this gradual democracy never happened, as Togliatti himself recognized.

The fact that a goal was not achieved does not necessarily mean that it was wrong. An unfavourable balance of forces can act against it and there can continue to be a struggle to change it. But, on this occasion, it was a formula in which there was not a possible dynamic of development that would have been objectively and politically fruitful. If the conservatives or, more precisely, the leading groups of the bourgeoisie did not experience the evolution desired by Togliatti, it is not because they made a mistake or suffered from political shortsightedness. Their goal was the reconstruction of the country in the framework of a capitalist economy and institutions able to guarantee their hegemony. From this point of view their action was completely coherent. To the extent that the situation imposed collaboration with the workers' parties on them in order to avoid explosive tensions and conflicts, they accepted the unitive policy of the CNL and the tripartite governments (including DC, PSI and PCI) but, as soon as that was no longer necessary because the international situation had changed and the presence of workers' parties in the government became an obstacle to their own reconstruction, they prepared and provoked a rupture.

Leaving aside certain formulas developed later, like that of the "democratic government of the working classes" (Eighth Congress) and the other, still vaguer, of "democracy of a new type", we should say something about the demand "democratic control of the monopolies" which was presented, particularly during the 1960s, as a central element of a "democratic programme". It was once again an inherently inconsistent demand. It was based on the hypothesis that it was possible, in the framework of capitalism, to control the functioning of the monopolies, by returning to a sort of capitalism based on free competition and able to take into account the interests of the popular masses. This forgot — or wanted to forget — that the monopolist phase was not a "degeneration" but rather the inevitable result of capitalism, and that a capitalism without the domination of monopolies was quite simply inconceivable. Taking into account the overall strategy of the party, this perspective was also untenable from the political point of view. In fact, a break in the power of the monopolies would have implied such a change in the

of the bureaucratic dictatorship through the relationship of forces created by the presence of Soviet forces.

42. *Rinascita*, August, 1946.

relationship of forces and such a qualitative leap and provoked such conflicts, that the workers' movement would not have been able to avoid a general confrontation in the perspective of a struggle for power.⁴³

Given the weakness of all these approaches, the PCI could not avoid finding itself in difficulties faced with the centre-left governments, at least during their first phase. In fact, on the one hand, it had to oppose an operation which openly aimed to weaken and isolate it, and on the other hand it could not reject the programmatic, political and ideological orientations which, at least on paper, were not qualitatively different from its own.

It was precisely after the event of centre-left governments that the contradictions of the PCI began to deepen and come to the surface. It had had a reformist perspective for a long time. Towards the end of the 1960s and in the first half of the 1970s, the emergence of mass movements of different types but all marked, at their high point, by great dynamism and by an ability to have an effect on the overall relationship of forces, created conditions favourable to making important social, economic and political gains. In order to avoid a dynamic which was dangerous in their eyes, sections of the ruling class considered it necessary to make concessions. As we have already underlined, the PCI was involved in these movements. But it did not succeed in giving them a total strategic perspective and at the same times it remained always excluded from the government. This is where, in the last analysis, we should look for the causes of its weakness, despite its electoral successes.

The strategy of the "historic compromise" elaborated by Berlinguer aimed to overcome this impasse. But

it did not turn out any more effective than the others (we will come back to this in the following chapter). In practice, the only goal it obtained was collaboration with the government in the so-called "national solidarity" experience between 1976 and 1978, whose only result was to make the PCI appear as covering for the policies of austerity and restructuring implemented by the ruling classes. Finally, the failure had to be explicitly recognized.

The hour of the "democratic alternative" had come. These are still recent events on which we do not have to insist, particularly as the new strategy — if this expression can be used — not only did not lead to any concrete results but from the beginning created problems of definition which were never resolved despite all the ideological and conceptual balancing acts.⁴⁴ It thus contributed to the deepening of a crisis whose most striking manifestation was a decade of electoral defeats.

43. The perspective of democratic control of the monopolies involved the use of other formulations, no more coherent, such as those of "equitable profit". Politically, a borderline case of vague perspectives is the formulation used by Togliatti during the Tenth Congress "Reduce and if possible break the absolute control of the bourgeois leading groups."

44. Suffice it to remember that, during the new turn, Berlinguer rushed to declare that the democratic alternative did not imply any change in the "fundamental basis" of the party's strategy, while a text for the 1983 Congress explained that the democratic alternative meant, at governmental level, an alternative to Christian Democracy and its system of government.



5. The protagonists: from Togliatti to Berlinguer

As we have seen, the history of the PCI has been determined by a series of factors which have marked Italian society and the international scene over the last 70 years. It is at the same time the history of tens if not thousands of organizers and activists whose devotion and sacrifices made it possible for the party to play a major role, independent of the judgement we can have on this role itself. But the PCI's history has also been determined by its successive leaders who defined its conceptions, strategy and orientations.

Concerning the first secretary, Amadeo Bordiga, we will limit ourselves to recalling a judgement of Pietro Tresso which, despite his rather old-fashioned language, remains valid:

Under Bordiga's leadership, and despite the fact that his orientation was wrong, the party became conscious of itself and of the truth that 'without a class party, without a revolutionary doctrine' the proletariat could not win. These are basic, fundamental truths. Under Bordiga, not only did the party become conscious of itself and begin to shape itself, but, in the midst of the harshest civil war, it made its 'selection', acquired an iron discipline and developed a spirit of sacrifice: so many parties that are indispensable to the creation of a Bolshevik party.¹

We will not deal here with Antonio Gramsci. We have already given our appreciation of his political and theoretical work as a revolutionary Marxist on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of his death.² During his life, Gramsci only had a determining influence for a short period, from the formation of a new leading group opposed to Bordiga until the end of 1926. It was only twenty years after his death that people started to study and appreciate his political and cultural contribution. For more than forty years, the major concern of the leaders and intellectuals of the PCI was to present Gramsci as the precursor or inspiration of their strategic conceptions. But, however their positions evolved, they were always very different from the positions developed by Gramsci not only during the first half of the 1920s but also in the *Prison Notebooks*. Thus, we have seen and still see a hair-raising spectacle of conceptual and terminological balancing acts or, to put it more simply, an uninterrupted series of mystifications of Gramsci's positions. We should now expect a new rereading of Gramsci in order to discover elements which anticipated the new turn of the party.³

Nor will we here go into details about two other leaders who were in place for limited periods. It is enough to remember that the first, Luigi Longo, who had shared all the responsibilities of the leading groups from the end of the 1920s, contributed when he became secretary to increasing the distance the party took from the Soviet Union with the condemnation of the invasion of Czechoslovakia. Thanks to his past history, he was

able to get both the new and the old generations of the party to converge on this position. The second, Alessandro Natta, presided over the last phase of the social-democratization of the party, without making any particular contribution.

Longo and Natta were party secretary for only twelve years between them. Palmiro Togliatti and Enrico Berlinguer exercised this function for much longer periods, during which they to a very large extent determined the conceptions and orientations of the party.

Togliatti: from the Comintern to Yalta

During the last twenty years, the judgement made of Togliatti has suffered, in proportion, the same vicissitudes as that on Gramsci. It has changed in line with the conceptions and orientations of the party, if not even of its tactical requirements.

Togliatti was for a long time presented as the closest collaborator and most faithful successor of Gramsci, then as the person who had made explicit and developed what had remained implicit and embryonic in Gramsci. Finally, after the Twentieth CPSU congress, he became the leader who was able to introduce the necessary elements of a break with the past. More recently, and particularly since the launch of the Occhetto operation, despite a certain continuity in the positive and often still apologetic judgements, the accent has been put on the need to make a difference between the party of Togliatti and that of today.⁴

We can share the judgements of Togliatti's supporters on one point: the comparison with other political leaders in Italy in the post-war period can only

1. *Bollettino dell'Opposizione italiana*, No. 13, 1 February 1933.

2. "The revolutionary Marxism of Antonio Gramsci", *International Marxist Review*, Vol. 2, No. 3, Summer 1987.

3. Giuseppe Vacca, an intellectual always concerned to give the most sophisticated explanations for the evolution of the conceptions and perspectives of his party, has announced a new book which is supposed to prove that Gramsci and Togliatti were "different but indissociable". This book should come out in spring 1991. On the basis of the interview which he gave to *l'Unità* (6 September 1990), it must be concluded that his ability to fantasize is inexhaustible.

4. Very often it is the same people who defend different interpretations, which proves that political concerns predominate over the requirements of historical analysis. A significant example of "adapted" interpretation is the issue of *Critica Marxista* on "Togliatti and the history of Italy" which came out on the twentieth anniversary of his death.

be favourable to him.

At the epoch of Togliatti, the ruling class produced only one man who imposed himself by his stature: Alcide de Gasperi. But De Gasperi himself had obvious limits and imposed himself much more through a convergence of circumstances than thanks to real genius or originality. As for the Socialist Party, it was incapable of bringing forth any leader of the stature of Togliatti. The same thing could be said about the leaders of the international Communist movement; especially after the death of Dimitrov it is difficult to find anyone who could be put on the same level as the PCI leader.

Thanks to his lucid intelligence, his skilfulness and his flexibility, Togliatti was able to represent better than anyone else the movement to which he belonged and to express its demands, particularly in certain phases (the popular fronts, anti-fascist unity, the period after the Twentieth Congress). In the eyes of his party and its leaders and cadres, his past and his contradictions were not negative features but rather a guarantee that, while changes would be made, certain limits would be maintained. In other words, the hegemony of the leaderships and the bureaucratic apparatuses would not be put into question.

Particularly during his final years, Togliatti was able to formulate with enough clarity and impose with the authority necessary the partially new course which the big majority of the party felt necessary. This is why even after the events that should have profoundly shaken his prestige, he continued to appear as a point of reference and an authority even for the most "renovating" currents, both nationally and internationally.

On the occasion of his death the aspects of his career highlighted were his role as a contributor to *Ordine Nuovo* and collaborator of Gramsci and the inspiration of the policy of the popular front and anti-fascist coalitions, and also his attitude after the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU. There was an attempt to see a coherent line of evolution in his action that was not fundamentally affected by Stalinist degeneration while forgetting the fact that of his forty-five years of political activity about twenty-five — and far from being the least important — were under the imprint of Stalinism. It was under Stalin that he imposed himself as a leader and took on top-level responsibilities in the bureaucratized Comintern. Obviously this would have been impossible without total adherence to the line, conceptions and methods of the despot in the Kremlin. It is a fact that no historian can seriously challenge — over and above the explanations and justifications that one can try to invent — that Togliatti accepted — with greater or lesser enthusiasm — and celebrated according to the rules of the time all the essential aspects of Stalin's policies. Everybody knows the particularly tragic events — the elimination of Bela Kun and the dissolution of the Polish Communist party — for which the Number Two of the Comintern was directly or indirectly responsible.⁵

The supporters of Togliatti have insisted a lot on his

contribution to the analysis of fascism and to developing a line of unity with the socialists, as well as his democratic and tolerant spirit. But in return they have wanted to have it forgotten that he had fully accepted, along with the other leaders, the "third period" orientations, the concept of "social fascism", without hesitating to expel those who had criticized them; that he was noted for his stubbornness in justifying the Moscow Trials and the witch-hunt of dissidents; that, particularly after his return to Italy, he introduced into the PCI the "cult of the leader". In fact, all those who criticized the line and functioning of the party in the best of cases became acquainted with a paternalist bureaucrat and most often a pitiless destroyer of all oppositionists or presumed oppositionists.⁶

Do we have to recall again that at the very moment that he was writing a preface to the *Treatise on Tolerance* of Voltaire that he was participating without the least scruple in the campaign of calumnies against the Yugoslav and Hungarian communists and was applauding the Czech and Hungarian editions of the Stalinist trials? Or again that he was presented particularly after his death as enlightened defender of the autonomy of culture but never expressed the slightest reservation about socialist realism or the destructive "cultural" campaigns of Andrej Jdanov?

We have already seen, moreover, that what were judged as the most positive aspects of his activity, that is the policy of popular fronts and the anti-fascist coalition, did not represent an original contribution but were dictated by the strategic choices of Stalin, of the Soviet bureaucracy and of a Comintern leadership which no longer has the slightest autonomy. At the limit, we could seek a relative originality in the ways of implementing the line or in certain of his specific tactical approaches. On this terrain Togliatti sometimes went further than others, for example during the Salerno turn or the vote on Article 7 of the new Italian constitution.

5. For example, it would be not only very "uninternationalist" but positively cynical to justify the elimination of Bela Kun and the dissolution of the Polish CP by explaining that the acceptance of such decisions made it possible to preserve the interests of the PCI. It should be added that, after Stalin's death, Togliatti continued to judge Tito very harshly and to approve, even if no longer publicly, the accusations made against Bela Kun (see *Archivio Pietro Secchia*, p. 490).

6. On this the testimony of Pietro Secchia is very interesting. He speaks of "the habitual system of Togliatti" which was "the negation not only of collective elaboration but even of collective leadership" (*Archivio*, p. 244) and publishes a letter of Togliatti after the Twentieth Congress which demonstrates openly the paternalist and authoritarian conception of this latter ("the general criticisms of the party's activity, when they must occur, should be prepared, led and directed", *Archivio* p. 679).

7. According to a testimony of Emilio Lussu, former leader of the autonomy movement in Sardinia, and then member of the Action Party and Socialist Party, Togliatti told him that it was thanks to this vote that the PCI stayed in government with DC for twenty-five years.

To come back to the period of the crisis of Stalinism, we can certainly not consider meritworthy the positions he took of total condemnation of the Yugoslav communists and unconditional support to Stalin in 1948. But even after the Twentieth Congress, Togliatti insisted on fixing precise limits to the condemnation of Stalinism. For example in a famous interview published in the review *Nuovi Argumenti*, he went so far as to put on the same level those guilty of the worst repression and their victims. When the Soviet leaders complained of the criticisms of them — which were after all very moderate — he immediately retreated and for some time avoided returning to the ideas he had sketched out.⁸

Still in 1956, not only did he approve the Soviet intervention against the revolution in Hungary, but he participated in the campaign against the insurgents. He published an article in *Rinascita* an article condemning a collection of writings of Hungarian intellectuals in the harshest terms which is perfectly typical of his fashion of polemicizing, of his bureaucratic — in the fullest sense of the word — conceptions and the real nature of his “deStalinization”. He did not even hesitate to criticize contemptuously the grandiose funeral of Laszlo Rajk, a ceremony which rendered justice to a victim of Stalinism and was one of the most moving ceremonies of the Hungarian anti-bureaucratic mass movement.⁹ Nor should we forget the coldness with which he at first received Gomulka who, at the time, expressed the anti-Stalinist feelings of the masses, nor his typically Stalinist interpretation of the workers’ and people’s struggles at Poznan, which he attributed to the action of the “enemy”.

What is more, after the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU (1961), Togliatti opposed those who wanted to further develop the critique of Stalinism and even threatened to take the initiatives to create a pro-Soviet tendency.¹⁰ A year later, in a note intended to explain his laudatory judgements of Stalin, he reused an old argument:

The revelations and criticisms which were made about Stalin during the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU do not diminish his grandeur or genius.¹¹

The analysis of the causes and meaning of Stalinist degeneration — as it was laid out in the interview in *Nuovi Argumenti* already mentioned or again in the special issue of *Rinascita* for the fortieth anniversary of the October Revolution — is in itself quite revealing of his conception of “deStalinization” and his desire to cover up his past responsibilities.¹² Certain of his assertions would merit publication in an anthology of self-justifications. For example:

We did not have and could not have any knowledge of the facts which are denounced today... We now learn that in the Soviet Union under Stalin there were trials which ended in illegal and unjust sentences.¹³

No more than anybody else who has put forward similar arguments did he realize that, even if such an

argument was accepted, then the judgement on those who used it would still be negative. Although he had spent many years in the USSR, he had seen and understood nothing of what was happening. A good balance sheet for a Marxist leader and intellectual!

Togliatti’s more general attitude on deStalinization gives us, in the last analysis, a key to understanding his personality. He was now perfectly conscious that the methods and conceptions of Stalin were obsolete, including from the point of view of preserving the existing bureaucratic regimes, and that it was necessary to change course. But for him changing course meant innovating to the extent necessary to maintain continuity in substance. His interventions from 1956 until his death in 1964 prove this without any possibility of equivocation.

But there is another aspect which is not secondary. If we consider in an abstract fashion his cultural propensities, his education, his mentality and his style, we could think that Stalinism was not very suited to his character. This explains his reservations as well as certain attitudes in the last years of his life and certain forms of practical application of Stalinism when it was still at its height. By his temperament and his tendencies, Togliatti was rather on the side of the rightwing current in the Communist International, which explains his affinities with Bukharin during a period of the history of the CPSU and the Third International. In this sense he was much more at ease with the popular fronts that with the third period, with the anti-fascist coalition than with the Cold War, and he would have preferred paternalist conceptions and practice rather than terrorist and repressive ones. However, it would be arbitrary to hide the fact that he never opposed Stalinism (even when he was privately convinced of the mistaken character of the line imposed) and, concretely, he was for decades its instrument, even at the cost of a deformation of his own personality. In the last analysis, his specificities increase his responsibilities rather than decreasing them.

An exceptional importance has been given to the

8. It was only at the Ninth Congress, in 1959, that Togliatti said he had not given up this standpoint.

9. The collection was published even in Italy (Laterza, Bari, 1957) under the title *Iridalmi Ujsag* (Literary Gazette). Contrary to what Togliatti claimed, most of the writers were in favour of a democratic transformation of Hungary in a socialist direction. In relation to the funeral of Rajk, he talked of a “macabre, absurd and exasperating parade”.

10. See Giuseppe Fiori, *Vita di Enrico Berlinguer*, Laterza, Bari, 1989, p. 118.

11. “Momenti della storia d’Italia”, *Critica marxista*, special issue, p. 206.

12. According to Secchia, Togliatti “did not want a discussion on the past because he would have appeared as the main one responsible for our positions and the policies in Italy... He wanted to wait and above all not change the leadership methods.” (*Archivio Secchia*, p. 303).

13. In the interview mentioned.

last of his writings, the *Memorial of Yalta*, which certainly constitutes a faithful reflection of his conclusions in relation to central problems of the communist movement. If this text is judged from the point of view of its intrinsic value, its importance is quite relative. His most important and least challengeable remarks — for example the criticisms of bureaucratic structures in the USSR, the explanations of the specificity of the dialectics of art and culture, and the need to coordinate trade-union struggles at a European level in the epoch of the Common Market — are simply repeating, timidly and very late in the day, ideas that several currents in the workers’ movement had been putting forward for a long time. Revolutionary Marxists from the 1930s, the Yugoslav communists from the 1950s, but also, in certain ways, the reformists of the golden age of social-democracy and, in Europe, trade-union groups and tendencies in different countries. It is therefore not an original and innovative document, as it is still presented.

Its importance lies in the fact that some things are said — even if late and not without reticence — by a person like Togliatti and by a Communist Party with a big mass influence and international prestige. It was important that the leader of the PCI should make a statement against any new authoritarian control of the international communist movement, denounce the fundamental weakness of certain Western European Communist Parties and the ineffectiveness of certain trade-union organizations (like the World Federation of Trade Unions) and emphasize — even if not in a very explicit way — the limits to the political and theoretical elaboration of the questions of the struggle of colonial and neo-colonial peoples.

The *Memorial* also looks at positions already taken by the PCI, further developing its reformist and neo-reformist conceptions and orientations, and questioning still more openly the Leninist conception of the state. But, even on this, its originality is open to discussion. In reality, the contributions of other leaders and intellectuals of the party have been, on this terrain, more important and more concrete. Efforts to understand the reality of the capitalism in the 1950s and 1960s were made through analytical work which was immeasurably more thorough than the vague and allusive formulations of Togliatti (marked among other

14. *Rinascita*, October 1955.

15. According to Spriano, the original aspects of Togliatti’s theoretico-political contribution were his judgements on religion and religious conscience and on the question of nuclear war (*Critica marxista*, special issue). It would be really exaggerated to state that these were original and systematic contributions. But it is true that Togliatti was one of the first to raise these questions within the Communist parties.

16. Quoted in the *Archivio Secchia*, p. 158.

17. *Ibid.* pp. 298-9. At the moment of Togliatti’s death, Secchia made a more favourable judgement, which however did not eliminate the previous considerations (*ibid.*, p. 546).

things by very obvious weaknesses in the economic domain). It is also significant that Togliatti did not take a position on major events such as the revolutionary processes then unfolding in Algeria and Cuba.

In an article on the work of the Christian Democrat leader Alcide de Gasperi, Togliatti indicated in the following way what in his opinion was the “touchstone” for the qualities of a political personality:

To what extent his ideal orientations and his personal perspicacity make it possible for him to understand the course of events, to grasp over and above the confusion of the reality of the situation, what is essential and new, and thus the seeds of the future? To what extent can he draw from his principles a line of conduct which makes him master of events, to the extent of making a permanent mark on them?¹⁴

If we apply these criteria to the person who outlined them, the result will not be very favourable to him. It would in fact be difficult to assert that Togliatti had foreseen “the course of events” and still less that he was able to “grasp... the seeds of the future” during the 1930s and in the immediate post-war period, to give just two examples. He accepted, took responsibility for and “theorized” Stalinism and, in 1944-45, formulated a strategic project which turned out to be intrinsically incoherent.

In the following period, he gradually adapted to events, often very skilfully, but, to use his own words, he was never able to become “master of events”. In particular, to the extent that he tried to explain after the event what had happened in an attempt at self-justification, he could not be an original thinker.¹⁵

People who knew him well at different times have made very negative judgements of him. According to Pietro Tresso, Togliatti:

Does not believe in any policy, but he is an advocate always ready to defend all the causes and support all the political lines, to know the priority causes and political lines at any given moment. When the Communist International was led by Bukharin, he was for Bukharin; after the turn he lined up on the victorious side, on Stalin’s side.¹⁶

The judgement made by Pietro Secchia was basically no less severe. In relation to the statements by Togliatti on the dissolution of the Cominform, he wrote:

These wise comments, like many others of this same Togliatti, always come several years late, that is to say when it no longer takes any courage to give, they come when the ‘turn’ has already started, the ‘decision’ has already been taken and it would even be imprudent to resist or oppose them.

And then, rather than confining himself to doing the same as the others; that is to say to recognize that we have to change, he takes the attitude of being top of the class, the attitude of he who would like it believed ‘I always said that’, of he who had previously accepted only by discipline and can finally exclaim ‘See, I was right’. In reality he has almost always accepted all the different orientations first of the Communist International and then of the Cominform. He had always accepted and fiercely defended them, giving proof of deep conviction and fighting against all those who expressed doubts.¹⁷

In the first case we can take into account a tendency

to polemical exaggeration, due to a very hard faction fight, and in the second, a form of resentment for the wrongs done. This does not alter the fact that Tresso and Secchia have grasped an incontestable and non-negligible aspect of Togliatti's personality. After all, these judgements go in the same direction as Gramsci's remarks in relation to Togliatti's criticisms of the famous letter to the Central Committee of the CPSU:

We would be poor revolutionaries, and irresponsible as well, if we stayed passive watching the events as they happen and justifying their necessity before the event.... Your way of thinking makes a very painful impression on me.¹⁸

However, within an overall evaluation we can consider as a specific contribution of Togliatti — although it was obviously not an exclusively personal contribution — the actions during a period of twenty years which transformed a Stalinist party into a neo-reformist, social-democratic type of party, while maintaining and increasing its mass influence and even its strength of attraction at a cultural level.

This project had not been conceived in a systematic fashion from the outset because Togliatti was far from foreseeing all the national and international factors which made it possible, and, in fact, at different time and with different arguments, he wanted to underline the division separating his party from traditional reformism. However, the positions taken on specific questions, more than his overall strategy, made it possible to conclude that Togliatti had begun to sketch out a neo-reformist project from 1944-45.

For example, in his report to the Fifth Congress, in 1945, he presented in a favourable light a speech by Turati in June 1920, that the old reformist had always considered as one of his masterpieces (and which in return the communists and "maximalists" had criticized harshly). In this speech, Turati made proposals for the reconstruction of the post-war period which were quite similar to those of the Communist Party 45 years later.

Another example: in a speech of May 1950, Togliatti noticeably corrected, indeed reversed, the traditional judgement of the PCI and Gramsci on Giolotti, by presenting the old bourgeois leader as a progressive liberal concerned with popular demands.¹⁹

In addition, according to Lelio Basso, he said to him one day:

You should not think that the PCI will never change. Sooner or later it will even have to change its name to become a big single party of the workers.²⁰

Thus Togliatti — precursor of Occhetto.

Berlinguer; historic compromise and Eurocommunism

Enrico Berlinguer joined the party in 1944, in Sardinia, at the timewhen the island was cut off from the continent. As a result, not only did he not have the accumulation of experience of the 1920s and 1930s because of his age, but nor did he participate in the

Resistance. He was rapidly co-opted into the leading bodies and all his experience occurred when he was already in the highest levels of the apparatus.²¹ The needs and mechanisms of the apparatus and the leading group determined the stages of his rise (as well as his temporary declines). Even his election as secretary was not due to a recognition of his qualities as superior to the other members of the leadership, and even less to greater popularity in the party and among the masses. In fact, there was a convergence around him of "currents" and "sub-currents" which existed at the time and none of which would have accepted a leader from an opposing grouping.

If we consider that Togliatti was topographically at the centre of the party then we can say that Berlinguer wanted to and did take up his torch. But he became secretary at a period when the party now had conceptions, orientations and an international position which were very different not only from those of the post-war period but also from those of the end of the 1950s. More particularly, Berlinguer, who had been Stalinist when everybody was, but was not educated at the time when Stalinism was at its height, had a different cultural formation from that of his predecessors. He was better placed to accompany, stimulate and accentuate the later evolution of the party towards a complete break with the umbilical cord which tied it to the USSR and the "communist movement" and its transformation into a neo-reformist party.

Berlinguer's work during the twelve years he spent at the head of the PCI will be remembered above all for the adoption of the strategy of the historic compromise and the Eurocommunist project. The strategy of the historic compromise was formulated for the first time in an essay which appeared in the review in *Rinascita*, just after the military coup d'état in Chile. His aim was was not simply to take into account this dramatic experience in the development of a governmental perspective for the left but also at the same time to propose a solution to the now chronic instability of the centre-left governments and to the political and social crisis which existed since 1968.

Berlinguer in general allied himself with Togliatti's approach which saw gradual reformist transformations (the formulation "historic compromise" was itself borrowed from Togliatti). The concept of "gradual democracy" was replaced by that of "democratic

18. See *La costruzione del Partito Comunista 1923-26*, Einaudi, Turin, 1971, p. 135.

19. The historian Gaetano Salvemini polemicized with Togliatti's judgement in the review *Il Ponte* of February 1952. Even Secchia is critical from this point of view (*Archivio*, p. 453). We have dealt with the meaning of Togliatti's speech in *Attualità di Gramsci e politica comunista*, Schwartz, Milan, 1955, pp. 32 ff.

20. *Corriere della Sera*, 21 August, 1985.

21. In a joke of Pajetta, Berlinguer as a young man joined the party leadership.

cleansing and renovation" of the whole society and state, and presented as the only way of "creating from now the conditions for building a socialist society and state".

In reality, insofar as there can be a comparison between an under-developed and neo-colonial country like Chile and an industrialized capitalist or indeed imperialist country like Italy, the Chilean experience should have made it possible to understand what was the alternative which existed when a project of gradual transformation towards socialism was started. There would be one of two things. The first would be that the project would remain simply on paper and there would only be marginal transformations. In this case there would be no direct confrontation between opposing classes for the very simple reason that the existing regime would not feel threatened. The second would be the undertaking real structural reforms, in the context of growing mobilization of the working class and other popular layer. In this case confrontation would be sooner or later inevitable.

This is what happened in Chile with the result we know. The ruling class and their apparatus were prepared for the test of strength, whereas Salvador Allende, the socialists, the communists, the trade-union organizations, the peasant movements, etc were not, and had the necessary measures of self-defence were not taken, or only very late in the day. Berlinguer simply avoids this problem, putting the emphasis on the question of alliances and the social and political bloc that he considered necessary for his project. It was not enough, he explained, to bank on a majority of 51% of votes for the left forces, there had to be:

intense collaboration with the popular forces of socialist and communist leanings, with the forces of Catholic inspiration, as well as with other democratically-inclined formations.

More concretely, Christian Democracy should be part of this operation. Foreseeing a possible objection, Berlinguer rejected any definition of Christian Democracy as an "ahistorical almost metaphysical category", which is simply to state an obvious truth. But he added that Christian Democracy is determined by two factors: on the one hand the "leading layers of the bourgeoisie" and on the other "other layers" stating that these could turn out to be decisive. So he now used his gradualist approach even in the definition of Christian Democracy.

Thirty years of Italian history had already proved that this hypothesis did not have any basis: at the end of the war, Christian Democracy had already been the fundamental political instrument of the bourgeoisie and

22. Interview in *la Repubblica*, 28 July, 1981. Nevertheless it should be added that the scope of the self-criticism is limited by the fact that on the one hand Berlinguer made clear "or better, the means used did not achieve their end", and, on the other, stated "For us, the democratic alternative is a necessary tool for the transformation of parties, including Christian Democracy." Thus the — illusory — perspective of "renewing" DC was not yet abandoned.

made it possible, given its eclectic and flexible ideology, to ensure the hegemony of the ruling classes over broad layers of society. It is difficult to affirm that it no longer played this role in the following two decades. We could say, on the contrary, that it became more conservative and less democratic. The historical compromise therefore did not have any solid basis. Berlinguer himself had to recognize ten years later that he had been mistaken when he thought that "DC could have really renew itself, change and modify its methods and politics".²²

Nevertheless, it should be admitted that at the Fourteenth Congress of his party, in 1975, he made a further effort to better define his strategy and integrate it more systematically into a historical and theoretical framework. On this occasion he laid out a new variation of "gradual democracy" (or "democratic and socialist transformation" in the formulation of the 1956 congress): the second stage of the democratic and anti-fascist revolution (the first having been halted in 1947), whose final outcome would be to "leave the logic of the mechanisms of the capitalist system".

To justify this approach he used historical arguments which are worth recalling, because this is one of the rare occasions when Berlinguer tried to motivate his assertions without referring to the past positions of Togliatti and the party:

If we look at the history of our country, we will find that the progressive and revolutionary forces which have had, depending on the period, different natures and class orientations, have been really able to make things move forward only when they have taken into account two elements, the international and the national; and when — with an impetus to renewal and vigilant realism — they have been able to draw other forces which, without being revolutionary, were nevertheless interested in or sensitive to the goal of general progress of Italian society, towards the goals of positive transformation of the social and political order. But, in Italian history, we also find the opposite, that is moments when the revolutionary and progressive forces have not been able to play this role of renovation and stimulation.

The strategic lesson of more than fifty years of national history is that the revolutionary forces really change the course of events when — avoiding the opposite errors of opportunism and radical and extremist sectarianism — they know how to stay in the direction of the advancing current and know how to associate the most varied forces to their struggles. All advance, all real historical, political and civil progress has always been the fruit of an alliance between different, non-homogeneous forces. But here we are not laying out a strategy which is only political and and only ours. For us it is a question, and we think that this should be valid for all, of a general vision of the way in which Italian society could develop, political relations could develop, the relations between individuals and this moral life itself. This is one of the permanent characteristics of Italian Marxism.

This interpretation of Italian history — and particularly of the Risorgimento — as a process marked by compromises is not new and Berlinguer could very well have claimed identification with Gramsci on this. But what was for others an interpretation of events for him was a lesson in political strategy, almost a world outlook. It is on this terrain that he sees the deepest specificity of the "Italian road to socialism".

Do we have to recall that the interpretation of the Risorgimento as a compromise by Gramsci or in different ways by Gaetano Salvemini or Guido Dorso



was always accompanied by a denunciation of the price that had to be paid for this compromise? The Lyons theses themselves explicitly underlined the conservative aspect and the negative consequences of the compromise which had marked the process of national unification. Berlinguer seems to forget all that and prefers ahistoric abstraction to determined abstraction. In other words, he thinks that the traditional evils of Italian society — all its “backwardness” and its “distortions”, all its deformations in the development of the democratic revolution. — could be overcome by a new practice of “compromise” while in fact the roots of all these lie in the historic compromises of the past!

It was at the moment of its broadest influence, particularly at the electoral and parliamentary level that the PCI played a leading role in the development of the Eurocommunist project. It was an attempt, with ambitions to theoretical and strategic theorization, to deal with the problems that the Common Market dynamic posed for the workers’ movement. To give an answer to the question opened by the crisis of Stalinism and the “socialist countries”; to redefine an identity of the Communist parties faced with social democracy, to increase the weight of those who were at the time the biggest Communist parties of the capitalist world with a perspective of common action. Rarely has such an ambitious project terminated so rapidly and in such a striking defeat.

Several factors contributed to this failure: the defeats and decline of the French Communist Party, the rapid decline and destructive crisis of the Spanish Communist Party, as well as the weakening of the PCI itself from 1979.

All these events could not but harm the attraction and credibility of a Eurocommunist pole distinct from

that represented by the social-democratic parties. But, aside from these events, Eurocommunism went into crisis and disappeared because of the contradictions which had marked it from the beginning.

First of all, the autonomy in relation to the USSR and the criticism of its leadership could give the Eurocommunist parties conjunctural tactical advantages, but inevitably led to a blurring of their identity. At the same time, the abandoning of the “historic” model of socialism made it possible to no longer share the heavy responsibilities but also meant a weakening of their strategic perspective. A concrete reference was given up but replaced only by very vague hypotheses which, as they became clearer, turned out to be very close to the traditional conceptions of social democracy.

On the other hand, the deeper and deeper integration of the PCI into the institutions and mechanisms of bourgeois society increased its influence in several domains and made it possible for it to occupy a bigger place in the “normal” political area but, at the same time, prevented it from appearing as a real alternative, particularly in the eyes of the layers hit hardest by the long wave of stagnation.

Then the attempt to develop a Europe-wide alternative was harmed from the beginning by the fact that the Eurocommunist parties themselves tended to have differences on not unimportant questions — for example in relation to Nato, the extension of the Common Market, and the policy in relation to Socialists — as a result, in the last analysis, of their “national” demands and the differentiations within the leading bourgeois groups of each country.

Finally, Eurocommunism could not avoid another fundamental contradiction: to the extent that a reformist strategy could take shape in a given context and be accepted by broad sectors of the masses, the social-democratic parties appeared necessarily more credible, both because of their traditions and their deeper insertion into bourgeois democratic institutions. This is what happened in Portugal, in Spain, in France and in Greece. In Italy, the hiatus in the relationship of forces had been, from the end of the 1940s, a braking element but, in the last analysis, the PCI was not able either to escape a decline which has lasted for more than ten years.²³

Two other contributions of Berlinguer to the ideological and political evolution continue to be underlined and demanded: the affirmation of the “universal value of democracy” and the guiding idea of “austerity”.

On the conception of democracy, impenitent supporters of historical materialism like ourselves can

23. For a broader analysis of Eurocommunism and its variations (particularly that represented by Ingrao) see *Destino de Trockij* (particularly the chapter “Teorizzazioni e mistificazione dell’eurocomunismo”. See also our article in the Canadian journal *Critiques socialistes*, autumn 1986.)

only challenge the notion of a “universal value”. Democracy is a historical category which cannot be correctly defined if we ignore its content and the socio-historical context in which it exists. If not it becomes an ahistoric concept, absolutely abstract and of very little practical use. In any case, it is not an original contribution of Berlinguer or other leaders of the PCI who, on this terrain, as everyone knows, were preceded for more than a year by liberal-democratic theoreticians and, to stay within the framework of the workers’ movement, by social-democracy.

As for austerity, reading the best-known definitions — for example those of the speeches of Berlinguer at the Elysée or those in theses of the Fifteenth Congress — provoke the suspicion that it is a conceptual or terminological abuse.

The perspective is put forward of a radical transformation of economic choices, of a hierarchy of consumer goods, or ways of living and cultural aspirations, which does not have a lot to do with austerity as it is usually understood and which, in the context given, can only appear as illusory as the music of a far off future.²⁴ But all Berlinguer’s formulations come down to an ideological mystification of the fact that at the time the PCI supported governments of “national solidarity” which presented austerity in a much more prosaic form by inviting the workers to tighten their belts!²⁵

On several occasions, particularly in the last years of his life, Berlinguer insisted strongly, in dramatic accents, on the dangers which were threatening human society, and, paraphrasing Marx, put forward the hypothesis that, without revolutionary transformations, we were going towards the “ruin of social classes in struggle”.²⁶

These are real worries which we share. But the solutions laid out were out of proportion with the problems raised. It should not be forgotten that it was under Berlinguer’s leadership that the PCI accepted

Nato, against which he had waged one of his hardest struggles. This was not the good road to “gradually overcome the logic of imperialism and capitalism”!

It is true that Berlinguer put forward the perspective of a “world government” which his disciples considered as “one of his most valuable and original ideas”. However, if it is not linked to the a radical revolutionary transformation and to the overthrow of the capitalist system the idea of a world government is purely and simply a utopia. Things did not change for the better when Berlinguer, in a more concrete effort, presented the United Nations as the embryonic form of the world government he wanted. As for the originality, commentators recalled that the idea of a world government had already been put forward by Immanuel Kant, who is no closer to us than Karl Marx or Rosa Luxemburg not to mention leaders of social democracy who have long had this formulation in their official texts.²⁷

Even at this level, Berlinguer’s contradictions stand out clearly.

24. See among others the choice of writings by Berlinguer in *Rinascita* (22 June 1984). The following quotation seems significant:

Far from being a concession to the dominant groups or to the demands of capitalism, austerity can become a conscious choice against them. Thus it can have a very high class content. It can and should become a path by which the workers’ movement becomes the vehicle of a different way of organising social life and even struggles (in today’s conditions) for its old and still valid ideals. In fact it is unthinkable, in current conditions, to wage a real and effective struggle for a superior society is one does not start from the fundamental necessity of austerity.

25. In the congress theses cited above they talk of the need to freeze wages.

26. For example, in the already-mentioned speech at the Elysée.

27. For example, on the occasion of the Oslo General Council in 1962



6. The last turn?

It could be said, rather paradoxically, that if Occhetto had proposed for the Nineteenth and Twentieth Congresses more or less the same texts that he had written for the last year without linking them to a proposal to change the name of the party, he would undoubtedly have obtained the same success as at the previous congress, without provoking too much division and avoiding the dangers of a split.

Such a statement would have a kernel of truth. In fact, Occhetto's initiative did not fall like a thunderbolt from a clear sky, from two points of view. First of all, because it was the result of a process of several decades and also because it had been anticipated by the Eighteenth Congress which was held, as will be remembered, under the slogans of the "new course" and "strong reformism".

Already on this occasion the "novelty" was basically the abandoning of any class perspective both at the level of analyses and that of orientations. The PCI was no longer presented as a party of the working class or of workers and even the expression "workers' movement" was no longer used.¹ Cossutta pointed this out in his contribution by stating, among other things, that the party was drifting towards liberal-democratic shores. The congress adopted, among the fundamental goals of the party, the goal of economic democracy outlined in the following terms:

Economic democracy represents a new frontier of political democracy and its extension into the field of social powers. It must be extended on several fronts: reform of the welfare state; democratization of the workplace; redistribution of income, wealth and property; creation of new forms of enterprise spirit. The fight for economic democracy should be seen as an increase in the workers' possibilities of access to knowledge and to governing the changes in the workplace and their social and human implications.²

It is obvious that there are here concepts and a perspective that are perfectly acceptable to liberal-democrats and even to vaguely progressive industrialists, particularly as they are in the framework of an orientation "whose priority aim should be to broaden the productive base, step up the general productivity of the system".³

Another aspect of the problematic currently under discussion was prefigured in the document on the party:

Today, in the Italian left, there is the need for a modern mass party which takes positions, which is capable of representing and unifying the needs of the powerless layers with the aspirations and demands of the better-off layers in a project which, by unifying those who are in the development process with those who run the risk of remaining outside, gives a different social quality to modernity.

In relation to the new status, Pietro Fassino should be given recognition for having given a new

"theoretical" justification in the pages of *l'Unità* during the congress, which went further than all the formulations used even by the social-democratic parties who have been involved for years in the institutions. According to Fassino, the new party corresponds to a "model inspired by the democratic state based on the rule of law" and which, more precisely, introduces "a new configuration of power, based on the parliamentary model". The central committee is seen "as a chamber, the leadership as a government, the secretariat as the cabinet, and the figure of president of the central committee is introduced".

Remembering that the PCI was in favour of an increased role for the prime minister, we can conclude that the goal is that of giving the secretariat a clearly hegemonic function in relation to other leaders.⁴ At the end of the congress, *l'Unità* did not hesitate to headline "Occhetto's PCI".

There would be the temptation to evoke the infamous cult of the personality. In fact it was not so much an impossible return to the charismatic leader of the Stalinist era, but rather an attempt to build up, by "modern" use of the media, a leader in the model of the most traditional parliamentary parties (and which could be counterposed to the "decisionist" Craxi).⁵

The rupture of 12 November and the last congress

Recalling what could be anticipated after the Eighteenth Congress should not lead to an underestimation the "rupture" of 12 November 1989, which is symbolically represented by the proposal to change the name of the party. For the essential, Occhetto's project was to go even further than the classical conceptions of the social-democratic parties: the traditional opposition between workers' parties and bourgeois parties should be replaced, according to him,

1. According to the congress reports in *l'Unità*, the expression "workers' movement" only figured in Gorbachev's greetings.

2. Political resolution, second part, point 10.

3. *Ibid.*, point 12.

4. In fact, with his "coup" on 12 November and other personal initiatives, Occhetto has put this conception into practice.

5. The concept of "decisionism" which now exists in Italian journalistic language, is borrowed from the thought of Carl Schmitt, a rightwing theoretician of Weimar Germany who is correctly considered as one of the ideological forerunners of Nazism. The PSI seems to accept without any problem that its general secretary is considered a "decisionist" by the whole press.

by the contradiction between "progressives" and "conservatives".

The, moreover very vague, references to the role which would be that of the workers in the new organization did not change anything of substance. Occhetto knew very well that without the support (first of all electoral) of the broad masses that is — despite what the most casual "modernists" might think — of waged workers, no "progressive" force can hope to impose itself. But it does not flow from this that he accepted the primordial idea of the political independence of the workers as a social class fighting for its own hegemony. The very concept of hegemony — which had been in its most disparate variants a *leit motif* of his predecessors — disappeared from his thinking. Hard luck for Gramsci!

In the ideological field, Occhetto and his supporters finished off the break with Marxist or even quite simply materialist conceptions. They put much more emphasis on politico-ideological than socio-economic themes. They dilute to the extreme their criticism of existing society and even the opposition between different political forces.

Occhetto states, among other things, that it is not a question of:

counterposing anti-Christian Democrats and anti-communists, as there is no sense in being anti-Socialist. The alternative implies a new strategic positioning of all the forces of progress and the differences between moderate conservatives and reformists could only run through the present divisions to give birth to unexpected majority and opposition coalitions as well as new political forces.

Again in his words, it was a question of:

unifying for the first time in history two great ideals which, in our century, have remained divided and opposed that of liberty and that of justice.

To complete the picture, he concretized his conception of integration in the "European left" by declaring explicitly that "the new party will ask to be admitted to the Socialist International".⁶

The "Statement of Intent" presented by Occhetto in October 1990, relaunched in a more systematic fashion themes already put forward in reports, articles and interviews as well as the texts of the Nineteenth Congress:

- analysis of the world situation in the Gorbachevian interpretation of interdependence and the idea of a world government, for which the UN is the pre-model;
- reaffirmation of the irreplaceable character of the market economy and of the goal of economic democracy, both nationally and internationally ("the 'new left' was not opposed to internationalization — he should have said, more openly, to multinationals — but considers the question of its democratic regulation");
- a "new position" on the "question of power", "not and no longer in terms of conquering state power but as a different organization of the regime itself": "socialism as the process of complete democratization of society";
- a governmental programme "capable of answering

the essential needs of all citizens" and the central character of the theme of "reforming politics" (institutional reforms etc.);

- the "going beyond democratic centralism" in order to "break the continuity not only with the tradition of international communism but also with Italian communism";

- "the idea of a renewed left; of a left which, in Italy, commits itself to work for a higher synthesis — without dispersing them — of the ideals and experiences of Italian communism, of liberal and socialist reformism, of social and democratic Catholicism, of a left which is open to confrontation with all currents and the world forces of renewal and which thus aims to participate in the achieving of the great project of human liberation."

The adoption of the new name, Partito Democratica della Sinistra (PDS - Democratic Party of the Left), is for him the coherent expression of the new political and organizational project and is not simply inspired by the desire to separate one's own responsibilities from those of the traditional communist movement and the countries of "really existing socialism".

As far as the conception of the party is concerned, the task of defining the new evolution was once again entrusted to Piero Fassino. It was a question of passing from the "party of emancipation to the party of citizenship" he explained. This formulation does not mean a lot, but, to the extent to which it does have any meaning, it is a further deepening of the orientations of these recent years and particularly of the above-mentioned document of the Eighteenth Congress. During this congress, the party had, to use the terms of its newspaper's headlines, said goodbye to democratic centralism. Obviously, it had not, at that moment either, given up the old mystification of the confusion — either deliberately or through gross ignorance — between the democratic centralism of the Bolshevik party of Lenin and the first years of the Communist International with the "democratic" but in reality brutally bureaucratic centralism of the Stalinist era.

Already at that time — does this have to be repeated? — the party was very different from what it had been not only in the 1920s but also in the 1940s and 1950s, that is to say a party which was no longer seen as an instrument of the struggle against capitalism in the perspective of a socialist society, but a party more and more shaped by institutions where the "professional revolutionaries" had become parliamentarians, local administrators, trade-union bureaucrats or managers of cooperatives and, at lower levels, full-timers, with a pre-determined career according to fairly rigid criteria and unwritten rules. The abandoning of a class orientation required the passage to the "party of citizenship" capable of adapting to society as a whole.

We have mentioned Fassino's analogy with the state

6. This could be considered to be a certain incoherence, given the transformation in the nature of the party that is desired. This is not so, because the Socialist International includes forces that have never been part of the workers' movement.

institutions. Even from a purely theoretical point of view, it is a mistaken conception because the party — this goes without saying — is a voluntary organization which one joins to achieve certain goals and not to reflect society as it is (nor with the sectarian-idealistic perspective of transforming the party into a sort of embryonic nucleus of a future society). To do otherwise would mean identifying with institutions which, leaving aside their deformations, have objectives which are different from those of a party. It would also mean, in the last analysis, giving up playing the role of a force which expresses and contributes to developing a strategic proposal which unifies the interests, the needs and the aspirations of certain classes and certain social layers, which are necessarily counter to those of other classes and social layers.

All these themes are taken up, in a more summarized form, in the majority draft resolution for the Twentieth Congress of the PCI. Thus the idea that the "market economy" is irreplaceable comes up again, co-management within the workplace is advocated, there is reiteration of the readiness to "reform" the Italian political system and reaffirmation of the objective of transforming the EEC into a European federation. However, with the aim of escaping the criticism of abandoning the socialist goal to shift into the field of "radicalism and liberal democracy", a short introduction explains that the new party will "retain the great goal of socialism" and "the idea of democracy as the road to socialism". This does not commit it to anything, but leaves a glimpse of the difficulties Occhetto and his supporters will meet in their project of a total break with the tradition of the party.⁸

As we know, the Occhetto project ran into quite broad opposition, provoking stormy discussions within the party. At the March 1990 congress, the opposition was divided into two currents: one led by the old leader Pietro Ingrao and the former secretary Alessandro Natta, and another led by Armando Cossutta, usually characterized, in too summary a fashion it is true, as pro-Soviet. Ingrao and Natta reaffirmed fundamentally, the conceptions which had characterized the party as much at the time of Togliatti as of Berlinguer, expressing an unreservedly favourable judgement of Gorbachev, and not rejecting the idea of joining the Socialist International. Cossutta put forward his criticisms in more drastic terms, but also claimed the past of the party of Togliatti and his gradualist reformist strategy, and, in questions of international policy, lined up with the position of Gorbachev while adding some marginal criticisms of the Socialist International.

For the Twentieth Congress, the two currents presented a united motion which took up the themes of their previous texts without any important changes. While proclaiming the need for a "refoundation", not only did this motion fail to develop any critical thinking about the historical experiences of the PCI but it did not hesitate to identify with the merits of Berlinguer, of the Seventeenth Congress (the one in which the PCI had stated its "complete adherence to the European left") and even with the "new party" of Togliatti.⁹

In other words, it reaffirmed the criteria which had inspired a gradualist reformist strategy, both on the domestic and international level (for example in demanding the central character of the European parliament and the "sovereignty" of the General Assembly of the United Nations, control of multinationals, etc). In taking up the themes which the Manifesto group had developed during its constitution as an independent organization, it developed a conception which avoided posing the problem of power (which is easier on paper than in reality!) and which was gradualist in its very fashion of posing the question of communism.¹⁰

On the other hand, it took on a Berlinguer colouring when it expounded a "new democratic cycle" which runs the risk of being reduced to a variation of the formulation of the 1970s cited above, that of the "second stage of the democratic and anti-fascist revolution". They avoided the party question by using the rather vague metaphor of a "network", an empty formulation of which they did not bother to explain the content.

The proceedings of the Twentieth Congress did not really contain any surprises in the sense that all the currents and sub-currents reasserted their analyses and their approach. In return, the new state of affairs was represented by the fact that the split took place at the end, when one current of the united opposition current decided not to participate in the formation of the PDS. In fact, this rupture had been prepared for several months, despite the tactical cover used. It only concerned a minority of the current because in particular the former leaders, like Ingrao, Natta and Tortorella, and the former members of the *Il Manifesto* group, like Magri and Castellina, stayed with the party

7. See *l'Unità* of 19 November 1990 (supplement). The democratic character of certain of the reforms envisaged is very open to question. For example, the choice of a governmental coalition by the electors — which opens the way to the bonus for the majority — could lead to an attack on the right of minorities to be represented in line with their strength. As to the elimination of the preferential vote, the competition between candidates through corrupt propaganda is undoubtedly scandalous but the pure and simple abolition of preferences would have the risk of increasing the power of the party leaderships and apparatuses.

8. To the extent that it is not simply a tactical operation the "Bassolino motion" expresses a feeling within the party which, although not opposed to the 12 November operation, wants to retain certain elements of the Berlinguer approach.

9. It is true that the text makes references to the "failings" in the analysis and strategy of the party in the 1960s and 1970s, but these are quite partial criticisms.

10. "Today, for us, the word 'communism' implies building in the present from an autonomous point of view and practice, capable of achieving, here and now, forms of liberation from the oppression and domination typical of capitalist social relations. This way of seeing communism is not dead with the collapse of the Eastern European regimes of the Soviet model. What has failed in the East is a society product of a conception of socialism in the centre of which there was the taking of state power and the statization of the means of production."

majority. But the split and the birth of what is for the moment called the Movement for Communist Refoundation was noticeably bigger than expected, for various reasons including because some former members who had left the party individually, particularly over the last ten years, associated themselves with it.¹¹

The new contradictions

Finally, there is a question which has to be asked: what will be the future of the new party?

As always, a distinction should be made between what is projected and what will happen in reality. First of all, it is difficult, if not excluded, that a completely new organization could develop (as was implied by the idea of a "constituent assembly" put forward at the beginning). The new party will not be, in general, anything but a new metamorphosis of the PCI with liberal-socialist or radical-democratic features and with a more eclectic political profile than today. In fact, it will continue to play a role similar to the role played by the social-democratic parties in the other West European countries, deepening the dynamic of a "progressive" party. Over and above the possible quantitative variations, its social base will remain fundamentally the traditional workers' and popular social base of the PCI.

The PDS will be deeply marked by the coexistence of different positions and currents. There are already within it militants and groups which attempt to defend, in mitigated terms, a perspective of "antagonism" to capitalist society by using for example the rhetoric of Berlinguer on the "third road" (this is what was done at the last congress by a small minority represented by Antonio Bassolino which, while accepting the change of name of the party, did not share a series of Occhetto's orientations). In the opposite pole there is a current which wants to link itself to a more classical form of reformism and which advocates convergence, if not short-term unification, with the Socialist Party (Giorgio Napolitano is the best-known spokesperson of this current).

The "new" party will not escape, in any case, the contradiction specific to social-democratic parties which, as we have seen, on the one hand, take on more and more direct responsibility for the management of the system and, on the other, have to be careful not to lose the support of the worker and popular masses which still constitute the basis of their strength.

Such a contradiction will become a lot sharper if the PDS becomes a governmental party. There is no need to be a prophet to imagine what it would do in such a situation. It would do, in general, what the French Socialist Party (PS) and the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) have done since the beginning of the 1980s. The strategy, political programme and ideology

11. On this see my article in *International Viewpoint*, No 203, 1 April 1991.

of these two parties were substantially shared by the PCI, and thus will be even more so by the PDS. The fact that the PCI has never tried to make a balance sheet of the governmental experiences of Gonzalez or Mitterrand or — even less — to say in what way its actions in government would be different from either of these, reflects the intrinsic weakness of its perspectives. Even if it succeeded — which is not guaranteed in advance — in halting a decline which started quite a long time ago and avoiding being torn apart by centrifugal pressures, the transformed party would run into major obstacles on the very terrain on which it wants to act that it could only overcome with difficulty.

Specific features and typical character

One of the keys to understanding the trajectory of the PCI, which its leaders, intellectuals and historians — whether Italian or not — have always underlined, is its specificity if not its exceptional character. There is no doubt that the whole history of the party has been marked by very particular elements. From the beginning it has had two leaders — Amadeo Bordiga and Antonio Gramsci — who for different reasons are difficult to compare to those of other Communist parties.

Secondly, the fact that it acted as an underground party during the 1930s and experienced its greatest growth in the second half of the 1940s, meant that its Stalinization was less deep and less systematic than that suffered for example by the PCF. Particularly since 1956, it has developed analyses of the society in which it acts and of the trends of its development which, despite their international conditioning, were notable for a greater relationship to reality than those of its sister parties, including those in Western Europe. Thus it has been able to insert itself into institutions (at almost all levels) more deeply and with more continuity than these other parties. Despite its reticences, hesitations and withdrawals, it has confronted the problems posed by the crisis of Stalinism since 1956. For example, certain polemics of that time — around its Eighth Congress — revealed its particular way of understanding the relationship between immediate goals and more general goals, which provoked some harsh criticism, particularly from the French Communist Party.¹² The influence of the political and theoretical conceptions of Gramsci also contributed largely to shaping its specificity. Despite the mystifications of his thinking, his contributions has acted as at least a partial counterbalance to the schematism and methodological aberrations of Stalinism.

Another important element was the existence in Italy of a Socialist Party, also very specific, which, first as an ally and then as a rival, often forced the PCI to look at domestic and international questions from a point of view which did not exactly coincide with that of the Soviet leadership and Communist movement,

whether Stalinist or post-Stalinist. In addition, between 1968 and 1975, it had to deal with mass movements and organizations that were the product of a prolonged social and political crisis: to meet this challenge and win back the ground lost it had to use not only all its tactical flexibility but also undergo some quite radical revisions and break, at least partly, with its former organizational practices (for example in adapting its relations with the trade unions to new situations).

It also showed more openness and tolerance in its internal functioning, despite the continuation of authoritarian leadership methods and the ban on forming tendencies and critical currents. The discussions which continued for several months after the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU, with broad participation from organizers and members, had been an important indicator of the changes which were taking shape. Finally, it is unnecessary to recall the leading role that the PCI played in the evolution of relations between the Soviet leadership and the leaderships of the Communist parties, and thus to changing the structures and the articulation of the so-called Communist movement even before its dissolution.

All this cannot be underestimated. However, if we limit ourselves to this type of remark we will not get to the bottom of the problem: the tensions and contradictions which marked the evolution of the PCI and, in the last analysis, its transformation into a neo-reformist party, qualitatively similar to the social-democratic parties, classical and modern, were inherent in all the Stalinist Communist parties. They shared the contradiction between subordination to the Stalinist system, that is to say to the interests of the USSR and its ruling caste, and the requirement to express the demands and interests of the exploited classes in their respective national societies. They shared the contradiction between their international position, and the growing real insertion — in the cases of greatest growth — into the mechanisms and institutions of bourgeois society. In other words, its tensions and its fundamental contradictions were — and still are to the extent that the problem has not been resolved — not specific but absolutely typical.

The PCI was able to play a vanguard role — from its point of view and from that of the Communist parties which rallied to its positions — not because of a qualitatively different nature, or because of greater clairvoyance of its leaders, but because of the specific factors which we have already analysed. The conclusion is therefore that it is thanks to these specific factors that it was able to express better than the others, the typical feature of the nature and dynamic in the given historical context of the Communist parties which, born as revolutionary parties then became Stalinist parties.

A similar discourse should also be made for the current evolution. Once a materialist analysis of society is abandoned, by interpreting its conflicts and its tendencies no longer in terms of class struggle but within the framework of "modern" sociology — that is

unilaterally empirical and, despite any pretension to concreteness, fundamentally abstract; once a strategy not only of coexistence but even of collaboration between qualitatively different social partners is adopted, both at the macro-economic scale (with support to common development models) and in the organization and management of enterprises; once any revolutionary perspective is given up, then it is logical that there is a tendency to "go beyond" the class conception of the party and the very notion of the workers' movement.

This trend to transforming the former traditional workers' parties into radical or progressive democratic parties is thus — both in practice and ideologically — present in all the reformist and neo-reformist parties as they have evolved in the last two decades.

While the PCI was the first to move more openly down this path with its turn of 12 November 1989, this is once again explained by a series of specific factors:

- the particular form of the crisis of a party which still has broad mass influence and is thus more pushed to find a solution

- the convergence of its decline sharpened by internal factors and the ravaging repercussions of the collapse of the bureaucratized transitional societies

- the sharpening danger represented by the competition of the Socialist Party; the existence in Italy of a liberal-socialist tradition, more significant than is usually believed in the 1930s, represented during the Resistance by a formation like the Action Party, and able to exercise considerable influence on the political and cultural discussion, despite its ephemeral existence, and remaining alive in the following decades thanks to the activity of incontestably prestigious intellectuals.¹³

In conclusion, even on this level, the typical feature predominates thanks to the combination of a series of specific features.

The end result of a process

We will not return to the international context in which the transformation of the PCI into the PDS took place. But it would be useful to recall the national context.

In the last ten years, the main capitalist groups and more generally the conservative forces, have been able — successfully from their point of view — to carry out large-scale restructuring and concentration, to consolidate themselves socially and obtain a relative political stability. The workers and their organizations

12. See particularly the polemic with Roger Garaudy, at the time one of the main leaders of the French CP. This is discussed in my book *Teoria e politica comunista del dopoguerra*, pp. 91-95.

13. This is a reference in particular to Norberto Bobbio, one of the rare people who can claim an unchallengeable coherence of thought and intellectual honesty from the beginning of the 1940s until today. Unfortunately, he also was carried away in the "Desert Storm" and justified the Gulf war as a "just war".

have always been on the defensive, have recorded important defeats, and even the specific weight of the working class is diminished because of the reduction of certain industrial sectors and many processes of fragmentation. At the same time, petty-bourgeois layers whose radicalization played such an important role in the crisis of the late 1960s and early 1970s experienced a political and ideological retreat and were less and less influenced by the workers' movement and the Communist Party. The involvement in institutional mechanisms continued, but with still more negative effects in this context and with greater pressure on the Communist Party, which was more and more pushed to seek a way in which this involvement over several decades would finally lead to involvement in the government of the country.¹⁴

On the other hand, the social composition of the party underwent considerable changes. This did not so much concern the different proportions of the total membership — although a decline in the number of workers should be noted — but above all the level of participation in the activity and internal life of the party, where elements of petty-bourgeois origin occupied more and more important places and were in the final analysis predominant. Inevitably, since the 1960s a transformation had also taken place at the level of the organizers and leaders.

While just after the war most of the decisive cadres came from the anti-fascist struggle and the Resistance, with a clear preponderance of elements from proletarian and popular layers; little by little the prevailing trend became cadres whose political experience tended to be identified with a presence at different levels of the institutions, and as a result, the old fulltimers who had internalized the role of professional revolutionaries, were replaced by careerists who gradually lost any living link with the layers of society who electorally remained the decisive strength of the party.

More generally, there was a change in the relationship between these layers, particularly the most politicized among them, and the party as such. At the end of the war, and for the following period, it was a relationship of confidence, with almost mystical aspects: despite its tactical attitudes, the party was considered as a political force decided to struggle against the existing society and for a socialist Italy, and its leaders enjoyed and unchallenged authority. Later things began to change. At the end of the 1960s, the PCI continued to collect the popular vote but this was no longer the expression of confidence in its strategy and still less in its desire to challenge the system. It was rather the fact that it appeared as the sole opposition force and as the only useful instrument for winning

certain partial gains and containing the power of the ruling class and its hegemonic party. This attitude was expressed above all electorally, and was at the origin in fact of the strengthening of the party towards the mid-1970s and its following consolidation. It was only later that the crisis of confidence took more obvious forms and that a growing number of electors began to no longer vote for a party which seemed to be without perspective, even on the particular terrain of its strategy and action.

Finally, there was a radical change in the role of intellectuals. To avoid misunderstandings, let us repeat that in joining the PCI or participating in its actions, a considerable number of intellectuals played a progressive role and some of them, thanks to their capacities, undoubtedly contributed to the spreading of the conceptions and methodological instruments of historical materialism, and, more generally, of Marxism. But what we would like to underline here is the evolution — or the regression — which took place. Just after the war most of these intellectuals considered themselves, in Gramsci's definition, "organic intellectuals" whose work and action were intrinsically linked to the struggles and destiny of the working class and the party which represented it. During the Stalinist period such an attitude had enormous dangers. Nevertheless, a quite important number of intellectuals enriched the patrimony of the workers' movement with a positive influence on Italian culture as a whole.

If we leap forward by several decades and look at the current situation we see that the picture has changed radically: the intellectuals who are members or sympathizers of the party act as an independent force, assuming the role of judges on all questions and occupying an increasingly important role in the media as opinion-formers. It is above all them, with different elements of the petty bourgeoisie, who try to shape, and to a large extent do in fact shape, the ideology of the party and even claim to define its strategic perspective, its tactical attitudes and organizational forms. They act in this way while they suffer, still more than the bulk of the party, all the negative impact of the international situation and the complicated trends in the national situation.

These are all the elements which explain the deep crisis of a party which, in order to maintain its strength and experience a new growth, could no longer rely on "sociological weight", on the unchanging nature of the social context, nor hope for an indeterminate continuation of the traditional loyalties or for a resigned acceptance of the lesser evil. In this sense, at the root of Occhetto's initiative there were certainly questions of the life or death of the party. But the answers which he gave are either mystifications if not totally fantastic: they go in exactly the opposite direction to that which the workers' movement should take to lead it out of this dead end.

14. An extreme case of insertion in the mechanisms, in this case economic, is represented by the evolution of cooperatives which are increasingly managed according to purely capitalist criteria, regardless of national borders.

The history of the PCI 1949-1991

N°15

- 1949 : Creation of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (Nato).
- 1953 : Mobilization of the PCI against the "crooked law" (legge truffa) proposed by Christian Democracy which would give the absolute majority of parliamentary seats to the party which obtains a relative majority of votes. In the face of popular opposition, the law is not approved. Death of Stalin.
- 1955 : Defeat of the CGIL (the trade union controlled by the PCI) in FIAT. The communist activists are hit by very harsh repression and many are expelled from the FIAT factories.
- 1956 : Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) where Khrushchev denounces the crimes of Stalin and the personality cult in the USSR. Sixth Congress of the PCI, which approves the strategy of the "Italian road to socialism". The PCI approves the repression of the Hungarian revolution by the Warsaw Pact troops. Many intellectuals leave the party in protest.
- 1960 : Popular rising in Genoa against the congress of the MSI (the neo-fascist party). End of centrism and beginning of the centre-left governments.
- 1962 : Riots in Turin (Piazza Statuto).
- 1964 : Death of Togliatti. Luigi Longo is elected secretary of the party.
- 1968 : The "May Days" and pre-revolutionary situation in France. The PCI criticizes the repressions of the "Prague Spring" by the Warsaw Pact forces. A big number of young people leave the party to join new revolutionary organizations, among which are different Maoist groups, Avanguardia Operaia and Il Manifesto, which forms its own current within the PCI and wins over a certain number of leaders (Lotta Continua is formed the following year). The GCR (Gruppi Comunisti Rivoluzionari, Italian section of the Fourth International) abandons entryism in the PCI and forms an independent organization.
- 1969 : A wave of workers' struggles which radically change the relationship of forces between the classes in the country and lead to the formation of factory councils (real organs of dual power within the factory, they gradually come under the control of the trade-union apparatuses). Right-wing terrorist attacks, the "strategy of tension" which the PCI is late in denouncing.
- 1972 : Berlinguer is elected secretary of the PCI.
- 1973 : Coup d'Etat in Chile against the Unidad Popular government led by Salvador Allende. According to Berlinguer, this defeat proves that the Italian workers' movement should not oppose the Catholics but should have a strategy of alliance with their party Christian Democracy (DC). Start of the policy of the "historic compromise".
- 1974 : Crisis of DC, which is defeated during the referendum for the abolition of the law on divorce.
- 1975 : Administrative elections, marked by a big progress of the PCI which now controls, in alliance with the PSI, all the principal cities in the country: Rome, Milan, Turin, Naples, Genoa, Florence, Venice etc. (as well, of course, as its traditional bastion, Bologna). Fifth Congress of the PCI, which definitively approves the policy of historic compromise.
- 1976 : New advance of the PCI during the political elections (34.4% of the vote). First big terrorist attacks by the Red Brigades. Defeat of the far left in the elections where it stood as united force under the label of Proletarian Democracy (Democrazia Proletaria) and only obtained 1.5% of the vote despite its leading role in several mass movements. Self-dissolution of Lotta Continua. In an interview in Corriere della sera, Berlinguer states that the PCI is in favour to Italy remaining within Nato. Theorization of Eurocommunism.
- 1977 : Wave of youth radicalization (where an important role is played by Autonomia Operaia) marked by sometimes violent confrontations with the PCI and the trade unions.
- 1978 : Kidnapping of the DC leader Aldo Moro by the Red Brigades. The PCI abstains in parliament when Andreotti (DC) presents his new government. Start of the policy of "national solidarity".
- 1979 : Berlinguer decides to abandon the policy of "national solidarity" and to replace it by the policy of the "democratic alternative", which rejects an alliance with DC.
- 1980 : Strike of FIAT workers threatened by redundancies. After 35 days of struggle, the union leaderships agree, against the wish of the overwhelming majority of the workers, to an agreement which allows for lay-offs (in fact exclusion from the factory) of 23,000 workers. Most of the union activists of the PCI and the far left are expelled from the factory. This defeat marks the end of the period opened by the struggles of autumn 1969.
- 1984 : Defeat of the struggle to defend the sliding scale of wages (during the referendum 45.6% of the electorate are for and 54.6% against). Death of Berlinguer, followed by the last big electoral breakthrough of the PCI in the European elections (35% of the vote). Alessandro Natta is elected secretary of the PCI.
- 1988 : Natta is replaced by Achille Occhetto. The party suffers a significant electoral decline.
- 1989 : After the events in Eastern Europe, Occhetto puts forward the proposal to change the name of the party.
- 1991 : The PCI Twentieth Congress approves the proposal of its general secretary to abandon the name Communist Party and adopt that of the Democratic Party of the Left (Partito Democratico della Sinistra, PDS). A left-wing current — Cossutta, Libertini, Asor Rosa, etc. — leaves the party and forms the Movement for Communist Refoundation (Movimento per la Rifondazione Comunista).

7. Eulogy for the Revolution

N°15

It goes without saying that the work of reconstructing the workers' movement must start from an analysis of society today. We are convinced that if a commitment is made to studying or restudying *Capital*, and not simply talking about it on the basis of hearsay or vague youthful memories, the result will not only be to see the validity of the Marxist method, but also the relevance and topicality of certain descriptions of the mechanisms and dynamic of capitalism. But, leaving aside Marx and Capital, it is enough to observe reality as it appears to those who try to understand it without deforming spectacles, without prejudices and without apologetic intentions.

First of all, not even all the ramblings of economists and sociologists who have mobilized to wipe out even the memory of socialist and revolutionary ideas, cannot suppress one incontestable fact: the fundamental trend to the concentration and centralization of capital — industrial, commercial and financial — acts today much more forcefully than at any time in the past. The big multinationals represent the extreme form of a concentration which implies the extortion of profits on a planetary scale, the despoiling of underdeveloped countries, and their subordination to literally catastrophic economic choices. And it is precisely through the multinationals that the growing interdependence of the economy takes shape. The understanding of this interdependence, it should be added in parentheses, was one of the guiding threads of the Communist Manifesto of 1848.

There could be an endless discussion on the fact that small and medium businesses have not disappeared and indeed can still experience, at certain times and in certain sectors, a new growth. But it is undeniable that the world economy is dominated, as it has never been before, by giants which alternate and combine mergers with harshly competitive trade wars. It is equally undeniable that industry remains strategically decisive and that the industrialization of the economy as a whole is continuing and growing all the time.

In the other hand, the small and medium-sized business often depend on the big one and occupy crannies which the major groups do not have any interest in occupying. This is without taking into account that many businesses which count as small or medium-sized on the basis of their number of employees are in fact very capital intensive. On the social level — leaving aside discussions which are however not uninteresting on the value of Marx's forecasts concerning growing polarization between the classes — the following things must be noted:

- A small minority of the ruling class itself, linked to

the main industrial, commercial and financial groups, has growing economic power and can mobilize in defence of its interests the political and military apparatuses of the imperialist countries.

- While, during the last few years, in the most developed countries, there has been a quantitative reduction in the industrial working class following restructuring and technological innovation, the number of waged-workers has continued to grow. And the essential distinction from the Marxist point of view, it should be remembered, is not at all between blue- and white-collar workers or industrial workers and service sector workers, but between wage-earners and non-wage-earners. Even if the prognosis of massive adoption of new technology at increasing speed is taken — and nobody can be certain that this will be what happens — nothing justifies a second prognosis: that of a decisive decline in waged-work over the next ten to twenty years.

- Despite the trends mentioned above, on a world scale and in almost all countries, the working class is numerically bigger — both in absolute terms and as percentage of the whole of the active population — not simply in comparison to the period of Marx or Lenin, but also to that of the 1950s or 1960s. It would thus be rather arbitrary to conclude that its role as the anti-capitalist driving force had lost its material basis.

- The social fragmentation and dilution which have been described by many authors are a real phenomenon, but it would be wrong to interpret this as a general and irreversible trend. To a large extent, it is a typical phenomenon of phases of prolonged stagnation and technological innovation and restructuring on a vast scale in a context of political retreat. Sooner or later, as we have already seen at other periods, we will see a unitive recomposition of the working class and, more generally, of the workers. The central problem is to sketch out a policy which encourages this recomposition by stimulating a new rise in consciousness at mass level.

One conclusion can be made: the inevitable explosion of new cyclical crises, the reappearance — including in the industrialized countries — of mass unemployment and the impoverishing of broad layers of the population, the more and more catastrophic destruction of natural resources, the recourse to sources of energy which are difficult or impossible to control and for which nobody can accurately predict the medium- or long-term effects. All of this, rather than

posing problems which make revolutionary Marxists feel theoretically disarmed, represent in the last analysis a dramatic confirmation of the theory of *alienation*.

Starting from the information summarized here, it is perfectly legitimate to formulate in a credible fashion the hypothesis of a persistent vitality and an upturn — over and above the specific forms and occasions — of anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist mass movements, as well as the probability of new total crises — that is to say not only economic but also social and political — of capitalist societies, in which the very basis of these societies will be challenged. And it is certain that, if this happens, sociological criticism and theoretical thinking will start to play a different music from that which we hear today.

For those who, without losing their bearings faced with the most recent events, are trying to understand reality and its most dynamic trends for what they really are, an absolutely vital task is to relaunch the very idea of revolution, counterposing it to the wave of gradualist conceptions of a positivist and flatly institutionalist tonality, of a weak and timorous reformism or neo-reformism, which is not even capable of defending the gains of the past.

At the end of the twentieth century we see capitalist societies affected by limitless irrationality and — in the infernal logic of their intrinsic mechanisms — condemning a large section of the planet's population to poverty and famine, with unpredictable consequences in the medium and long term for those happy islands of the consumer society themselves. The societies could — as the result of a nuclear war or a succession or ecological crises — provoke the destruction of life on earth. It is an extraordinary paradox that in such a context the existing system should be rehabilitated within the workers' movement itself, or at least be accepted as the only possible form of social organization to which there is not alternative in the foreseeable future.

To suppose that a society governed for decades by an implacable internal logic and an uncontrollable dynamic, where all the decisions which in the last analysis decide the fates of peoples and the future of each individual are the preserve of a tiny minority; to suppose that such a society could be transformed without a revolutionary rupture means not to see reality and cocoon oneself in illusions (even while pretending to be realistic).

Let us think for an instant about the problem which has just been mentioned, that of the *destruction of the environment*, a problem which was not posed in the dramatic terms that it is today not simply not a century ago but even thirty or forty years ago, and that today is presented by the most competent scientists in a more and more alarming light. I am not competent to judge between the different hypotheses which are discussed, but the most likely one seems to be that if the trends which are already in operation, and are only countered in the most ridiculously insufficient forms, are not reversed then the fate of the planet is sealed, regardless of the rhythm and time which this process will take.

And to achieve this reversal there would have to be a *real revolution*.

Let us ask another question: while it is true that the economy is more and more dominated by the all-powerful multinationals whose number is constantly declining because of process of concentration and centralization, is it realistic to hope, as all reformists seem to do, that things can change by introducing a few laws — which are in general not very effective and in any case doomed to remain simply words on paper — while making up theories of the wide-spread "enterprise spirit" or "democratization of the economy", or again by trying to convince industrialists, bankers and big merchants to take another path in their own interest? This is a vain hope and the conceptual and terminological acrobatics which we have seen over the last few decades not only are totally without foundation but seem today, on the basis of real experiences, quite laughable. Realism teaches us that only a revolution can change the current state of affairs.

The third problem — third in order but certainly not in importance — is that of *women's liberation*. As the feminist movement quite correctly asserts this is question of confronting structures, ways of relating, conceptions and behaviour that have existed not simply for hundreds but for thousands of years. On this question, even more than all the others, is not a *revolutionary* break in the full sense of the term what is required?

Finally, is it possible that the innovations and qualitative changes which are necessary at all levels could take place in the framework of the existing state structures and political institutions? Such an idea is obviously impossible to defend for the great majority of countries in the world where there exists a state structure and "institutions" which remove the possibility for the vast majority of the population of bringing their own aspirations and interests to bear (things do not really change qualitatively even where are the beginnings of democratic openings). But it is untenable even in the case of the presidential or parliamentary democracies of Western Europe and North America.

On this question, after so much rhetoric about "actually existing socialism" and its mystifications, it is time to discuss the "actually existing democracies". These could be discussed even while leaving aside the socio-economic content or even the concrete conditions which make inherently *unequal* the exercise of the *most elementary democratic rights* (an ABC which today tends to be forgotten rather too casually, despite the fact of being confronted daily with the spectacle of the use and abuse of the media by privileged, ruling groups and individual magnates who are free of any form of control by the citizens).

To give a few examples, what should be said about the decision-making process in the most powerful of the capitalist democracies, the United States? There, the apparatuses of the two twin parties consciously aim to reduce the number of electors in order to control them better, with the result that only a third of all citizens

vote, and then only after appalling election campaigns where the real problems are not even touched on; where only the very wealthy can be elected; where the President has considerable powers and is in turn moulded — if not deformed — by the financial, political and military forces which act backstage and are not answerable to anyone.

What should be said about Britain? A country where the archaic electoral system makes it possible on the one hand to eliminate from the political scene not only the small parties but even those with 20-25% of the vote, but on the other makes it possible for a party with a relative minority (in the current case the Conservative Party) to have been in government with a large majority for well over ten years and, among other things, to have waged a war in the southern hemisphere without any form of popular consultation, and to have waged another, internal, war against the trade unions, particularly the mineworkers union.

And what should be said about France? Here where a president elected every seven years concentrates in his hands many powers, where parliament plays an absolutely secondary role and can be bypassed by the government thanks to an article in the constitution which makes it possible to adopt a law even if the majority of the elected representatives are opposed to it, and where the electoral system can reduce to almost nothing or even exclude political formations which represent 10% of the electorate.

Nor should it be forgotten that these mechanisms have been used without too much scruple by leaders of socialist parties who do not miss out on any occasion to present themselves as the apostles of democracy.

The extreme case is that of Mitterrand who, having denounced the 1958 institutions and the paternalist bonapartism of De Gaulle for twenty years, used to the full the mechanisms of the Fifth Republic from the time he arrived in power, to the point of offending the memory of his predecessor.

Things are that much more serious as these parties are dominated by charismatic leaders such as Mitterrand himself or Gonzalez, who impose a paternalist internal functioning, based on clientelism, without leaving any space to critical minorities. The Labour leader Kinnock is still just a beginner compared to his colleagues from other countries. But, during his last party congress, he announced openly the shape of things to come. Having been put in a minority by the delegates on a number of questions — including reduction of military spending which he opposed — he had the cheek to state that he would not take this vote into account!

Is it necessary to add that things are still worse in the Conservative parties, such as for example the French Gaullist party, where the personalities decide everything and where democratic norms do not even exist on paper?

In conclusion, over and above all the specific and conjunctural analyses, the question should be asked: is it possible that state apparatuses that aim to ensure the functioning of an economy based on profit and the

hegemony of a historically determined social class can represent the framework in which qualitatively different goals can be achieved? In which the profit logic and capitalist exploitation can be broken, and a truly democratic social organization and functioning, that is to say in which the active participation of everybody in the life of the society in all its aspects can be guaranteed.

A positive answer could only be given by those who accept a mystifying ideology or who defend an ahistoric conception of democracy, seen as an abstract form separated from its concrete historical content. In return, those who start from real historical experience and do not want to ignore that which "our" society demonstrates to us every day can only give a negative answer. The necessity for a revolutionary break with the state structures — such as they exist, even in the most "modern" forms — summarizes the need for a revolutionary break in its *totality*.



Names of people and organizations

Amendola, Giorgio (1900-1980). Son of the liberal leader Giovanni Amendola, he joined the PCd'I towards the end of the 1920s and later became one of its main leaders. While continuing to identify with his past as an orthodox Stalinist, towards the end of his life he stated that the Livorno split had been a serious mistake for the Italian workers' movement.

Bandiera Rossa (Red Flag). Dissident communist movement active in Rome between 1943 and 1947. Today this is the name of the journal of the current in *Democrazia Proletaria* linked to the Fourth International.

Basso, Lelio. Historic leader of the left-wing current in Italian socialism, who later became a "fellow-traveller" of the PCI. An intellectual and historian, he contributed greatly to the knowledge and dissemination of the works of Rosa Luxemburg. He died in 1978.

Berlinguer, Enrico (1922-1984). General secretary of the PCI from 1973 to his death in 1984, he developed the strategy of the "historic compromise" between 1973 and 1979 and then that of the democratic alternative. Under his leadership, the PCI went a long way on the road to social-democratization.

Blum, Léon (1872-1950). Historic leader of social-democracy in France. Opposed to the Tours split which gave birth to the PCF in 1920, he was the leader of the Popular Front government in 1936-1937.

Bobbio, Norberto (1909-). Undoubtedly the principal contemporary Italian philosopher. In 1942, he was among the founders of the party of Action and in the post-war period he became the theoretician of the liberal-socialism. An intellectual of the independent left, he criticized Marxism in the name of a rehabilitation of the "state based on law". Author of *Quale socialismo?* (Turin, 1976) and *Il futuro della democrazia* (Turin, 1983).

Bordiga, Amadeo (1889-1970). Founder of the journal *Il Soviet* in 1918 and first secretary of the Communist Party of Italy (PCd'I) at its foundation in 1921. He opposed the tactic of the united front initiated by the Communist International and, from 1923, was pushed out of the party leadership (where his positions continued however to command a majority up to 1925-1926). An anti-Stalinist, he was expelled from the PCd'I in 1930. Exiled on the island of Ponza under the fascist regime, he abandoned all political activity. At the Liberation, he reformed his political current, marked by very sectarian, dogmatic and leftist positions (he theorized for example the "invariability" of Marxism), which were expressed in the review *Il programma comunista*.

Bukharin, Nicolai (1888-1938). Bolshevik leader and theoretician. He became well-known thanks to his many Marxist writings (*The Political Economy of the Leisureed Classes*, 1907, *The International Economy and Imperialism*, 1915, *Historical Materialism*, 1921, etc.). Member of the Bolshevik Central Committee in 1917, the follow-

ing year he opposed the Brest-Litovsk treaty. Defender of the New Economic Policy (NEP) and leader of the Communist International during the 1920s, he first inspired the Right Opposition and then capitulated to Stalin in 1929. Executed the Moscow Trials.

Castellina, Luciana. Leader of the *Il Manifesto* current and member of the European parliament for the Party of Proletarian Unity for Communism (PDUP) in the 1970s, she is currently one of the representatives of the left wing in the PDS.

Cossutta, Armando. Leader of the left wing in the PCI (considered in a rather simplistic fashion as the most pro-Soviet of the Italian Communists), he is today one of the leaders of the Movement for Communist Refoundation.

De Gasperi, Alcide (1881-1954). Historic leader of Christian Democracy, he was head of the government between 1946 and 1953.

Democrazia Proletaria. Organization of the Italian far left. Formed in 1976 as an electoral coalition, it constituted itself as an organization the following year.

Fassino, Pietro. Leader of the Occhetto current in the PCI and currently one of the spokespersons for the PDS.

Giolitti, Giovanni (842-1928). Liberal leader, head of the government before and after the First World War, first of all between 1911 and 1914 and then in 1920-21.

Gomulka, Wladyslaw. Polish communist, he was arrested in 1949 on accusations of nationalism. In 1956, under the pressure of the mass movement, he was elected secretary of the PUPW (Polish Communist Party) and led the temporary liberalization of the regime.

Gottwald, Klement (1896-1953). Communist, president of the Republic of Czechoslovakia from 1948.

Gramsci, Antonio (1891-1937). Born in Sardinia, he became a socialist in Turin just before the First World War. In 1919, he edited the daily newspaper *L'Ordine Nuovo*, in which he analysed the experience of the factory occupations and developed his theory of workers' councils. In 1921, he participated in the foundation of the PCd'I whose representative to the Comintern he became in Moscow and Vienna, between 1922 and 1924. In 1926, he wrote the "Lyons Theses" which marked a turn in the party's orientation by distancing it from its original Bordigist orientation. The same year he was arrested and sentenced by the fascist authorities. During the ten years of his imprisonment he wrote the *Prison Notebooks*, which are one of the most important contributions to the enriching of Marxist thought.

Grieco, Ruggero. Leader of the PCI during the 1930s and after the war.

Gronchi, Giovanni (1887-1978). President of the Republic from 1955 to 1962.

Kun, Bela (1886-1936). Communist, main leader of the Hungarian Republic of Workers' Councils in 1919, he took refuge in the USSR after the repression which crushed the revolutionary movement. He was executed during the period of the Moscow Trials.

Jdanov, Andrej (1896-1948). Leader of the USSR and the of the CPSU. He incarnated Stalinism in the fields of culture, literature and the arts. It is to him that we owe the notorious theory of "socialist realism".

Ingrao, Pietro (1917-). Intellectual and leader of the PCI, he is considered as one of the historic representatives of its left wing. Despite his opposition to the party changing its name he remains a member of the PDS.

Leonetti, Alfonso known as "Feroci" (1895-1984). Collaborator of Gramsci in Turin at the time of *L'Ordine Nuovo*, he was among the founders of the PCd'I in 1921. He became a member of the CC and the PB after the Lyons Congress. Editor in chief of the underground *l'Unità*, in 1929 he opposed the "turn" and was expelled from the party. Joined the International Left Opposition with Tresso and Ravazzoli. Leader of the Fourth International to the end of the 1930s. Participated in the Resistance and rejoined the PCI after the war.

Longo, Luigi known as "Gallo" (1900-1980). Joined the PCd'I at the beginning of the 1920s and led its youth organization. Faithful executor of the Moscow line during the "turn" in 1929 and during the Spanish Civil War, Collaborator of Togliatti, he became secretary of the PCI between 1968 and 1973.

Lotta Continua. One of the main organizations of the Italian far left between 1969 and 1976, year of its dissolution.

Magri, Lucio. Founder of the *Il Manifesto* current within the PCI at the end of the 1960s, he was later a leader of the PDUP, a reformist left party which rejoined the PCI at the beginning of the 1980s. He is currently one of the main representatives of the left in the PDS.

Il Manifesto. Left current in the PCI which published a review of the same name in 1968 and, from 1972, a daily newspaper, (which still exists even though it no longer represents an organized current).

Matteotti, Giacomo (1885-1924). Socialist member of parliament, assassinated by fascists after his speech on the "tyranny of violence" in parliament.

Morandi, Rodolfo. Leader of the PSI, with Pietro Nenni, after the war. Like a large section of Italian socialism he was influenced by Stalinism.

MUP. Movement for Proletarian Unity.

Napolitano, Giorgio. Leader of the right wing of the PCI, of a more openly social-democratic orientation. He is today the spokesperson of the "for improvement" ("migliorista") current and the "minister for foreign affairs" in the shadow cabinet of the PDS.

Natta, Alessandro (1917-). Leader of the PCI, he became its general secretary after the death of Berlinguer in 1984. He was replaced by Occhetto in 1988.

Nenni, Pietro (1891-1983). Leader of the PSI from the 1920s, he participated in rebuilding it in the post-war period and was secretary from 1944 to 1962, a period during which he was influenced by Stalinism (he even won the "Stalin

prize" in 1950 and went to Moscow three years later for the funeral of the "Little Father of Peoples"). From the start of the early-1960s, he turned his party to a perspective of coalition government with DC, which opened the centre-left phase (centro-sinistra).

Nitti, Francesco. A member of parliament from 1904, he participated in the Giolitti and Orlando before and after the First World War. Head of the government in 1919-1920, he represented the liberal-democratic wing open to collaboration with the socialists.

Occhetto, Achille. Former leader of the Federation of the Young Communists (FGCI) in the 1960s and later close collaborator of Berlinguer, he was elected general secretary of the PCI in 1988. He is at the origin of the change in name of the party and the project of creating the PDS.

PCI. Italian Communist Party.

PSDI. Italian Social-Democratic Party.

PSI. Italian Socialist Party.

PSIUP. Socialist Party of Proletarian Unity.

Ravazzoli, Paolo (1894-1940). Leader of the clandestine leadership of the PCd'I and secretary of the CGIL at the end of the 1920s, he participated in 1930 in the foundation of the "New Italian Opposition" and was expelled from the party. In 1931, he defended the positions of the International Left opposition during a meeting of the ISR in Moscow. He left the Trotskyist movement during the period of the popular fronts and became close to the PSI.

Russo, Enrico (1895-1973). Joined the 1924 with the Serrati current; active in the emigrant community and the POUM militia during the Spanish Civil War. Leader of the CGL and the Left Federation of the PCI in Naples in 1943.

Salvemini, Gaetano. One of the main intellectuals in Italy in the inter-war period. A historian of a liberal-socialist orientation, he was one of the first to theorize the "southern question".

Secchia, Pietro. Leader of the "left wing" of the PCI at the Liberation, he tried to oppose Togliatti by advocating a hardening of the line of the party (which he never challenged as a whole). He was gradually marginalized within the apparatus.

Sereni, Emilio. Intellectual and economist. He played a leading role in the party during the 1930s and after the war.

Spriano, Paolo. Undoubtedly the main historian of the PCI, along with Ernesto Ragionieri. He is author of a five-volume history of the PCI (*Storia del PCI*, Einaudi, Turin, 1975; *L'Unità*, Rome, 1990), of a work on Stalinism and the workers' movement in Europe (*I comunisti europei e Stalin*, Einaudi, Turin, 1983) as well as other volumes on Gramsci and Matteotti and a book of memoirs (*Le passioni di un decennio*, Garzanti, Milan, 1985).

Stella Rossa (Red Star). Dissident communist movement active in Turin at the end of the Second World War.

Terracini, Umberto. Collaborator of Gramsci in *L'Ordine nuovo* and founder of the PCd'I. Imprisoned from 1926 to the end of the war, he was temporarily expelled from the party after having opposed the Soviet-German Pact in 1939. He chaired the Constituent Assembly in 1946.

Togliatti, Palmiro known as "Ercoli" (1893-1964). Founder

of the PCd'I and later leader of the Communist International, he first of all allied himself with Bukharin before becoming one of the most faithful executors of the line of Stalin. Main figure responsible for the Comintern during the Spanish Civil War, he returned to Italy in 1944 and imposed the "Salerno turn", which orientated the party towards an alliance with bourgeois and conservative anti-fascist forces (including the monarchy). In 1948, he survived an attack on his life which provoked a mass uprising and led the country to the edge of civil war. He led the PCI until his death.

Tresso, Pietro known as "Blasco" (1893-1944). Left-wing activist in the PSI before the war, he was one of the founders of the PCd'I in 1921. First of all Bordigist, he supported the positions of Gramsci in 1922, when he participated in the Fourth Congress of the Comintern. Elected to the Central Committee of the party in 1926, during the Lyons Congress. Leader of the underground centre and trade-union work of the PCd'I. In 1929-1930, he opposed the "turn" which after the crushing defeat imposed on the workers' movement by fascism, saw a new revolutionary wave as imminent in Italy. He created the "New Italian

Opposition" with Leonetti and Ravazzoli and joined the Trotskyist movement in exile in France. In 1938, he participated in the founding congress of the Fourth International. Imprisoned during the war, he was killed by the maquis of the PCF at his release in 1944.

Turati, Filippo (1857-1932). Founder and charismatic leader of the PSI, of which he led the reformist wing. Director of the review *Critica Sociale*. Opposed to the war, he denounced Bolshevism and the Russian Revolution. Opposed to the creation of the PCd'I in 1921, he remained the most coherent representative of Italian social-democracy.

Villone, Libero (1913-1973). Leader of the left federation of the PCI in Naples, in 1943, he later joined the Trotskyist movement.

Zinoviev, Gregory (1883-1936). One of the main leaders of the Bolshevik Party; president of the Comintern in 1924; opposed to Stalin, he was expelled from the party in 1927, at the same time as Trotsky. Readmitted in 1931, he was shot during the first Moscow Trial.

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From the PCI to the PDS *The long march of the Italian Communist Party*

Livio Maitan

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The Italian Communist Party has now completed its process of social-democratization. During its last congress, in Rimini in February 1991, it abandoned its historic name and took that of the Democratic Party of the Left (PDS). For many years proud of its "communist identity" and even of its "diversity" in the context of the national political system and the European left, the PCI was for several decades not only the main force of the Italian workers' movement but also the biggest Communist Party in the capitalist West. At the end of such an itinerary a balance sheet is necessary. In this study, Livio Maitan looks at the fundamental points in the history of the PCI and underlines the problems and contradictions which prepared the contions for the present turn.

Livio Maitan was born in 1923 in Venice. He has been active in the Italian workers' movement since the beginning of the Second World War. A national organizer of the Socialist Youth at the Liberation, he joined the Fourth International in 1947 and is today one of its central leaders. He has taught sociology at the University of Rome and translated and prefaced almost all the Italian editions of Trotsky's writings. His previously published works include *PCI 1945-69: stalinismo e opportunismo*, Rome, 1969; *Partito, esercito e masse nella crisi cinese*, Rome, 1969; *Dinamica delle classi sociali in Italia*, Rome, 1976; *Destino di Trotskij*, Milan, 1981; *Il marxismo rivoluzionario di Antonio Gramsci*, Milan, 1987.

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