The Italian Communist Party 1921--1964: A profile.

Aldo U. Marchini  
*University of Windsor*

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THE ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY 1921 - 1964:

A PROFILE

by

ALDO U. LARCHINI

Submitted
In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts
in the
Department of Political Science
University of Windsor
1966
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A B S T R A C T

The following study has as its purpose the desire to identify what qualities have become characteristic of the present day Italian Communist Party and to relate historically their ideological and political genesis during the years from 1911 to 1964. The former date represents the year when the two most important leaders of the party began their intellectual preparation for future political careers; the latter, the year the celebrated Yalta Memorandum was written by Palmiro Togliatti. It is hoped that this will contribute to an appreciation of the reasons why il Partito comunista italiano has succeeded in exercising a profound influence on all aspects of contemporary Italian national life and how it has attracted and retained the immense following it possesses among the Italian masses.

The desire also is to trace the origins of the party's considerable reputation for intellectual competency to the ideological heritage left to it by Antonio Gramsci, one of the two great personalities of the party and the most eminent Marxist thinker produced in Italy during this century. Gramsci's thought is little known outside Italy. Even there, the greater part of his writings have been published posthumously only since the collapse of the Fascist regime which incarcerated him in order -- to use the public prosecutor's words -- "to prevent this mind from operating for twenty years." It is impossible
to overlook Gramsci's ideas when discussing Italian Communism because they pervade the thinking of all his successors.

Gramsci's Marxism is characterized not by a monophagous concentration on economics but rather by a profound attentiveness to the importance of culture and philosophy as both catalysts and media of social change. This has led the Italian Communist Party to place particular emphasis on the role of the intellectual in revolution. It was Gramsci's view that, in any society the intelligentsia provides the rational shield for the existing socio-political-economic order. Remove the protective veneer provided by the "mandarinate" and society will be exposed to the corrosive effects of whatever new ideals the disaffected intelligentsia champion against the old order.

The importance it attached to the cultural aspect of political and social transformation caused the Italian Communist Party to adopt with reluctance any dogmatic ideological postures in charting its political course and it did so only when political conditions made it imperative. Conversely, the party remained responsive to the exigencies of changing conditions in society which exacted political maleability and ideological heterodoxy in adapting to them. The party was to experience many changes of fortunes from the time of its founding in 1921, but the quality briefly mentioned above remained a constant feature of its political personality and in the end this was to prove to be its most valuable trait.
While subject of this paper has meant that the time span covered is necessarily quite long, what follows is not intended to be an exhaustive study of Italian Communism. A profile ought to be detailed enough to suggest the whole character of the subject it depicts but it cannot be, by its nature, a full length portrait.
I wish to express to the members of my thesis committee, Doctors V. C. Chrypinski, E. D. Briggs and C. E. Fantazzi, my sincere appreciation for the attentive care with which they read this paper during the various stages of its composition and for the numerous suggestions for its improvement which were offered by their readings. I hope to have incorporated in this final draft at least some of their recommendations although I accept full responsibilities for the lacunae which remain.

I am also very deeply indebted to Mrs. Elena Saffran who spent many wearying hours typing and re-typing all these pages. To her I should like to express most genuinely felt thanks.
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INTRODUCTION

The threads of history which were spun together to form the Italian Communist Party can be seen today in the form of the bright red fibres woven into the political, economic, social and cultural fabric of contemporary Italy. This interweaving is not a recent thing; it is the result of a painstaking process which took years to achieve. It began not just at the formation of the Italian Republic after WW II; but must be traced back to the time of the party's own origins in 1921 and, earlier still when today's reality was only a wild aspiration in the minds of a few men.

The circumstances under which the "Italian Section of The Communist International" was organized ought not to be disregarded for the truism that "the Child is Father to the Man" can well be applied to politics. Thus it is important to look at the environment in which the Italian Communist Party was gestated to see what nurtured those characteristics which are discernible today in a party which is seeking to revitalize itself and reinsert itself into il sistema of Italian politics.

The physical and ideological environment in which the growth of the party was fostered prior to its formal creation at Livorno in 1921, was principally, but, by no means exclusively, the city of Turin. The importance of this particular environment is stressed because it influenced very deeply the
who were to give il Partito comunista italiano* its most enduring philosophical and political leadership. Above all, it worked upon the thought of Antonio Gramsci, the most subtle and profound theoretician of Italian Marxism, and his colleagues Palmiro Togliatti, Umberto Terracini and Angelo Tasca, who were to collaborate with Gramsci in editing the weekly publication L'Ordine Nuovo.

Of this group, Togliatti was to become the best known Communist personality inside and outside of Italy because, from the time of Gramsci's eventually fatal incarceration in 1926, until his own death in 1964, it was he who led the PCI with grew, after World War II, to become the largest Communist Party in the West. During the Thirties, under the pseudonym Ercole Ercoli, Togliatti also held responsible positions in the Comintern and played an important role, as a leader of the Communists, in the Spanish Civil War. Today, Terracini heads the Communist group in the Italian Senate and, despite his fifteen years in Fascist prisons is still considered to have one of Italy's more brilliant legal minds. Of the four original Ordinovisti only one, Tasca, was eventually to become estranged both from his colleagues and their party the PCI.

* For the sake of convenience the initials PCI will be used henceforth.
CHAPTER I

THE FORMATION OF THE

ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY
The Setting

As capital of the region of Piedmont and as the seat of the House of Savoy, which became the national dynasty of Italy during the Risorgimento, Turin has held a prominent place in modern Italian political history. From the time of the Risorgimento, with perhaps more enduring effects, Turin has been a major protagonist in the economic development of the country and, as its political and economic importance increased, the city became a centre of Italian cultural life as well. Its university attracted some of the finest scholars in Italy to its faculties and it became one of the most important in the country.

Piedmont, the northwesternmost region of the peninsula, has a character quite unlike Mediterranean and insular Italy. If the "boot" were severed from Europe, Piedmont would be one of three Regions left entirely on the continent. It is differentiated not simply by geography or greater industrial advancement. The Piedmontese, who speak a dialect with strong and unmistakable French qualities, revealing their long detachment from the mainstream of Italian history, are a rather sober, earnest, unartistic people with little of the supposed Southern Italian penchant for speculative dolce far niente, which is not suited to their temperament. The role of the Piedmontese in modern Italian history has paralleled none so much
as that of the Prussians in Germany.¹

Like the neighbouring Lombards, they are an industrious people who, perhaps because of a less enervating climate, have applied themselves to affairs of business with more success than their southern compatriots. Under ambitious leadership in the later nineteenth century, (Cavour was Piedmontese), the region began to become industrialized and this process naturally took place in the cities, principally Turin. There, metallurgical industries, later to become associated with the making of automobiles, flourished particularly, and by the early twentieth century great industrial organizations such as Fiat² became an enormously powerful force in the economic life of the city whose population came to depend so much on Fiat for its livelihood.

While the Piedmontese countryside remained poor, agrarian, and really quite backward, with little in the way of non-agricultural industry, the population of the Region as a whole did not grow very greatly. However, between 1901 and 1911, the population of industrial Turin was swelled by over 27½ through internal migration of provincial Piedmontese seeking more lucrative employment in the capital. These new Turinese became an urban industrial proletariat of almost classical


2. The name is formed by the initials of the company’s full title, Fabbrica italiana automobili Torino.
Marxist description; wage-earning, unorganized and victims of the fluctuations of a developing capitalist economy. Industries were large, still largely controlled by individual capitalists (the Agnelli family in the case of Fiat), and rigorous ten or eleven hour, six-day work weeks were the rule for the workers who depended entirely on these factories for their livelihood.

These new workers were not all simply peasants transferred into the factories. Metallurgical industries required skilled tradesmen. While in 1912 there were some 93,000 factory workers in Turin, some 30,000 were skilled.\(^3\) Class differences in the city were accentuated by the fact that those citizens who could have formed a substantial "white collar" middle-class as government bureaucrats had long left Turin to follow the royal government to the new capital of united Italy, Florence, and later, Rome. As industry expanded with greater rapidity, a situation was created in which "Proletarian" faced "Capitalist" with little middle ground.

It was in such a situation that Socialism was to find numerous adherents among workers who saw in it justification for their claim to a greater share of the wealth they

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were producing. Since the turn of the century, Piedmont had been the second most important source of Socialist party strength (after Emilia-Romagna).

As their sense of solidarity and of common interest developed the metallurgists started their first unions and by 1911 began seriously to organize agitation for better working conditions and higher wages. During the grim winter of 1911 a strike was staged and for three months the determined Turinese workers held out for their demands. But their efforts were to meet complete, frustrating defeat.

In this same year Antonio Gramsci arrived in Turin to begin studies at the university. His own background could hardly have been more different from the Turinese environment which he was just entering. As Piedmont was continental, European, industrial, progressive and dynamic, Gramsci's native Sardinia was insular, Mediterranean, agrarian, backward and static and, for all that, perhaps more "Italian." He was

4. Palmiro Togliatti, *Il partito comunista italiano*, (Rome, 1961) p. 20. Togliatti admits that the early spread of Socialism among the Turinese proletariat resembled a religious phenomenon as much as anything:

Among the masses, Socialist ideology took on an elementary, messianic character, but it was precisely this quality which allowed it to reach hundreds of thousands of workers who were being awakened for the first time to a political consciousness and thus it profoundly convinced them that, even under the most wretched conditions, they would win respect by their daily struggles and sacrifices to reaffirm their solidarity and strengthen their economic and political organizations.

5. Cammett, *op. cit.*, p. 25 (Footnote)
born into a family of economically modest station. His father was employed as a clerk for the local office of the provincial government but this itself signified having an above average education for the time and place and all the Gramsci children grew up in a home where books circulated and where reading was encouraged. Antonio revealed himself to be a highly intelligent child but as he grew older a serious physical handicap was to reveal itself. Gramsci grew to be hunchbacked. His physical deformity bore as much weight as his evident intelligence when the decision was made to have him schooled despite the hardship involved for the family.

Even so, the future Marxist personally became acquainted, at a very young age, with the sternness of economic necessity which introduced him to labour he could hardly perform physically. For two years, starting at the age of eleven, to contribute to the family income, Gramsci was working ten-hour days including Sunday mornings concerning which he was later to write: "I used to move about registry books which weighed more than I did and many nights I used to cry in hiding because my whole body ached." 6

This early experience with hard economic reality left an indelible impression on an impressionable mind of the pitilessness of economic deprivation and its indifference to

individual needs or the human capacity to satisfy them. Luckily, Gramsci’s excellence in school permitted him comparative mobility amidst the otherwise torpid and primitive pattern of Sardinian life. His introduction to the Italian intellectual world was to reveal to him the immense distance which separated the peasant masses from the intelligentsia and seeing that culture and learning was the one nexus between the two, Gramsci became acutely sensitive to the role and importance of the educated and cultivated in society. Another glaring contrast within Italian society was observed by Gramsci when he was exposed in Piedmont, to the existence of another Italy; an advanced industrial North, to which an agricultural and backward south was a stark contradiction. Despite half a century of unity, the two Regions did not seem to be part of the same country.

Gramsci was able to attend university upon winning one of several state scholarships for needy students in a rigorous competitive examination. Another successful candidate in the same competition was a student of similar background, Palmiro Togliatti. The two young intellectuals met, became close friends and, as history would have it, the two outstanding figures in the Italian workers' movement. For the first two years at the university, both Gramsci and Togliatti immersed themselves in their studies of history, economics, languages, philosophy, philology and literature following the classical university curriculum.
Two other students at the university at the same time, Umberto Terracini and Angelo Tasca also formed a friendship with Gramsci and Togliatti and all four became part of the nucleus which was to have great significance for the future PCI. During these years before 1920, Turin University had enrolled a number of future Communist leaders including Luigi Longo and Mauro Scoccimarro as well as outstanding Liberals such as Piero Gobetti who became Gramsci's counterpart as ideological ancestor of the radical Giustizia e Libertà anti-Fascist resistance movement and its heir the Partito d'Azione. Gramsci and Gobetti also became close personal friends despite their ideological differences. All these early colleague-friends sincerely acknowledged Gramsci's intellectual pre-eminence.

If the proletariat of Turin was being drawn to Socialism for practical economic reasons, the young intellectuals of the city, such as Gramsci and Togliatti, Terracini and Tasca associated with the university, were coming to an intellectual encounter with Marxism. It was not that the faculty of Turin University was bursting with Marxists. There were some who declared themselves to be of such orientation but Italy's outstanding Marxists were to be found at Rome or Naples. At Turin, many of the most distinguished professors, such as the economist, Luigi Einaudi who was later to become the first constitutional president of the Italian Republic, were in fact classical Liberals.
Nevertheless, students were exposed to vivid personalities such as that of the professor of German literature, Arturo Farinelli from whom, Togliatti later was to recall, they learned:

a new morality...whose supreme laws were utter sincerity with ourselves, refusal of conventions and abnegation, for the cause for which we had consecrated our existence.'

The Turinese students arrived at Marxism by following an exhaustive intellectual path, by way of Hegel and especially by way of Italy's most distinguished modern philosopher-historian and virtual cultural dictator, Benedetto Croce. Croce and his outstanding teacher, Antonio Labriola, both Neapolitans, were Marxists although Croce's early Marxism was but a passing phase in his intellectual development (to Gramsci's disapproval.) As this exhilarating intellectual confrontation was occurring, Gramsci and his friends were coming into personal contact with the concrete problems of the working class:

In 1912, in 1913" wrote Togliatti, "at certain hours of the morning, when we left the classroom and went out from the corridors into the porticos heading toward the Po, we met crowds of men different from us, who were taking the same road. A whole crowd headed toward the river and toward the parks on its banks where in those days the workers held their meetings during strikes or holidays. And there we went, accompanying these men; we heard their speeches, we spoke with them, we became interested in their struggle.'

7. Togliatti, quoted by Cammet, op. cit., p. 15

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Through the Socialist Youth Federation, to which they were introduced by Tasca who was already active in its ranks, they established their first formal links with the Socialist party. Thus, young workers and students came together and the experience was to affect both. The presence of the latter raised the intellectual level of the Section and their meeting with the former introduced the young intellectuals to the realities of proletarian Turin. Under the auspices of the Federation, the students organized and administered numerous mutual benefit societies and taught night courses to the keen workers whose intelligence, character and political consciousness won their admiration.

This combination of serious theoretical study and practical party activity gave the energetic Marxists scholars an enthusiasm for their political commitment. During the day they debated theory at the university and, at night, would continue their activities at the Federation:

We often left the party meetings in a group surrounding whoever happened to be our leader, Gramsci wrote. We continued our discussions through the streets of the by now silent city while the few late goers stopped to watch us, amazed at our ferocious propositions, our explosive laughter, our sorties into the realm of dreams and the impossible...For us the future would be a perfect alloy between the old...and over cautious socialism...and the new socialism full of moral and revolutionary energy in which there was not a party and a Proletariat but a single mass rapidly moving toward a goal which at certain moments we believed so near and imminent.  

9. Cammett, op. cit., p. 32, quote of Antonio Gramsci
Gramsci's political activities were to absorb his attention increasingly. He left university without taking his degree for despite his promising career as a philological scholar he grew dissatisfied with the university's "isolation" which prevented him from taking a more active part in the European drama which daily was coming closer to a climax.

The year was 1915. Europe was at war and European Socialism had collapsed in humiliation as national parties abandoned internationalism to support national war efforts. In Britain and France Socialists even entered the government. In Italy only did Socialists, reflecting general public feeling, oppose the war consistently: when Italy did enter on the side of the Allies the Socialists unofficially split and compromised on a "neutral" formula of "neither support nor sabotage." It was a compromise which merely papered over the differences between the "reformist" Right and "revolutionary" Left-wings of the party which had been living in an uneasy menage since the turn of the century and which were becoming increasingly alienated from each other. The sentiments of the politically conscious Turin workers, however, were clearly and most decidedly anti-war. Four days before Italy entered the war the workers of that city staged a general strike in resentment and protest against impending Italian intervention.

It was in this charged atmosphere that Gramsci committed himself completely to journalism and party work.
Because of his poor physical condition he was exempted from military service, but many Turin Socialists were conscripted and Gramsci consequently rose in the party to take increasingly responsible positions. During this period his incipient elaborations of theory began to acquire greater articulation.

Up to now the impression given has been that Gramsci and the "Piedmontese" Communists were the principal movers in the founding of the PCI. This is misleading. It is certainly true that they were to emerge triumphant and form the leadership and that Gramsci's ideas were to hold sway, but this was not settled until 1926. Until then, the dominant figure of the future party was the young Neopolitan engineer, Amadeo Bordiga.

Bordiga was a revolutionary thinker of considerable stature but neither he nor his faction, though more politically energetic, were as subtle or as theoretically exhaustive as the Turin colleagues. While he remained within the Socialist party, Bordiga was leader of the radical Left-wing known as the Abstentionists. This group identified itself with one of the three rival groups in the Second International which had formed on the eve of World
Bordiga's views at this time were very close to Lenin's. Indeed, at about the same time Lenin was formulating his ideas on the imperialist nature of the war in Zurich, Bordiga was arriving independently at the similar conclusions in a series of articles written during the winter of 1914-15 and published in Avanti, the Socialist daily. (At this time Gramsci became editor of its Turin edition.)

Once Italy's entry into the war was an established fact the Reformist Socialist Right-wing, whose strength lay in the parliamentary group led by Filippo Turati, was not long in approaching "defensist" postures and giving its blessing to the Italian war effort. While the wavering Left, still in

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10. The three factions in the International were split on doctrinal issues concerning the position Socialists should assume in relation to their national participation in the War.

(a) The Defensists (mainly French and German) maintained the right of a state to defend itself from external attack.

(b) The Left wing (led by Lenin and Rosa Luxembourg) stressed the revolutionary possibilities caused by the critical situation and urged action by the Socialists to promote overthrow of their governments.

(c) The Pacifists rejected the proposition that "defensive wars" were legitimate and rejected the idea that revolution was more necessary than peace.

(For a fuller discussion of how this division was related to the PSI see Donald K. Urquidi, *The Origins of the Italian Communist Party 1918-1921*, [Columbia University, Faculty of Political Science, 1962], an unpublished doctoral dissertation. See Introduction particularly.)

See also Carl Landauer, *European Socialism*, (Berkeley, 1959), Vol. 1, Chapter 17.
formal control of the party machine, stuck to the original neutralist formula, Bordiga, speaking for the radical Abstentionists, was preparing the ground for the inevitable split.

The Abstentionists essentially took the following positions: As long as Capitalism was solidly entrenched, the most fruitful Socialist tactics could only consist of propagandizing, recruitment, criticism and vigorous verbal opposition to the dominant class in control. But such tactics had become obsolete. In a period of revolutionary crisis in which the breaking point between Bourgeoisie and Proletariat had been reached, the proletarian party must push for the violent overthrow of bourgeois domination.

The issue was one of updating old policies to fit new conditions. The arguments which were to rage within the Socialist party concerned just this: was today really different from yesterday? Did conditions demand new attitudes, new policies? The Abstentionists answered an emphatic yes. The war had undeniably thrown the world into crisis. Europe and Italy had surely entered into a phase of imminent revolution, and, if the time for revolution was ripe, the proletarians must indeed unite and prepare for it. There was no longer time for class collaboration. It was, above all, wrong to join a bourgeois parliament or a bourgeois cabinet. These only corrupted Socialist deputies. The behaviour of European Socialists in the face of World War I had proved this. And Socialists in the government proved to be window dressing to
keep the working-class quiet while important decisions were 
still being made by conservatives.

Parliaments only smothered revolutionary intransi-
gence in the illusion that Socialist participation in govern-
ment meant the working-class was sharing in power while real 
power was still exercised by the police, the army and the 
courts. The Abstentionists insisted that those Right-wing 
elements in the Socialist party who had become collaborators 
be expelled and wanted the party transformed into a militant, 
disciplined revolutionary party.\textsuperscript{11}

By then external events were weighing heavily on 
Italian events. The civilian populations of Europe were 
smouldering in bitterness and discontent over the human suffer-
ing the war was causing and resented it all the more since 
they felt it was a useless war for them. This was no less 
true in Turin than elsewhere. It was 1917 and the March 
Revolution had already taken place in Czarist Russia.

There was no bread in Turin and other staples were 
extremely scarce but the factory workers were subjected to 
rigid work discipline under the surveillance of a government 
supervisor. The Kienthal and Zimmerwald manifestos calling 
for peace, of which Lenin was a leading signer, were well cir-
culated among proletarians in the city who sympathized with

\textsuperscript{11}. Urquidi, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 28-37
their resolutions. Finally, at the end of August, 1917 the eruption occurred. For five days the Turinese workers raised the barricades in a spontaneous, unled insurrection which was to become one of the most bloody events in the history of Italian labour. Despite the armed support of some sympathetic Alpine troops, the uprising ended in defeat.

Suppression was not easy. Some fifty were killed, two thousand were wounded and thousands of workers were arrested and sent to the front, ironically to Caporetto. Socialist leaders of all levels were subsequently imprisoned and in the vacuum the relatively unknown Gramsci became provisional secretary of the Turin Section of the party. The Left-wing of the party seemed vindicated and it accused the previous Turin leaders, who were largely Reformists, of not having had the courage to channel the resentments of the workers into a more effective protest with less tragic results.

After Caporetto, the parliamentary Right-wing became openly Defensist while the Left, in disgust, called for a national conference to coordinate its own action in the face of this clear rupture over strategy. On November 18, 1917 some forty delegates gathered in Florence and for the first time Antonio Gramsci and Amadeo Bordiga were to meet. Gramsci and

12. It has been stated that the collapse of the front at Caporetto which took place in October 1917 was due partly to the defeatism and low morale of the soldiers sent to this front. (Footnote in Cammett, p. 53)
Bordiga spoke for the extreme Left while Giacinto Manotti, Serrati and Costantino Lazzari dominated the more numerous Massimalistit, trying to steer a middle course. The former urged expulsion of the Right and abandonment of the official but now meaningless neutralist position of the party with regard to the war effort in order to organize for the revolution. The final declaration of the meeting, however, was less radical and, while condemning the Right's support of the war, limited itself to reaffirming the principles of the Zimmerwald and Kienthal meetings.

Once the de facto split existed, every new issue only served to sharpen divisions. The Bolshevik revolution became the issue of greatest consequence to face the now disunited PSI. While the revolution evoked widespread sympathy in the whole party, especially among the Maximalists and Abstentionists, it was the latter which was most heartened

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13. This term refers to that section of the party which pushed for implementation of the maximum programme of the party as opposed to the Right wing "gradualists."

14. In December Lazzari, who was a principal Maximalist spokesman of the PSI, circulated a note stating: "All should follow with confidence the developments in Russia where, thanks to our comrades, peace and socialism are being achieved."

Quoted by Aldo Garosci "The Italian Communist Party" in Communism in Western Europe, (Ithaca (NY), 1951), Mario Einaudi (Ed.) p. 156
by the Bolshevik success and fully identified itself with the Bolsheviks.

Reaction to the setting

Gramsci hailed the October revolution because it proved that Marxist laws were not rigid. The revolution could be carried out where there was a revolutionary will and it was thus not necessary for Socialists to sit on their hands until immutable economic laws developed conditions for Socialism, at the Right was pedantically arguing. Gramsci did not deny the tenet that Socialism depended upon industrialization to function properly but he emphatically denied that mature, fully-developed industrialization was an essential pre-condition or that full capitalism had to pass before the socialist transformation could take place. Revolutionaries could create revolutions. This emphasis on will, revolutionary consciousness, and action characterizes all of Gramsci's thought.

Soon after the Bolshevik overthrow in Russia, Gramsci, Tasca, Togliatti and Terracini founded L'Ordine Nuovo in Turin. This weekly journal which first appeared on May 1, 1919 became

15. At about the same time Bordiga was publishing his ideas in the journal *Il Soviet* published in Naples.
the most important organ of Italian Communism. It was to be a journal of Marxist theory and Socialist culture, according to the young editors, but its most important contribution was to be the elaboration of the theory of creating a new state and a new proletarian civilization based upon a new representative institution, the factory council.\textsuperscript{16} 

\textit{Ordine Nuovo} was convinced that the creation of the Soviets, which Italian Socialists were then hearing about increasingly, had a value beyond the Russian situation. It sought in Italy an indigenous "germ" of this proletarian institution which was comparable to the Soviets in nature and could confirm a universal validity beyond the Russian situation to show that the Soviets were the natural form for proletarian self-government. Gramsci felt that the Soviets, by any name, were the concrete expression of the latent tendencies for emancipation already existing in the revolutionary consciousness of the proletarian masses. Theorizing from the real situation he was most familiar with, Gramsci was not incorrect. In Turin, the germ of the Soviets had, in fact, existed since 1906. The \textit{Internal Factory Commissions} had been created to hear workers' complaints to Management and to settle disputes concerned with labour conditions. During the War their importance grew notably and they became the single

\textsuperscript{16} Consigli di fabbrica

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instrument for exerting pressure on management since strikes were outlawed.

In Marxist terms, by which the contradiction of the existing state structure exists latent within itself and hastens collapse of the old structure, Gramsci and the "Ordinovisti" saw in the Factory Commissions the embryo of the new Socialist state, the kernel of worker self-government. Since the factory was the source of modern economic power, and the political superstructures of all societies were a reflection of the productive nature of the economic base, Communist society would necessarily rest upon the factory and therefore the political structure of this society had to be based in the factory also. The factory would be to the socialist worker what the constituency was to the bourgeois voter.17

This emphasis on the factory council was not merely an aping of the Russian experience. It came from a Marxist conviction that this was the most suitable instrument by which the working class would create a new Socialist state. The real revolution, in Gramsci's theory, did not consist simply in toppling a bourgeois government. It was a process of replacing the entire capitalist system with a "New Order." As Gramsci's theory developed in Ordine Nuovo a doctrine

17. It should be noted that until 1913 the franchise in Italy was restricted to a minority of the population, about 2% of adult males.
unfolded which sought to justify concentration on the factory council. It was based on three basic positions.\footnote{18}

A principal consideration was the conviction that traditional organs which spoke for the working class, that is, unions and the political party, were not and could not be revolutionary in the sense that Gramsci took revolution to mean. Both of these organs were not directly or permanently connected with the workers. The Party was able to reach the worker imperfectly, by periodic local or mass meetings or more continuously by the press. It could not assimilate the whole working class and train it for its future tasks. Nor was this its proper function. The Party must remain the organ of the vanguard of the working class, keeping its attention fixed to broad general problems and the planning of strategy. The trade unions were also imperfect for they spoke for members of specific trades and were organized to achieve limited goals: higher wages, fewer hours, better working conditions. Unions necessarily treated the worker as did the Capitalist, as a commodity to be bought and sold for a price to be bargained for.

\footnote{18. For a more complete discussion of the Ordine Nuovo programme see Urquidi, op. cit., pp. 41-51; Cammett, op. cit. pp. 60-113}
Gramsci emphatically rejected the notion that the worker was a commodity. The worker himself had to reject this view and see himself as the essential active component of the economy, of society. He must see himself not as just another wage earner but as the producer of wealth, not for the capitalist, but for himself and for his fellow man.

According to this analysis, neither the Party nor the Union could be considered to be the latent anti-thesis to the capitalist system. Both were creatures of Capitalism. The Party was molded by the bourgeois institutions in which it participated. It faced the danger of becoming a reformist body merely seeking concessions for the workers within the capitalist system without seeking fundamentally to change it. The Unions for their part were defective because they could only seek to compete with the entrenched capitalist; they could not remove him.

Another major assumption was that since real political power in Marxist terms is ultimately derived from economic control and ownership, the Proletariat must not be diverted or distracted from gaining control of the means of production merely to chase after the state instruments exercised to protect that control. The real revolution would take place in the factory. The worker must gain real managerial control there. Industrial sophistication had diminished the importance of the Capitalist:
The captain of industry has become the cavaliere d'industria hidden in the banks, salons, stock exchanges, and ministerial and parliamentary corridors. The owner of capital has become a dry branch in the field of production. Since he is no longer indispensable—since his historical functions have atrophied—he has become a mere agent of the police. He puts his interests immediately into the hands of the state which will ruthlessly defend them.

Once the workers controlled the factories the capitalist grip would weaken until it was forced to lose hold. 20

This persuasion led finally to the assumption that the taking of power would be a continuing process. Revolution had not merely to be provoked, its success had to be guaranteed and since the protagonists of the revolution would be the workers it was they who had to prepare themselves culturally to build and run the new socialist state they would create once power was achieved. This carried the implication of mass participation in the social and economic revolutionary process. And, since neither the Party nor the Unions could bring this about it was the Factory Council which became the perfect organ for this participation. Membership would be general and universal and based not exclusively on trade union membership or party militancy but on basic membership in the

19. Gramsci in Cammett, op. cit. p. 83

20. One might be led to assume from this that Gramsci was not terribly concerned about the capitalist "superstructure." On the contrary, this very thing was Gramsci's most consuming interest. The emphasis on worker control of industry was made in the conviction that once this was an established fact it would form the economic basis of the new proletarian civilization or superstructure and that this control was the essential condition for it.
labouring masses. The Internal Factory Commissions therefore would have to be transformed from agencies dealing only with conditions of work and wages into instruments for gaining control over the actual management of factories.

The *Ordine Nuovo* articles continued to elaborate upon the programme and organization of the Factory Councils in great detail but the *Ordinovisti* did little to organize a Leninist type of party or even a Communist faction in the PSI. Bordiga was taking care of that problem. In Turin, however, a young Bordighist Fiat worker, Giovanni Parodi, active in the Socialist Youth Federation, did much to spread *Ordine Nuovo* ideas among the workers in the city's factories. Factory Councils soon formed so that by 1920 more than 150,000 workers were organized in the Italian "soviets."

Committed as it was to the concept of the Factory Council, *Ordine Nuovo* became as dedicated to the inescapable task of raising the cultural level of the proletariat to prepare it for its difficult new responsibilities. In substance Gramsci insisted upon the need for creating a new proletarian intelligentsia, of forming intellectuals from the working class, a recurrence of his own experience. But their education must not be arid and isolated, merely literary or traditionally academic. It must relate to life and have a scientific competence related to industrial society. Learning, too, is work
and the working class must realize that:

...it is in their interest to submit themselves to a permanent discipline of culture, to develop a conception of the world and the complex and intricate system of human relations, economic and spiritual, which give form to the social life of the globe.  

The Turin environment in which a modern efficient and technological, industrial society was developing found an echo in the emphasis of *Ordine Nuovo* on the role of the worker as producer in a simultaneously social-economic arrangement:

The more the proletarian is specialized in a professional act, the more he feels the indispensability of his comrades, the more he thinks of himself as a cell of an organized body..., (then) the more he feels the need for order, method (and) precision.

Consequent to this, the worker-producer would conceive of society as a whole as "one immense factory organized with the same precision, method and order which he sees as vital in the factory where he works." Gramsci's attention to this problem was fervent in the belief that:

For the proletarian it is a duty not to be ignorant. Socialist civilization, without the privileges of caste and class, to be fully realized, demands that all citizens know how to supervise what their spokesmen decide and do. The problem of the education of the proletariat is the problem of freedom.

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22. Ibid., *op. cit.*, p. 84

23. Ibid.


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Gramsci did not escape criticism, for his ideas were difficult, not easy to grasp, especially for workers who did not have his erudition. But he insisted that a question which was basically difficult should not, nor could be watered down or reduced to neat, uncomplicated rudimentaries to make it more accessible to the workers. Too much was at stake:

To be easy we would have had to misrepresent and impoverish the debate which extends onto concepts of the greatest importance, onto the most intimate principles of our spirit. A concept which is per se difficult cannot be made easy in the expressing of it without its becoming vulgar. 25

And, instead of diluting the quality of his arguments, Gramsci and his colleagues on Ordine Nuovo, aided by some professors from the university, organized schools for workers to raise them up to the level of the debate.

Gramsci's insistence that the Proletariat achieve economic, technological and intellectual superiority was related to another, much broader, more complicated problem. While Turin absorbed Gramsci's attention for its industrial advancement and for the militancy of its working class, he was not blind to the larger problems of Italian society as a whole. His Sardinian origins remained a vivid memory for Gramsci and he was to devote much study to the "questione del Mezzogiorno," the southern issue, especially during his long incarceration.

25. Ibid.

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And because Italy remained overwhelmingly agrarian, outside of the industrial islands of the North, the southern problem was connected to the whole of Italy's socio-economic structure and was one of the greatest problems that would face the Italian revolution.

Gramsci viewed the peasantry and specifically the southern peasantry toiling on the great "latifondi" as a vast submerged mass whose economic, social and political aspirations were constantly frustrated and rendered impotent by the amorphous, undirected, usually violent manner in which they were vented. This grew out of the traditional social establishment of the South. Roosting above the unschooled masses was the class of the rural petty- and middle-bourgeoisie and its intelligentsia and lording over the whole were the great landowners and the small elite of great intellectuals. Traditionally, the political agents of the peasant masses were members of the rural middle-class intelligentsia but it was the great landowners and the great intellectuals who really channelled and directed the activity, political in one case, ideological in the other, of these deputies.

The peasantry, especially the vast, illiterate dis-inherited mass had however to be convinced that their real interests lay in an alliance with the urban proletariat and that their emancipation from nearly feudal conditions depended on the success of the proletariat in achieving its aims. If
the latter could win power it would use it to attack and overthrow the rigid rural hierarchy lifting it from the shoulders of the overburdened but inarticulate peasantry.

For just as the peasants needed the industrial worker, the latter needed the peasantry. Cities had to be fed. But, for Gramsci, the solution to the peasant's problems could not end at the division of land into small individual plots. The peasants would bring with them nothing but antiquated, inefficient and unproductive habits of cultivation. And to modernize agriculture required investment capital which peasants did not have. In agriculture, as in industry, progress could only emerge from constructive planning for efficient collective effort administered by peasant councils through which the awakened peasantry would participate in self-government.

But the majority of "gradualist" Socialist leaders failed to tackle the problem of the countryside, preferring to view everything through rigid Marxist economic formulae. The frequent violent rumblings unsettling the agrarian South were not recognized as the ideal opportunity to detach the peasantry from its faith in its reactionary leadership. Instead, the traditionally conservative peasantry was allowed to flock to the clerical Populist Party, forerunner of the Christian Democrats. And those who could prod the "contadini" into an awakening chose not to.
Gramsci inculpated principally the great intellectuals such as Croce, (who was the independently wealthy son of great Southern landowners) for this state of affairs. By rationalizing and defending the status quo to the persons who spoke for the peasantry, these great intellectuals bound the

26. In this ethical search...for a new quality of life under socialism...Croce's name recurs constantly in Gramsci's writings. And the relationship is one of mixed respect and blame. Gramsci was fond of comparing Marxism to the Protestant Reformation or the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century. Like them he argued, it had the function of creating a "new integrated culture" of a "mass character." Hence it "did not matter" that it was originally based on "mediocre philosophical works." The Marxist writings that would have the "classical characteristics of Greek and Renaissance culture" would come later. Meantime, Gramsci argued, in his role as a highly educated leader of European thought, Croce was wrong to turn his back on Marxism. He was behaving like Erasmus and the other Renaissance humanists who were repelled by Luther's crudities. Impatient for an immediate refinement of thought, Croce refused to recognize a new culture in embryo: he forgot that it had taken German Protestantism three centuries to produce a Hegel...by viewing Marxist philosophy as a mere "parenthesis" in his intellectual life Croce had blinded himself to the potential importance of his own thought in the culture of the future (and) he had denied himself a truly popular influence. For the wider strata of the population, Gramsci reasoned, the Crocean philosophy held the promise of raising the intellectual level of twentieth century Marxism in the same fashion in which Hegelianism had given to the doctrine its original philosophical categories.

This brief summary of part of Gramsci's "Il materialismo storico e la filosofia di Benedetto Croce" is contained in H. Stuart Hughes' Consciousness and Society: The Reconstruction of European Social Thought 1890-1930, (New York, 1961), p. 103-4
peasant to his helpless subordination to the great landowners.

It became, therefore:

...important and useful that within the mass of intellectuals...a left tendency be formed..., oriented toward the revolutionary proletariat. The alliance between the proletariat and the peasant masses requires this formation. The alliance between the proletariat and the peasant masses of the South needs it even more. The proletariat will destroy the southern agrarian bloc in the measure in which its party succeeds in organizing larger and larger masses of poor peasants into autonomous and independent formations, however, its success in this necessary task is dependent upon its capacity to dissolve the intellectual bloc which is the flexible but highly resistant armour of the agrarian bloc.27

Gramsci was sure that the intellectuals could be won over and would throw in their lot with the cause of the proletarians.

If bourgeois society could be deprived of its mandarins who spoke on its behalf, praising it, defending it and protecting its institutions, it would be left exposed to the corrosive influence of new views concerning "the good society." When a social structure commands no confidence from its members it evokes no enthusiasm for its perpetuation. If it tottered, the response would be apathetic and indifferent. And, while it was in crisis, while it crumbled, if there existed within this old society a vital well articulated challenge to the status quo, this new rival opposition could enlist the disaffected majority of the population who found its programme valid enough to tilt the balance of social forces to the side of the

27 Gramsci in Cammett, op. cit. p. 242
innovators. This new grouping would form a "hegemony" within the civic institutions of society, its schools, its political groupings, its cultural movements, literature, the arts, theatre, even the Church, so that only the persistence of the coercive political apparatus of the old ruling establishment—the courts, police, army and bureaucracy—existing beyond its valid time, would prevent the assumption of power by this renovating movement.

For Gramsci the State was the "apparatus of hegemony." This was orthodox Marxism for it did not negate the class nature of the state nor conceal its repressive potential. Within political society Gramsci perceived two aspects of power, one was managerial power (direzione), the other, ruling power (dominio). Since the State as superstructure reflected its economic understructure, a social group had to exercise management power over the economy before it could rule politically. Moreover, once it exercised political rule, or dominio, it had to continue to exercise the managerial function or direzione. For State hegemony was in fact the unity of the two. If this unity broke, or crumbled, the State structure was placed in crisis.

There was a further elaboration in Gramsci's theory

which concerns the nature of popular consent to being ruled.

There were two "moments" to consent. One was:

...the 'spontaneous' consent given by the great masses of the population to the direction impressed upon social life by the fundamental ruling group, a consent which arises 'historically' from the prestige (and hence from the faith) resultant to the ruling group from its position and function in the world of production. 29

The second source of consent is:

...the apparatus of state coercion which assures 'legally' the discipline of those groups which do not 'consent' either actively or passively, but is established for all of society in the expectation of times of crisis in rule and management in which the spontaneous consent diminishes. 30

Hence, from this stemmed the crucial importance of winning over the intellectuals as well as raising the Proletariat to the cultural level it would require during the "time of crisis" in order to build its moral and intellectual hegemony. And amid the ruins of World War I the time of crisis seemed to have arrived all over Europe.

These ideas, presented here in fragmentary summaries, form the core of Gramsci's entire intellectual achievement, which has been described as the "most subtle and original" of twentieth century Marxist thought. 31 Indisputably, one of Gramsci's bequests to Italian Communism has been a tradition of sincere intellectual openness toward problems arising from

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29. Gruppi, p. 28
30. Ibid.
31. Hughes, op. cit., p. 99
the complexity of social relationships and a profound respect for the position of the leaders of thought whose analyses must produce some valid contribution to the solution of the problems.

This tradition has formed one of the two dominant qualities of Italian Communism. Gramsci's ideas were not lost to his heirs, particularly his younger friend and colleague, Togliatti, who has himself, however, been accused of exploiting the Gramsci "myth" to conceal his own (and the PCI's) intellectual intolerance to dissent. Yet, recently, an Austrian Communist who knew Togliatti in Moscow in 1935 recalled how the latter, upon learning that he like many knew next to nothing about either Gramsci the man or his ideas, lamented:

Unfortunately you are not the only one who knows little or nothing about Gramsci. Gramsci is one of the major Marxist thinkers of our time. I do not exaggerate in placing him, for the originality of his thought, next to Lenin. We Italians are reproached for a tendency toward vainness. Yet we have been less effective than other nations in making known what we have achieved in the elaboration of theory. When the historical-philosophical works of Gramsci are translated, the fullness and profundity of his thought will be a surprise. Social-democracy has flattened out Marxism reducing it to a mere economism...Gramsci knew how to avoid this defect. He arrived at it through the study of philosophy: Giordano Bruno, Spinoza, Hegel, Marx. From Marxism he was able to cull its philosophical substance...No one before Gramsci underlined with as much conviction the importance of intellectuals in the formation of a nation. Certainly he did not idealize the intellectual, but he refused every form of anti-intellectualism. Discussions were not
lacking between him and me. But what a great man, what a precursor, what a teacher Antonio Gramsci was.  

Such are the ideas which, perhaps still inchoate, were circulating and argued over in the editorial offices of Ordine Nuovo, in the local organs of the Socialist party, within the party as a whole, during lectures in the workers' schools.  

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33. Earlier in the same article, Fisher recalled Togliatti's comments on the situation of intellectuals in some parties. They bear recording for their "Gramscian" tone:

The anti-intellectualism which prevails in some communist parties, has nothing at all to do with bolshevization and does no good for the working class. We communist intellectuals must overcome our own one-sidedness, we must know how to remain intellectual, as Hegel says. We must not strike poses in front of proletarians, we must not speak to workers in a manner differing from that which we use with other adult human beings, and at the same time we must continuously improve ourselves through practical work, through action, through organizational activity. The work table must not be transformed into a wall between us and living beings. Not all books are worth reading but every human being deserves that one speak with him, that one listen to his opinions, that one promote his best qualities, that one find for him an activity through which he can express the best in himself. We must continuously re-establish in ourselves the balance between the intellectual and the man of action, between the individual who reads, who writes, who gives shape to his preparation in theory and the organizer who takes part in the organization, between the individual who brings to his thinking visions of the future and the man who works for the future: only in this way can one train the party as a whole to achieve an analogous balance. If the communist intellectual neglects this duty, within a short time, the party will be managed only by the organizers, by party regulars and by tacticians which cannot bring about much good.

Ibid
in the unions and in the factories of Turin. And in the immediate post-war atmosphere these ideas attracted attention for their seeming relevance to the situation in Italy and Europe.

The air seemed charged with the threat of revolution. Left-wing European Socialists were filled with hope by Lenin's success in Russia and were poised to spread the revolution westward. The Great War had banished forever the serene complacency of pre-war bourgeois capitalist regimes. Their monument: thirteen million dead, twenty million wounded or maimed, three proud empires crumbled, fearful devastation and suffering wherever armies had marched. Among the civilian populations in Central and Eastern Europe, exhausted and starving, epidemics of typhus, cholera and influenza claimed millions. And over the whole continent the weary demoralized and frustrated mass of common people were not prepared merely to restore with meek docility the status quo of social privilege and economic discrimination.

In Berlin, Bavaria and Hungary proletarian insurrections tried and almost succeeded in demolishing the shaken capitalist structures, leaving the Bourgeoisie terrified of the Red peril. Indeed, the Bolsheviks were counting upon European successes to support the besieged revolution in Russia and to make the communist movement solidly international with a firm industrial basis in Europe which could be complimented by
agrarian Russia and vice versa. But European Socialists were not united in support of the Bolshevik programme. Some were hopelessly "Opportunist" and "Reformist," others were unable to carry verbal violence over into action. Lenin decided in 1919, to create a new alliance of Socialists, in a Third or Communist International where they could be coordinated and encouraged to act.

In March 1919 it was created, but by the summer of 1920 it became clear that the spontaneous revolutionary movements in Central Europe were losing their momentum. Therefore, European Socialists had to discipline themselves, they had to imitate the militant Bolsheviks in creating a unity of purpose directed to the single revolutionary aim under the direction of a central committee to be based in Moscow. During its Second Congress an ultimatum to these parties was laid down in the famous "Twenty-One Conditions" for membership in the Third International. In response every Socialist party in Europe was split into two hostile parties.

In Italy, Lenin's manoeuvres only succeeded in accelerating the formal separation of the two already alienated wings of the Italian Socialist Party which had been maturing for a considerable time and which was being promoted by the dissatisfaction of the Bordighisti and Ordinovisti with the tactical positions of the PSI. But in Italy the break was not clean for the uncertain Massimalisti assumed an ambiguous
attitude between the Left and Right. Like a child in a suit for divorce, unable to choose between parents, hoping a reconciliation would make it unnecessary, this wing was tormented by the breakup of the irreconciliable mates.

The breakup had begun in 1919 at the Sixteenth Congress of the PSI where the outline of the three wings of the party clearly emerged. Significantly the party at this congress, dominated by Serrati and the Massimalisti, became the first and only European Socialist Party to affiliate with the Third International although the Italians' knowledge of what it stood for or what its intentions were was at the time still scanty, unclear and not officially communicated in the invitation. The Comintern which had held only one congress, was still badly organized, had been hastily established and lacked official representation from numerous European Socialist parties with which there was barely any correspondence.

The PSI voted unanimously to join but only the intransigent Left was enthusiastic. The Massimalisti joined as an act of solidarity and emotional sympathy for the Russian Communists. The Right, for the sake of unity, gave only hesitant and lukewarm support with misgivings. Its alienation from the Left was so great that the latter pushed for its expulsion from the Party. The motion failed but the break could not be long postponed. In the elections of April 1919, the first under universal manhood suffrage, 32% of the Italian electorate sent
156 Socialist deputies to Parliament. The PSI became the largest political party in Italy. The outstanding parliamentary personalities were still leaders of the Right while simultaneously Bordiga was denouncing Socialist participation in parliaments.

Between this event and the final rupture two events of dramatic historical importance occurred in Turin which were to put Gramsci irrevocably on the side of Lenin. For the Italian workers the crucial year of their struggle was to be 1920.

Casting the die

In the atmosphere of the post-war period in Europe and hence in Italy, the significance of the times was not appreciated just by the revolutionary Socialists. The capitalist bourgeoisie was not blind to events and the Italian bourgeoisie was no blinder than elsewhere. The abortive communist insurrections in Germany and Hungary were not as distant as the Russian revolution which was stubbornly resisting foreign intervention to reverse it. It had merely been isolated. In Italy, the worker had won the vote and he had used it to upset the old balance of parliamentary forces. His spokesmen in the Chamber were Socialists even if not the extremists on the party
Left-wing. But the latter were openly militant and did not hesitate in staging bloody riots to express their views. Their leaders were revolutionary and the Italian state repressed these demonstrations with difficulty. After the war the police were entirely reorganized and a crack guard corps was established to meet the situation for the threat came not only from the Left but also from the Right. The Fascists, however, were nationalists and rivals of the Socialists who were themselves frequently the target of Fascist club-swinging squads.

Northern Italian industrialists still saw the Red insurrection as their greatest threat and in early 1920 Confindustria, the organization of industrialists, was formed and recruited representatives from almost all industrial bodies in Italy. During the founding meeting a plan for action was laid to combat strikes and significantly to check the Factory Council Movement which had grown alarmingly in Turin. Confindustria was ready to throw down the gauntlet for it knew the unions were financially weak. Italy had entered a period of inflation and the workers could not financially afford a strike because the rise in the cost of living had reduced the purchasing power of their wages. For their part, the unions realized the unfavourable bind they were caught in and watched the industrialists' manoeuvres with apprehension.
The first major confrontation occurred again in the bastion of worker militancy, Turin, and its outcome had massive importance for Italian Communism. On March 29, 1920 the management of a Fiat subsidiary plant dismissed its Factory Council. For what reasons this was done is still not exactly known. In retaliation the same Council called for a sit-down strike in protest. The management answered with a lockout. This chain of events was amplified in two days by imitations in all other Fiat factories in Turin. The result was not desired by the workers for, on April 11, they met with the industrialists to try to reach a settlement. The latter, however, insisted upon reducing Factory Council power to that possessed by the old Internal Commissions, a demand equivalent to depriving the Turin labour movement of all its gains and of repudiating its programme. Against this showdown attitude, the Turin workers were drawn, unprepared, into a struggle over two alternatives; either accepting the idea of utter domination of factories by the Capitalists, or defending the principle of worker control of production. Their unanimous answer was a massive General Strike which was totally to paralyze the city and Turin Province for ten days. It was not an economic strike for it did not involve matters of wages or hours. It was the first political strike in Italian history, but, although the strike spread to embrace most of Piedmont, it was doomed to fail. Troops were sent to surround the city despite sympathy.
strikes by railroad workers who belatedly succeeded in halting troop transports. The Turinese strikers found themselves surrounded and outnumbered and besieged by a situation which forced the choice of capitulation or open revolution. They were forced to choose the former and conciliation by third parties because it was clear that Turin was isolated from the rest of Italy.

Turin Socialists reserved their greatest bitterness for the timid national leadership of the PSI which left the Turin workers to meet their defeat alone without seeking to spread the strike or even to support it. On May 8, Ordine Nuovo printed the reaction of its editor, Gramsci, in one of the most important articles he was to write, stingingly accused the Socialist leaders of continually stifling the revolutionary militancy of the rank and file by their incompetence, ignorance and indifference. Worse still, the Maximalists had given too much attention to the "respectable" opinions of the neo-bourgeois Reformist-wing, whose spokesmen held positions of authority in the party organizations but who did not speak for the mass of members. This was utterly inconsistent with the principles of the Third International. The party had thoroughly to rid itself of these opportunists and had radically to revise its tactics to become a tight knit disciplined body. The PSI leaders ignored Gramsci's lacerating denunciation but it received the close and favourable attention of one important observer, Lenin.
During the summer of 1920 the Third International held its Second Congress, this time with a large delegation from the important PSI. Lenin up to then had supported Serrati with the hope of keeping the Maximalists and PSI Left united against the Turati wing. After the Turin events, however, his attitude toward the PSI changed. The Italian party suffered from two maladies. First it was saddled with Reformist leaders who influenced the Maximalist leaders too much for the party's good. They only prevented the exploitation of real revolutionary possibilities. But on the other hand, the Communist leader, Bordiga, was an intransigent Abstentionist, a "left wing extremist." The latter attitude was not reasonable. It was "an infantile disorder." Communists need not shun parliaments. They must use them to beat the Bourgeoisie at its own game, to gain a grip on the levers of power even if only to be obstructionist and subvert parliament from within. In the meantime, however, the first aim was to expell the Reformists.

To this end the Comintern adopted the famous "Twenty-One Points" several of which were directly aimed at the PSI. Point Seven peremptorily demanded expulsion of Reformists:

The Communist International is unable to agree that notorious opportunists such as Turati, Modigliani...shall have the right to appear as members of the Communist International.34

The conditions stipulated further that affiliated parties had to be formally known as communist parties and had to submit to decisions of the Executive Committee of the International.

The most jarring thing the Italian delegation was to hear, however, came directly from Lenin who stated openly:

In regard to the Socialist Party of Italy, the Second Congress of the Third International considers that the criticism of that party and the practical proposals submitted to the National Council of the Socialist Party of Italy in the name of the Turin Section of that party which were formulated in L’Ordine Nuovo of May 8, 1920 and which fully correspond to all the fundamental principles of the Third International are in the main correct. 35

In the same speech Lenin also told the astonished PSI delegation, principally Maximalist, that it was to call a congress to purge itself of its "non-Communist elements," i.e. the Reformists.

Thus, Gramsci, who was not even present at Moscow, received Lenin's authority in support of his views despite Gramsci's relative obscurity on PSI national councils and, less so, within the communist wing which was still dominated by Bordiga. Gramsci had been described as too absorbed in the journalistic Turinese aspects of his work to assert himself more in both national bodies. His modesty and reticence were described as other impediments to his ambitions to positions

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35. V.I. Lenin, "Theses on the Fundamental Tasks of the Second Congress of the Third International" Selected Works, (Moscow, n.d.), p. 177
of party responsibility. But, from the time of the Second Congress, Gramsci's ideas were to loom large in the internal debates raging within the PSI, which were finally settled at Livorno in January, 1921.

Before the Livorno Congress, one final occasion for the Italian revolution was to present itself to the divided Socialists. In the post-war economy of Italy inflation was the greatest nightmare for it ate away at fixed income groups as well as wage earners. The latter, however, could negotiate adjustments.

During the summer of 1920, in Milan, the Metallurgist Unions began to present demands for wage increases to the management of this industry which had been particularly depressed after the war. The latter flatly refused and the unions, by prearranged tactics, started a slowdown which reduced output to 60% of the usual level. The unions, which were financially weak, were not aiming for a costly strike and the "Reformist" leadership was not prepared to repeat the April events in Turin. The plan was to respond to a possible employer lockout with a sit-down strike. But it would be a sit-down strike with a difference, for the plants were to be kept running by the workers until the lockout was called off. As it was to happen, by the end of August 280 factories in the Milan area were dramatically "occupied" by the employees. The hopeful expectation of the union leadership was that the government would
intervene to demand that the owners enter negotiations for new contracts. The government, however, chose to stay aloof.

On the other hand, on September 1, the Turin workers, rather than isolate Milan, took over their factories and quickly the movement spread to involve every industry in Northern Italy. This time, as contrasted to the Turin strike in April, the militancy of the workers was not contained in one city but covered the entire industrial heartland of the peninsula. And this time the workers were armed and ready to use the factories as fortresses. In Turin, Giovanni Parodi, the young Fiat worker active in the Socialist Youth Federation, and a propagandist for Ordine Nuovo, sitting in the office of Agnelli, ran Fiat for a month in the name of the triumphant Factory Councils.

Again Italian Socialists were confronted with a choice. It soon became clear that the occupation of the factories had to be supported by an attempt to seize political power. The plants were surrounded by troops and the flow of raw materials and transportation of finished goods were being strangled by their presence. Production inevitably slackened. The momentous choice was to begin the revolution now or the opportunity would vanish from Socialist dreams for unforeseeable years. The government had not intervened to pressure the industrialists to accede to worker demands and the economic purpose of the strike had to be reconsidered. Insurrection or capitulation was the choice.
The Maximalist leadership could not overcome its indecision while the Right was troubled already by the turn of events. The Left, which was not represented in the higher offices of the party and especially in the unions, could not influence the official course of the Socialist party. The outcome of the wavering was an acceptance by the PSI and the unions of a late offer of government mediation. While a new contract won raises and other benefits, the Factory Councils were dealt a death blow. A promised government bill to legalize them was quietly lost in the Chamber under a pile of shelved projects. On September 25 the workers ratified an agreement to return the factories to the furious owners who began to look for some new political allies who could protect their interests better than the weak Liberals. From the end of 1920 Fascism would grow to become a major political force in Italy.

In Turin, Gramsci was later to recall, he had to restrain workers who were determined to break out with a violent insurgence by reminding them of their debilitating isolation during the strike in April. But he became convinced that the existing PSI was dead as a revolutionary force in Italian society.

36. Spriano, op. cit., p. 377
In January 1921 the party met in Livorno. On a vote to accept the Twenty-One Conditions, the Maximalists were unable to break with the Right who possessed some of the oldest and most illustrious names in Italian Socialism. Rather than unite with the Communists who were the second largest faction, the Maximalists, who were known during the Congress as "Unitarians," watched the Communists walk out of the auditorium and out of the party. The latter called for the first Congress of the Communist Party of Italy for the next day. Thus, the revolutionary communist party was officially born. But it was too late. The revolution in Italy had already failed to ignite and the chance would not present itself again for decades.
CHAPTER II

THE LONG VOYAGE THROUGH FASCISM
The Nascent Party and the Fascist Offensive 1921-1926

When the secessionist Left wing of the PSI led by Bordiga met in Livorno's San Marco Theatre on the morning of January 21, 1921, it felt confident that it was about to initiate a revolutionary communist party pregnant with the historical mission of emancipating the Italian masses. If Bordiga were to have his way the new party would single-mindedly consecrate its existence to this one aim of sparking the revolution while scorning the old parliamentary tactics of the party it had just repudiated. But the year was 1921, not 1920, 1919 or 1917. The revolutionary wave which had rolled across Europe had crested and was withdrawing to its Eastern source where it would be kept in reserve until it was unleashed again after another great war.

The melodramatic performance of the previous day in the Teatro Goldoni, although played to a packed house, was not going to prove to be the opening bars of a fiery Red tarantella, played fortissimo, which would send Italian society into revolutionary convulsions. Rather, it was to be the introduction to a long political adagio with many improvisations and interpolations to elaborate the principal theme, played lento, ma risolutamente. For Italy the main tune to be played for the next twenty years would be a loud brassy martial number called Fascismo and the band leader was Maestro Benito Mussolini late of the PSI.
Looking back with comforting historical hindsight, the split in Italian Socialism just at the moment when Fascist reaction was about to set in can be seen as a disaster to the working class movement in Italy. One might ask, however, how an undivided PSI, unable to act with decisive unity in the past, would have reacted to the threat of Fascism. The pre-Livorno PSI had been quite clearly two parties; one reformist, one revolutionary. Living together within the same organization, neither could fully make its own principles prevail over the entire body. Separation at least had succeeded in clarifying party lines. But at Livorno the lines were still not yet made fully clear. Again the sentimental Serrati and his Maximalist followers were the cause. The former was in sincere sympathy with the PSI Left and the Third International except with regard to their unyielding insistence on "purification," that is, expelling the Right. At Livorno, Serrati could not bring himself to support this expulsion, but the equally schismatic result was that the Left walked out on its own.

This act, it should be noted, was not according to Comintern or to Lenin's desires. It was his tactic to "expel Turati then unite with him;" that is, to create first a "revolutionary" party with a large mass following which could then coordinate its efforts, whenever possible, with a clearly identified social-democratic party to achieve specific goals. Serrati's argument against this was that to expel one's Right-
wing colleagues would envenom relations so much that post-schism relations would be impossible. As a result, for many years, Italy, unique in Europe for this, had two authentic Marxist parties existing side by side in the same body politic.

It is convenient to argue that the Italian Communist Party was created and manipulated by the direct interference in the PSI by Comintern. Though convenient, it is inaccurate. Nonetheless, while the birth of the PCI was the culmination of an inexorable process which had been maturing for years, independently of the Bolsheviks, eventually the PCI did come to depend upon Comintern support to a notable degree. Almost from the start, due to the ominous political situation in Italy, the PCI became a semi-clandestine and conspiratorial party concerned as much with preserving its own existence as with political agitation among the masses. As Togliatti has admitted: "One can say that the greatest part of Italian public opinion became aware of the Communist party, for what it really is, only in 1944."²

This dependence upon the support of the Comintern was not immediate. It became clear by 1926 when Gramsci rather

1. This, substantially, is the thesis of Urquidi's dissertation. Convincingly, he argues that, at Livorno, the Comintern obtained a party "which it neither anticipated nor fully accepted."

2. Togliatti, *Il partito comunista italiano*, p. 5
than Bordiga won full control of the party. And, soon after that the *de facto* leadership passed to Togliatti upon the imprisonment not only of Gramsci but also of Bordiga, Terracini, Scoccimarro and many other leading party figures. Until then, as Urquidi argues, it is questionable as to who used whom with regard to PCI-Comintern relations.

When Comintern became seriously enough interested in the PSI to try to influence its leadership and programmes it was not very successful in having its will obeyed. It was not capable in the first instance, in having the PSI Right-wing expelled. Rather, the PSI Left, under Bordiga's leadership, walked out in the face of Maximalist inability to choose sides. That this was not the desired Comintern policy was proven when, with hopes of mending the split, it invited delegations from both the PCI and PSI (which had voted at Livorno not to cast off its Comintern membership) to attend the Third Congress in June, 1921. In October, 1922 the Maximalists finally did decide upon a belated policy of "purification" and just barely succeeded in expelling the Turati faction which then openly became the Social-Democratic party of Italy.

Bordiga, however, did not rush to reunite with the Maximalists. The Communists in his view had to remain "pure" and avoid collaboration with the spineless Socialists who had even toyed with the idea of coming to an understanding with the Fascists. Earlier in the year, in March, when the Second
Congress of the PCI was held, Bordiga had dominated the Congress and his non-collaborationist, abstentionist ideas still prevailed. Again, this was in divergence from Comintern positions.

The Comintern naturally saw the political situation most clearly from the Moscow vantagepoint since the Bolsheviks were still the only successful Communists in Europe. If, in 1920, Comintern sensed the opportunity for fostering the revolution in Western Europe by prodding "Communist" Socialists still wedded to "Reformist" Socialists to expel their Right-wings and get busy with revolution, by 1922 the situation appeared quite changed. The heady euphoria of 1920 was replaced now with a real sense of isolation and a sober understanding that the order of the day was not revolution but reaction.

Russia was still reeling from its own internal as well as external problems. The exigencies of a collapsed economy had even forced the Bolsheviks to adopt a partial restoration of Capitalism. Lenin himself, by now, was so wrapped up in the endless exhausting problems of the Russian revolution that it was increasingly difficult for him to devote very much of his rapidly diminishing energy to international problems.3--

3. This is the position of Adam B. Ulam in his book The Bolsheviks (New York, 1965), p. 493-514
To his realist mind it must have been more than clear by 1922 that there would be no European revolution. All attempts had failed, except in Russia, and there the revolution was fighting for survival. The necessity of the moment was not revolutionary adventure but consolidation. As for European Communists, it was to be a question of preparing to meet the ineluctable forces of reaction which were gathering strength increasingly. These forces seemed nowhere more menacing than in Italy. A new policy had to be adopted, and thus Comintern turned one hundred and eighty degrees from advocating schisms to promoting the policy of the "United Front" among all Socialist parties.

Western European Communists who, after years of struggle, had just succeeded in forming autonomous parties found this radical about face very difficult to accommodate. For his part, Bordiga objected vigorously for it went contrary to all his instincts about cultivating a revolutionary elite, non-cooperation and abstentionism. At first, Gramsci had doubts also but his entire career as an acute analyst of socio-political problems equipped him with a greater intellectual sensitivity to changing circumstances than the less flexible Bordiga who adamantly resisted...
tactical adaptations.⁴

Comintern used two principal arguments to try to convince the stubborn Italians. First, the PSI had finally expelled the Right and Serrati was not prepared for a fusion with the PCI. Secondly, while Italian Socialists had remained split, Mussolini had taken over the government. In November, 1922 an agreement toward PSI-PCI fusion was finally negotiated at the Fourth Comintern Congress despite Bordiga’s continuing objections. Ironically, Mussolini provided a solution to the test of wills. Upon his return from the Moscow meeting,

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4. Gramsci’s doubts about Comintern policy stemmed from his conviction that the newly-formed party had an immediate, pressing task to accomplish, that of persuading the greater part of the proletariat to come over to the PCI and, in doing this, to put pressure on the Maximalists to come down one way or another for Right or Left Socialism. To accomplish this would require full energy being directed to organizational and propagandistic work and would amount to engaging in a real rivalry with the PSI. By changing over to a policy of collaboration would mean postponing this contest. On the other hand, Gramsci was acutely conscious that the menace posed by the violent Black-Shirted squadristi was being assisted involuntarily by the quarreling Italian Left which rather than combat Fascism was sniping at itself. Profiting from this lack of solidarity among the Socialists, Mussolini set his squads of thugs to attacking socialist cooperatives, unions, printing presses, Chambers of Labour and individuals in order to try to purge the latter of their beliefs with liberal doses of castor oil.
Bordiga and the Executive Committee of the PCI were arrested and jailed.5

Togliatti had escaped the Fascist dragnet while Gramsci at the same time was still in Moscow where he had been sent in May 1922 as PCI delegate to the Executive of the International. Much of the time there, Gramsci spent recuperating from a collapse of what was normally less than robust health, but the Russian sojourn allowed him to study the Bolshevik experiment firsthand for the first time. When in Turin, he was able only to theorize on the system of Factory Councils; in Russia he could closely study their actual operation under the direction of Lenin. In his role as member of the Interna-

5. Upon his return from the Fourth Comintern Congress, Bordiga was as opposed to political collaboration with the Socialists as ever even though at the last PSI Congress held in October 1922 the Turati faction was expelled, albeit with a bare majority, and the PSI expressed a new willingness to seek a fusion with the PCI. This lack of any enthusiasm and procrastination by Bordiga was reciprocated in the PSI where in the meantime a new body of opinion against fusion was being formed and articulated by the editor of Avanti, Pietro Nenni. The continuing extremism and intransigence by the Neopolitan Communist alienated him as much as anything from the Comintern (as well as the PSI). With his removal from the scene by his imprisonment the fusion of the two parties could continue and was finally (but only partially) realized in the latter part of 1923. By then, the anti-fusionist Socialists led by Nenni had gained the bare majority to vote against reunion. Thus, the "fusion" when it finally took place was with the Serrati faction rather than with the entire PSI.
tional Executive, Gramsci was able also to observe "panorami-
cally" the international communist movement from its centre
rather than from the "provincial." Italian angle. While pri-

cely noting the defects of the central body, its bureaucracy,
its sense of authority and, disturbingly, the obscure rivalries
shaping up in Moscow, he also acquired an appraisal of his own
PCI and was able to appreciate its problems from another view-
point, a non-Italian one, one which permitted him, in a sense,
to see himself through the eyes of others. Whatever he thought
of this other analysis, Gramsci harboured a deep conviction that
the PCI-Comintern relationship was a vital one, especially to
the former.6

6. There wa3, undoubtedly, at bottom a certain practical and
political conviction, which the new position for observa-
tion reinforced and nourished; that one must not and that
one could not break with the Comintern. He knew that the
party had a meaning, a position, a bond with the proletar-
iat only if it remained the Italian Section of the Inter-
national. More than once he would say that only, or rather,
above all for this reason fifty thousand Socialist militants
at Livorno followed the communist group and that, if the
half of these resisted persecutions, continued to struggle,
to nourish hope, to organize itself, it was because the
Communist Party of Italy was a part of that international
front which was being guided by the Country of the Revolu-
tion (and) by the party of Lenin.

Paolo Spriano, Gramsci, p. 385
It has been maintained that the source of Bolshevik influence, first in sections of the PSI and afterwards in the PCI, was not based on doctrinal superiority but rather stemmed from the immense prestige won by the Bolsheviks who alone had managed to carry out the only successful revolution. Only when it became quite clear that the various attempts to ignite revolutions in Europe were failures did the Bolsheviks increasingly receive the mantle of complete doctrinal authority as well. And, once this became the situation, Comintern blessing became a requisite for any communist party leader pushing a particular programme, for it bestowed on the individual or policy an inconfutable status and prestige.

If Bordiga, who had just been arrested by the Mussolini government still could not understand that the immediate problem to be faced by the Italian Section in 1923 was not revolution but Fascism and insisted on following his "purist" abstentionist programme, the Comintern could only see one solution; to remove Bordiga from the secretaryship of the PCI and replace them with someone else who was more attuned to

7. At the Livorno Congress, Turati, speaking before the whole party had declared "When the Russian myth has passed, our classical conception of socialism will again come to the fore." Cammett, op. cit., p. 29

Urquidi maintains that: "The basic source of Bolshevik authority was derived largely, if not entirely, from their successful revolution." op. cit., p. 399
events and adaptable to changed conditions. Since Bordiga was now in forced prison isolation the occasion to change the leadership presented itself conveniently. Bordiga's position fell to Gramsci. As early as the Second Congress the Turinese leader had seemed to Lenin to have had adopted realistic attitudes, and now his candidacy for Bordiga's position seemed the most suitable. Gramsci in turn appointed Togliatti, who was still in Italy, as ad hoc leader.

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8. Vide supra, Chapter 1, p. 43

In his Ordine Nuovo article of May 8, 1920 for which Lenin publicly expressed admiration and agreement, Gramsci, writing after the collapse of the "occupation of the factories" foresaw the consequences of the failure to push the occupation to its logical conclusions. The State had to be taken over by the working class and its party or: there will be a tremendous reaction on the part of the propertied classes and the ranks of government...no violence will be neglected in order to subjugate the industrial and agricultural proletariat...they will seek relentlessly to smash up the working class bodies for political struggles and to incorporate bodies for economic resistance within the gears of the bourgeois state. Gramsci quoted by Togliatti "L'Anti-fascismo di Antonio Gramsci" Momenti della Storia d'Italia (Rome: 1963), p. 174

This passage written two years before the advent of Fascism was an acute prophecy of future events. Not only did the Fascist squadristi use violence to intimidate rank and file socialist supporters but within a year of holding office Mussolini and Confindustria reached an agreement permitting virtual autonomy of the latter within the economy while suppressing non-Fascist unions and forbidding the formation of factory committees and the right to strike to the working classes.
It is quite true that it is unlikely that Gramsci would have assumed party leadership without Comintern assistance and influence and this would appear to confute the thesis that the PCI was not the child of Comintern or the "agent of Soviet Communism" in Italy. It should be kept in mind that until Gramsci, (whose views were to begin with more in harmony with those of the Comintern than anyone else's), assumed party leadership, the PCI was not at all what Comintern had hoped for.

As has been pointed out, Comintern had wanted "purification" of the PSI, that is, expulsion of the Right wing. Instead, the extreme Left wing walked out leaving Serrati to tergiversate about splitting with the Turati faction for another precious year. Subsequently, once the PSI Left became the new PCI, Comintern could not impose its views on party tactics upon the new leader. Bordiga insisted upon sustaining parliamentary abstentionism and, related to this, refused to collaborate with the old Maximalists. Finally, neither Bordiga nor Serrati had been considered by the Comintern to be really ideal for leading the PCI. Bordiga was too rigidly extremist

9. Speaking to the Third PCI Congress as a full member Serrati explained his position in the period of schism thusly: "Even in the course of our polemics and of our bitterest debates, I felt myself to be spiritually closer to you than to many elements of my old party. No one will ever know what suffering those contradictory feelings provoked in me. I thought I was right and instead I was committing a grave error, the gravest of all my life." Quoted by Togliatti in "Serrati" Momenti della storia d'Italia, p. 15
in his views and Serrati too sentimental about the venerable **Partito socialista italiano** with its great uninterrupted tradition and its great parliamentary orators. Only the **Ordine Nuovo** group seemed to espouse the right policies and pursue the correct line of action. But Comintern was not certain until the Third PCI Congress in 1926 that the **Ordine Nuovo** group would prevail. By that time Fascism was entering its thoroughly totalitarian phase and the PCI was driven underground and into exile.

Noting these facts, it is difficult to claim that the Italian Communist Party was nothing more than a creature of the Communist International. This does not negate, on the other hand, the clear fact that Comintern did actively push forward the **Ordine Nuovo** group into the leadership. But it does not imply either that Gramsci was merely a puppet repeating whatever Comintern told him to say. Gramsci assumed the leadership convinced of the correctness of his (and Comintern's) position. He was increasingly convinced that Bordiga's "sectarianism" was wrong and that the party had to change its line. If this necessitated an inner-party struggle, so be it. And, if the

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10. "...the Italians are notoriously soft-hearted and sentimental over old friendships. An Italian Lenin would to the end sneak out for a glass of wine with an Italian Martov..."

Ulam, *op. cit.*, p. 502
Comintern were eager to help him win against the Bordighists, this aid would be welcome. Although Bordiga supporters were important personalities in the party leadership, the party press since Livorno was in the hands of old Ordinovisti. In Rome, the party's central organ, Il Comunista was being edited by Togliatti. And in 1924 L'Unità, edited by Gramsci, made its first appearance.

In these publications Gramsci and his colleagues could press for unity of action among Italy's leftist parties. With Bordiga in prison and assured of Comintern support Gramsci and his supporters set about to win control of the party machinery as well. It had been Gramsci, significantly, who had guided the merger of the Serrati faction and PCI in 1923 while Bordiga was in prison, and, early in the next year, he again diverged from Bordiga's abstentionist programme when he was elected to Parliament, where, as leader of the Communist group in the Chamber of Deputies, his views received national attention and wide publicity.

While he worked towards forming a united front against the Fascists, Gramsci simultaneously set about to apply to his already semi-clandestine party some of the Bolshevik organizational structure he had studied while in Moscow. By adopting the cell system not only could the party be changed, if the need arose, from an open legal organization to a skeletal, illegal, clandestine one, but the molecular-sized cell could more easily
penetrate places of work and other organizations, evade detection and escape suppression. At least in this way the party could maintain some semblance of organization even as a secret, conspiratorial grouping. As it turned out, this preparation gave the PCI the best underground apparatus of all the anti-Fascist resistance groupings.

Although Bordiga was released after several months imprisonment, the Gramsci-Togliatti-Comintern alliance utilized the period of absence to secure the appointment of an enlarged executive committee of the PCI to assure Gramsci of a majority, although the inner party rivalry continued about a year, until January 1926. During this time, the party organization reverberated with the jostling for positions, and party meetings rang with accusations and counter accusations. Finally, at the PCI Third Congress the Bordiga group was overwhelmingly voted down.

Meanwhile, Gramsci was using his parliamentary position to the fullest in order to promote the anti-Fascist front. To Bordiga's dismay, he became a prime mover in important parliamentary manoeuvres. This was occasioned by the murder of the Socialist deputy and critic of the regime, Giacomo Matteotti, in June, 1924 by order of Mussolini. The general uproar that followed this crime shook the regime so violently that for a
a while its downfall appeared certain. In protest the so-called "Aventine" was formed. It consisted of some one hundred and fifty anti-Fascist deputies who walked out of the Chamber vowing not to return until the Fascist government resigned (or hopefully until the king dismissed the prime minister). Gramsci took part in this opposition.

11. This murder led Gramsci to write about the actual political situation in Italy with an analytical penetration that verified in part elements of the prophecies he made in his 1920 article (quoted above p. 57 footnote):

There exists a crisis in Italian society, a crisis which traces its origins to the same factors with which this society is constituted and to their insuperable contradictions: there exists a crisis which the war has accelerated, deepened, rendered insurmountable. On one hand there is a State which cannot hold itself up because it lacks the support of the great masses and which lacks a class of leaders which is able to win for it this support; on the other hand, there is a mass of millions of workers who have slowly been awakened to politics who seek to assume an active role in it, who want to become the footing for a new State which will incarnate their will. There is on one hand an economic system which no longer is able to satisfy the elementary requirements of the enormous majority of the population because it is built to satisfy the particular exclusivist interests of a few restricted privileged classes; there are on the other hand hundreds of thousands of workers who cannot live under this system unless it is modified at the roots.

Quoted by Togliatti "L’Anti-fascismo di Antonio Gramsci", p. 173
While the majority of the "Aventine" deputies hesitated in pressing their moral advantage and wasted their time in irresolute debate, Gramsci vigorously proposed establishing a rival "parliament" which would pass its own laws in opposition to the government, putting pressure on the king to take some action and spark a general uprising against Mussolini. When this revolutionary proposal won no support, Gramsci led the Communists back into the Chamber and carried out his own fiery opposition to the regime. After six immobile months, the "Aventine" began to disintegrate and this gave Mussolini time to regain his shaken confidence. By the autumn of 1926 by proclaiming his "Exceptional Laws," after an assassination attempt on him failed, he reimposed press censorship, deprived the rebel deputies of their seats and dissolved political parties and every form of anti-Fascist organization.

Earlier in the year, in January 1927, before the decrees were proclaimed, the PCI had held its Third Congress in Lyons, France to escape Fascist suppression. It was there that Gramsci proposed his "Lyons theses" which eliminated Bordiga's "Rome theses" of the Second party Congress of 1922. These theses were a compound of Gramsci's pristine political concepts especially with regard to the system of the Factory Councils and the general problem of the South and his more recent positions on collaborationist tactics which were influenced by his Soviet sojourn, the experience of his personal
participation in the Comintern, and the awareness that his worst expectations about Fascism were in the process of being realized.

Speaking at the Lyons Congress against the background of a discouraging disunity among the anti-Mussolini "rivoluzionari", Gramsci explained the new party orientation:

In no country is the proletariat in a position to win power and to hold on to it solely with its own forces: it must therefore procure some allies for itself, that is, it must carry on such a policy that it will be able to place itself at the head of other classes which have anti-capitalist interests and guide them in the struggle. The question is particularly important for Italy where the proletariat is a minority of the working population and is disposed geographically in such a way that it cannot presume to carry out a victorious struggle for power except after having provided an exact solution to the problem of its relation to the peasant classes. In the near future our Party will have to dedicate itself particularly to posing and solving this problem.\(^{12}\)

"In the near future" however, was to be too late for Gramsci himself, who, despite his status as a deputy, was arrested along with most of the leading PCI personalities, except Togliatti, and the party itself was driven underground. Thus, Gramsci, who had been one of the first to predict the intensity of the inevitable reactionary counter-revolution while flailing the PSI leaders for not profiting from the revolutionary situation in 1920, became one of its first and one of its most lamentable victims. His efforts, as an influential

\(^{12}\) Spriano, op. cit., p. 389
and responsible political leader, to organize a resistance to stem the increasing menace of Fascism by effecting an alliance with other anti-Fascist parties were too late. By the time his opinions and policy decisions carried any notable weight and could determine the political action of at least the PCI, the danger he had early foreseen had not only manifested itself but had acquired such power as to quash any belated opposition.

The Clandestine Existence

The incarceration of such a large number of important communist leaders was a painful blow to the PCI although it was not fatal. With Gramsci removed from active leadership, Togliatti assumed de facto control of the party. Two years after being arrested and after being shunted from prison to prison across Italy, Gramsci was brought before the "Special Tribunal for the Defense of the State" in 1929. Declaiming against Gramsci before the tribunal, the Fascist prosecutor demanded that: "for twenty years...this mind be prevented from operating." Obligingly, the judges condemned the accused to twenty years, four months and five days imprisonment for treason. During the trial, Gramsci warned the Fascists that they "would lead Italy to her ruin" adding that "it will be left to us (Communists) to save her."
After serving ten corroding years of his sentence, during which time his health broke down completely, Gramsci was released "for compassionate reasons" to enjoy three days of freedom before he died in April 1937. Despite his isolation and while prevented from receiving detailed news about "outside" events or all the books he wished, Gramsci did not resign himself to an arid, unproductive prison routine. He instead tried to organize his thoughts in as systematic a way as he could under the circumstances and set about recording them on hundreds of pages of notes to form what have been called his "Quaderni del Carcere" or "Prison Notebooks." The subjects of his contemplations, often written in cryptic form to escape prison censors, were numerous and varied but, by intention, much of his effort was directed at one of his most enduring interests, an analysis of Italian intellectuals, their role in Italian society of the past, and, leading from this, a consideration of Machiavelli, the Risorgimento, the philosophy of Croce, the nature of Italian institutions and countless other varied subjects.

After the Second World War, the "Notebooks" as well as hundreds of his letters were painstakingly collected and systematically published.\footnote{13} The effect of these writings on

13. In 1947 Gramsci's "Lettere dal carcere" or "Letters from Prison" won one of Italy's major literary awards, the Viareggio Prize.
wide sections of the post-war intelligentsia of Italy was so profound that unknowingly and unintentionally by his own intellectual accomplishment Gramsci single-handedly succeeded to a remarkable degree in attracting the intelligentsia of the country into forming that alliance of the workers and thinkers, the "hegemony of the proletariat," he had so deeply committed himself to work towards back in Turin as a young, idealistic, university student. Gramsci's thought is hardly known outside of Italy, but there its influence has been real and deep. Referring to the "Quaderni" a young Italian historian of the working class movement had written that:

their significance (and) influence in the formation of new generations of scholars and militants cannot as yet be fully appraised. But, it can already be said that without them one could not conceive of the renewal of the intellectual life of our country over two decades (whatever the political, ideological orientation of individual intellectuals has been)...14

In Italy today it is certainly not the case that every intellectual is a communist. But, it can be said that, in general, quality intellectual life, intellectual achievement in all its manifestations often does take its flavour from the Left. Numerous intellectuals may well harbour suspicions about the PCI as a party for various reasons (such as its long identity with unpalatable Soviet policies) or may prefer not to pledge formal political allegiance to any political

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14. Spriano, op. cit. p. 389
party whatsoever, but these same individuals will almost invariably express admiration and respect for the human example and the thinking of the Sardinian hunchback, Antonio Gramsci.

That there should exist a suspicion or perhaps an ambivalent uncertainty toward the PCI can be explained. It, too, is a product of the historical vicissitudes the party experienced after 1926. If Gramsci gave the PCI one of its qualities or traditions, the other emerged from nearly two decades of exile, conspiratorial struggle, and dependence on Soviet support for its only claim to "legitimacy" in absence of any demonstrable mass support during the long Fascist reign. With Gramsci, Bordiga, Terracini, Scoccimarro as well as other principal Communists imprisoned, Togliatti assumed what was to become an uninterrupted career as PCI leader which lasted almost forty years. Being in Moscow at the time of the arrests, Togliatti was able to escape the fate of his comrades.

Lenin had died two years earlier in 1924 and although Stalin had already assumed effective control of the Soviet party and state machinery, his authority was not yet undisputed by rivals. The struggle for power had already begun before Gramsci was arrested. As absorbed as he was with his own problems in the Italian party, Gramsci observed the Moscow rivalries with some misgivings and apprehensions for the jostling of Right and Left groups in the Russian party, and
the manipulations Stalin made with one and the other was confusing the other sections of the International. One of Gramsci's last acts as party leader was a letter he wrote to the Bolshevik leaders:

Comrades...today you are in the process of destroying your work. You are degrading and running the risk of nullifying the directing functions which the Communist Party of the USSR had conquered through the work of Lenin. It seems to us that the violent passion of the Russian questions is causing you to lose sight of the international aspects of those very Russian questions. It is causing you to forget that your duties as militant Russians can and ought to be carried out only within the framework of the interests of the international proletariat.15

However, Gramsci's protests went unheeded. Unlike most Russian Communist leaders who had lived in Western Europe, were often multi-lingual and outward-looking, Stalin was not an international-minded thinker. His experience had been internal, Russian. If the international movement was failing, Stalin believed, unlike Trotsky, that the revolution would have to depend on Russia itself. The hostile capitalist states refused to recognize the Soviet regime and tried to prevent it from infecting the rest of the world. Thus for a decade this regime concentrated on assuring its own survival. Stalin declared therefore that the task of world Communists, for the moment, would be to promote the success of "Socialism in one country."

To assure this Stalin had at his disposal the authority of the

15. Gramsci in Cammett, op. cit. p. 243
Soviet-dominated Comintern. For parties such as the PCI which had just suffered almost fatal blows in their own countries and looked for cover under the wing of the nourishing maternal body, the Communist International, the prudent policy was to accept Soviet policies as they were decided without alienating the beneficence of the senior party. Consequently, the Soviet influence on the PCI became increasingly evident. As the years of exile passed, the party became identified more and more as a "Soviet agent" and as "an obedient tool of Soviet foreign policy." As PCI leader and eventually as a member of the Praesidium of the Comintern, Togliatti resigned himself to the exigencies of the political situation and sought to guide party activities as effectively as the limitations on his initiative permitted. The Turinese idealism he shared with his university friends as a young man took, in these discouraging years, a secondary place to the practical, detached, tactical calculations exacted by a bitter struggle against rival Fascism. But, the non-Bolshevik, Gramscian elements in his intellectual attitudes were not entirely smothered by the conformist, authoritarian, Stalinist atmosphere.¹⁶

When the PCI was forced underground the precautions it had taken to create a semi-clandestine structure proved

A "Foreign Centre" had already been established in Switzerland in the early twenties. Later it was moved to Paris where it remained in contact with both Moscow and the secret, skeletal remnants of the party in Italy. The base for the most important offices of the "Internal Centre" was Milan. The party managed for a while to continue clandestinely to publish and distribute its newspapers and, to stir up labour unrest, tried to infiltrate the Fascist-controlled unions. In 1927 and 1928, however, the party was dealt two more painful blows. Dozens of "internal" party leaders were caught by police dragnets and the Internal Centre itself was discovered and smashed.

The dilemma of the PCI as a victim of relentless hounding by the Fascist police was not aided by the new policies it had to adopt after 1928 as directed by Comintern. Reflecting new Soviet attitudes, sections of the International scorned those parties which had scorned the International, such as Social Democrats, whose hostility to revolutionary Communism and its institutional incarnation the USSR had only helped the growth of Fascism.

The motivation of this new attitude of the International stemmed also from an analysis of the economic situation which concluded that the world of capitalism was on the brink

17. A most useful book to consult on the resistance period is Charles Delzell's Mussolini's Enemies The Italian Anti-Fascist Resistance, (Princeton, 1961). Much of the information in this section of the paper, I owe to this excellent study.
of a major collapse. Therefore, communist parties, to prepare to exploit this impending crisis, must prepare their own ranks and cut off relations with those socialist parties which in the past had only held back the revolutionary energies of Communists.

This policy which was promulgated at the Sixth Comintern Congress went against everything Gramsci had worked for as PCI leader when he worked to reunite with the PSI, when he was a member of the initial "Aventine" and contradicted what he had declared before the Lyons Congress.\(^{16}\) Togliatti's views on the question of combatting Fascism were similar to Gramsci's and at the 1926 Congress he quoted Goethe's last utterance "Light, more light" in the face of the adamance of the International in pushing the new attitude. It was Togliatti, however, who submitted to the views of the Comintern and, for the next six years, guided the PCI in its political isolation\(^ {19}\) until 1944 when it resumed its collaboration with the PSI in a "unity of action" pact.

During the intervening period, in Italy, the PCI continued to try to infiltrate Fascist bodies with undercover party agents to cultivate discontent among workers who were being subjected to pay cuts. In some cases, party influence could be

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19. It was during this period that Angelo Tasca, who had over a long while slowly become alienated from the course of the party was taking broke with the PCI on the question of the new isolationist tactics after incurring his public denunciation by Stalin.
detected in attempted strikes. Simultaneously the party was attracting to itself numerous young idealistic anti-Fascist students. Some of them bore famous Italian political names. One was Giorgio Amendola, son of the Democratic deputy, Giovanni Amendola who had been leader of the Avventine and who had died from beatings he received from a Fascist gang.

Many of these young men, such as Amendola, were in the future to become outstanding leaders of the postwar PCI. Also at this time Luigi Longo, the present PCI secretary, was assuming increasing responsibilities as head of the Communist Youth Federation.

In 1931 the party held its Fourth Congress in semi-secrecy in Germany. This was the first gathering of all major party leaders in one place since the Lyons meeting and was an encouraging proof of party continuity. Many delegates had managed to come from Italy and saw for the first time the man behind the pseudonym "Ercoli." The Congress was principally used as an opportunity to plan strategy and as a result the delegates returned to Italy with the goal of reestablishing much of the "internal" organization which had been suppressed by the police. But the latter was able, with discouragingly efficient doggedness, to smash the party apparatus and continued arresting numerous Communist activists. Their suppression was so thorough that the PCI experienced its lowest point of effective internal activity since its formation in 1921.
By 1934 the policy of isolation was finally discarded. The dangerous assumption of power by aggressive German Nationalism, which could form a bloc with Fascist Italy, the near degeneration into Fascism by a still democratic but weak and bitterly divided Third French Republic, the existence of a quasi-Fascist, pre-Nazi regime in Austria, the clerical Fascism in Portugal and the mounting threat from the Right in Spain, as well as the constellation of anti-Russian Right-wing regimes in Eastern Europe, all united in bitter hostility towards Soviet Communism, upset the uneasy equilibrium in Europe.

When Soviet leaders turned from the absorbing work of building a Socialist system to take a deep hard look at developments in Europe, what was seen was alarming. The vivid contemplation of a menacing alliance of Fascist states united against it was a fearsome threat to be urgently undermined. The collapse of the capitalist economies with the consequent revolutionary possibilities which had been predicted at the Sixth Comintern Congress had indeed materialized but the swelling ranks of the unemployed were not all automatically pledging their allegiance to the Left. The Communists, Socialists and Social Democrats were facing an energetic competition for support from a militant Right and this competition alarmed not just the Communists but the rest of the Left as well.
Pressed by the French Communist Party and the PCI, who joined the French and Italian Socialist Parties in pacts of "unity of action" in mid-1934, the Comintern assented officially to this policy at its Seventh Congress in 1935. The USSR itself, facing the threat of the Fascist advance willingly cultivated anything which would strengthen and defend what it had already accomplished with such painful sacrifices and internal convulsions toward creating "Socialism in One Country." For now, behind the consolidation of Fascist regimes in Europe, it perceived not just an undirected play of political forces, but a concerted effort by Capitalist Reactionaries to manoeuvre for a war against the Soviet Union and to accomplish what it could not do in 1918-21; that is, to destroy Communism at its source once and for all.

The developments in Germany more than anything worried the Soviet leaders who had heretofore come to some understandings with capitalist states to the point of entering commercial relations with them in order not only to mitigate the economic straits within the USSR but also to try to weaken the "Capitalist Encirclement" of those states which quarantined it into its isolation. The Hitlerian intention to renew Germany's Drang nach Osten at Soviet expense was a grave danger to European peace.

Thus, international developments, inaugurating a change in Comintern policy, permitted the PCI to pick up the
threads of its old struggle against Fascism in collaboration with the Socialists and according to the policies Gramsci had promoted almost a decade earlier at Lyons. The "Popular Front" defensive policy was basically an actuation of the axion "united we stand, divided we fall," which contained within it an implication of preparing for an impending engagement of the enemy. Within Italy, the PCI (in concert with the PSI) directed its propaganda against Italian aggression in Ethiopia and urged strikes, army desertions and sabotage of the military preparations. This met with only limited success while among Italian emigres in Europe the Communists were much more effective in launching anti-war demonstrations. The PCI also sent its agents to infiltrate the Italian Royal Armed Forces to insinuate pacifism and cultivate resentment of the rival Fascist Militia. None of this succeeded in preventing the subjugation of Ethiopia by Fascist Italy.

The real chance for open combat with the Fascists came in Spain where a Popular Front government was being faced with a revolt by the clerical-military Right led by army general Francisco Franco who was in sympathy with the Fascism of Mussolini and Hitler. The latter assisted their protege with generous support in arms and men while on the other side the "Loyalists" requested help from the European Left. The Soviet Union sent in materiel and agent-advisers. Thousands of left-wing volunteers poured into Spain to form "international brigades" of anti-
Franco forces. Many of the brigade commanders were leading personalities of other communist parties such as Luigi Longo from the PCI. Togliatti himself became the chief political delegate of the Comintern in Spain and wielded a great influence in the Spanish CP. The Spanish Civil War was to give Italian Communists an experience in civil war which was a foretaste of what was to occur in Italy in the near future.

Despite the ultimate defeat of the Spanish Loyalist cause, the Civil War taught Communist leaders in Spain an important lesson, one which would be helpful in the future. Regardless of the deep differences which normally kept parties of the Left bitterly divided amongst themselves, unity in defense of a common interest, in the struggle for a common goal, in the face of a common enemy had been the most powerful weapon in the arsenal of the entire Spanish Left. This unity should therefore be constantly promoted and reinforced amongst all parties of the Left in all countries.

In the larger European scene moreover, developments in the late Thirties indicated the trend toward a showdown war with Fascism was gaining momentum. Spain had been a prelude. During the late Thirties, with all the Popular Front engagements against Fascism in the Iberian peninsula, communist successes in the Italian one were not encouraging. The internal party activity had been effectively quashed by the police and Communists directed most of their efforts at infiltrating Fascist organi-
izations where large numbers of members, who were not necessarily Communists, were passive participants out of convenience. The younger generation especially became increasingly disaffected from the hollow pomp and inflated rhetoric of the Fascist regime and were more and more attracted to the appeal of the Left.

In 1939 an event occurred which seriously strained the alliance between Communists and Socialists. The cause again derived from a change in Soviet strategy in Europe. For a period of time the Soviet Union had been cooperating with West European states in the policy of "collective security" against Germany. The USSR had even been allowed to enter the League of Nations after Germany walked out. However, by the end of the decade Stalin grew suspicious of his western allies especially after they pacified Hitler at Munich by offering up Czechoslovakia. The Soviet Union had been shut out of the Munich talks and it appeared to Stalin that the West was treacherously seeking to encourage Hitler's appetites in Eastern Europe and scheming to set Germany and the USSR at each other's throats. Not to be outdone in perfidy, Stalin cynically concluded the notorious Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact which stunned Europe and especially the Socialist Left which had thrown in with the Communists in order to fight Fascism.

For Communists, the significance of the Pact was clear. Keeping foremost the constant need to protect and
defend the cradle of Revolution, the Popular Front had to bide time and not provoke, by its anti-Fascist intensity, an attack by the Axis on the USSR. When the inevitable war "between imperialists" exploded, the Communists would promote a policy of defeatism among the proletariat who must exploit the revolutionary possibilities of the war. The overwhelming cynicism of this manoeuvre of Realpolitik appalled all but the most disciplined party comrades who bowed to the turn of events. In the rest of the Left countless numbers, who had idealistically conceived of a united struggle of all "democratic" forces against Fascism, could not blandly accept the apparent communist duplicity and broke away from the Front in dismay and out of an increasing aversion to events in the USSR—the purges, the collectivization of agriculture, the conformity all of which gradually had revealed an unhesitating ruthlessness in Soviet methods.

If Communists internally harboured similar emotions, few chose to break with the Party. Most chose not to aggravate a critical phase in international movement. Although the PSI-PCI relationship suffered serious strains from these events, it was never completely ruptured. While there was no lack of support for such a move among some Socialist leaders, figures such as Nenni chose to see the Non-Aggression Pact as a temporary stalling for time by the Soviets who would resume the anti-Fascist offensive in short time. Nenni was not incorrect.
for as soon as Russo-German solidarity broke and Fascist Italy entered the war the PCI-PSI collaboration went into full gear.

Towards the Year of Reckoning -- 1943

For the PCI, the PSI and for all the anti-Fascist fuorusciti or exile groups the war was not just a chance to coordinate their common resistance to Fascism. It was the chance to demolish Fascism completely. For the PCI it was long awaited chance to promote its leadership to the working classes, to launch Communism in Italy, to vindicate the sacrifices, the years of struggle, the disciplined obedience invested to maintain Soviet support. It was also a chance to re-assert and re-articulate Gramsci's noble concepts to begin building a new proletarian civilization. This was the significance of the war and the PCI leadership realized it fully.

For Togliatti, personally, the years of exile and total dedication to his cause must have provided abundant occasion to apply the lessons he had learned from Farinelli many years before at the University of Turin. Now, finally, it would bear fruit but not yet without more bitter struggles. For the PCI, as much as for those to whom Churchill had directly addressed his famous words, the war would bring "blood, tears, toil and sweat."
Italy's entrance into the war was to prove a disaster for Fascism and for Mussolini. Both were to become its victims but not without causing immense suffering to the country and to its people. Against the advice of his generals, who pleaded that Italy was not militarily prepared for such a foreseeably long and exhausting war, Il Duce, declaring that it was better to live a day as a lion than a thousand years as a lamb, led his hopelessly un-martial people into the thick while there were prizes yet to be had.

Not only was the general civilian population, tired of years of war discipline stemming from Ethiopia and Spain, as apathetic and gloomy as it was over Italy's participation before W.W.I, but the men in arms, who were poorly equipped because of the heavy draining of arms into Spain and earlier Ethiopia, did little better than go through the motions of combat and in the process won a widespread reputation for military mediocrity. Led by officers for whom they held little respect and who seemed better at organizing parades than solving problems of logistics, the Italian armies suffered humiliations and defeats right from the beginning. The African Empire, which Mussolini had wasted no time in monumentalizing in the hardest Ozymandine marble with new Roman fora and broad avenues slashing the Eternal City, was being lost piece by piece. The British Navy was successfully insisting that Mare Nostrum was as much theirs as Fascist Rome's whose navy was substantially sunk at Taranto over this nasty property contention.
The effect of the accumulating disasters, especially after Italy itself began to be bombed, was to sink civilian morale even lower into defeatism, to give heart to the anti-Fascist exiles, and to stir hostility and opposition to Mussolini within circles of the government and among top Fascists rivalling around the dictator. Even Victor Emmanuel III, whose moral stature was even less exalted than his physical one began to stir, if for no other motive than from an abiding and utmost concern over any threats to Savoy occupancy of the throne and anger over the regime’s increasingly unconcerned lèse majesté.

While all this internal ferment was catalyzing the “loyal opposition” to the regime, the PCI along with other parties of the exile opposition, was intensifying its efforts to transfer the centre of operations to the peninsula. This required no little exertion in the face of new difficulties for, with the establishment of the Vichy regime, many leading Italian Communists in France, including Longo, were arrested and deported to Italy where they were put in confino on an island off the mainland coast. 

gliatti, after a brief French arrest upon his return from Spain, took up residence in Moscow until he could return to Italy.

The party did succeed in its immediate aim which was to send infiltrators into Italy to agitate among the population and particularly to stir unrest among the workers of the industrial heartland. These infiltrators, with great risk, managed
to reestablish cells in crucial places such as Fiat to try to sabotage military production and to stimulate industrial unrest by exploiting the brooding discontent among employees who, under increasing air raids, became intimate protagonists of war. Thousands of pamphlets and leaflets were distributed by the PCI over northern Italy. These relentless efforts were finally capped with success.

Largely because of communist exertions, by the end of 1942 northern industries were subjected to numerous "hiccough" strikes which were only ostensibly economic. Finally on March 6, 1943 the industrial workers of Turin, the traditional stronghold of the PCI, "came through" and thousands of workers of the immense Fiat works at Mirafiori (some 21,000 strong) led other Turin factories on strike. Thousands of Turinese women joined their husbands and staged their own public demonstrations calling for the regime to sue for peace now that Sicily itself was being invaded. Quickly, major Milanese plants were subjected to similar demonstrations which lasted into April.

Not only did these massive strikes unsettle the already shaken confidence of the regime which had forbidden strikes for twenty years since the Confindustria-Mussolini agreements in 1923, they interrupted production and galvanized the palace plotters against the Duce. For the PCI the strikes affirmed its leadership and control of the workers of the North who responded to its appeals even before the regime was toppled.

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The latter was not long in coming, for, on July 25 of 1943, Mussolini fell from a coup d'etat, filling the streets with demonstrations of approval.

Although the coup did not abolish the entire regime, the new royalist government released all anti-Fascist political prisoners who wasted no time in assuming their activities. One of the first important achievements of the PCI was to win leading control of positions in the old Fascist labour confederations with Socialist and Catholic support and, by this, quickly obtain an open, recognized, public position of influence and administrative control within the tolerated political structure. As soon as the Allies invaded the mainland at Salerno, Togliatti as well as other exile leaders were allowed to return to Italy.

The long wait had finally ended. The hour of victory was at hand, but not just yet. The coup had not been a revolution. The dictatorship of Palazzo Venezia was merely transferred to the Palazzo del Quirinale. The government, under Marshall Badoglio, was not revolutionary nor even liberal. Mussolini had been taken into custody but not imprisoned. Rather, he was confined to an eyrie on top of the highest peak in the Appenines where he was soon rescued by Germans. The latter, quickly sensing the treacherous intentions of the king, soon turned from allies into military occupiers of the country. Badoglio's intentions which were first to neutralize Italy's belligerent status then join the Anglo-Americans after evading possible
German retaliation were foiled. The Allies were not much more eager to cooperate with Badoglio and insisted on complete capitulation prior to armistice and invasion.

Finally, on September 9, a day after the Armistice was declared, while the Allies were landing, the Italian Royal Family and Badoglio courageously fled south abandoning Rome to German control. During the previous "Forty-five Days" political formations were slowly reemerging in Naples around the venerable and prestigious old philosopher Croce who had maintained a "quietist" opposition to the regime during its two decade long existence. The Communists took part in this but in the North their difficulties were just beginning. Under Nazi patronage, Mussolini proclaimed the formation of the puppet "Italian Socialist Republic" based near Verona. While the South was being liberated by the Allies, in the North an armed guerilla partisan resistance was quickly taking form. Although its leadership reflected every political hue, the role of the Communists was primary. Not only would its activities be directed against the Nazi occupiers, but for two years, Italy, or at least the North, would suffer the worst experience a nation may sustain, Civil War.
"... A noi comunisti spetterà di salvarla!"

--- Gramsci addressing the Special Tribunal
May, 1928
Return to Legality

Italian democrats like to consider "la resistenza armata" to have been one of the great periods of modern Italian history, the culmination and fulfillment of the Risorgimento which had been left "unfinished." The moral resurgence incited by the final, bloody combat against Fascism during the Resistance affirmed the ideals of democratic, economic and social justice with the same intensity with which the Risorgimento had celebrated the ideals of national unity and the independent liberal state. And these later commitments to ordain the Rights of the Common Man were consecrated by the amplitude of the sacrifices exacted to legitimize them.  

In the vanguard of this struggle for the future of Italy, which had enlisted thousands into its ranks, were the Communists. Although the Communists constituted about half the partisan brigades they were not alone in this movement. At their side stood all the other anti-Fascist movements of varying size and varying degrees of political radicalism.

For the PCI itself, the Resistance was a great turning point, the start of a still continuing metamorphosis. During the years of the clandestine struggle the PCI had assumed a Russo-bolshevist character which served well to protect it in

1. Of over 200,000 more or less regular participants in the partisan movement it has been estimated that over 70,000 were killed and 40,000 severely wounded. Vide G. Mammarella Italy After Fascism A Political History 1943-1963 (Montreal, 1964), p. 81. The Fifth Army sustained 54,000 losses in the Italian campaign. Delzell, op. cit. p. 543.

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times of weakness and adversity. Now this chrysalis stage was ending and out of the political cocoon of anti-Fascism was emerging a new imago ready to spread its red emblazoned wings before a fascinated public which had been used for twenty years to the colour of Black.

One of Togliatti's last important acts in Moscow before his return to Italy in early 1944 was to help prepare the dissolution of the Third International of which he himself was Vice-Secretary.

On May 15, 1943 the Executive Committee passed a resolution:

The development of events in the last quarter century has shown that the original form of uniting the workers chosen by the First Congress of the Communist International (in 1919) answered the conditions of the first stages of the working class movement, but has been outdated by the growth of the movement and by the complications of its problems in individual countries, and has become a drag on the further strengthening of the national working class parties.

The Praesidium of the ECCI submits for the acceptance of the sections of the Communist International:

(i) The Communist International, as directing centre of the international working-class movement is to be dissolved.

(ii) The sections of the Communist International are to be freed from the obligations of the rules and regulations and from decisions of the Congress of the Communist International...2

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Even if Machiavellian motives led to the dissolution of the Comintern\(^3\) its effect, in the case of the PCI was to allow a great deal of room for manoeuvre. On the other hand, after being used for twenty-four years to the idea of an international communist centre, the absence of one was a new factor to which communist parties had to adjust.

The International had been a source of legitimacy for exiled communist parties and it had given member parties a sense of unity and strength, a sense of sharing in the success and prestige of the USSR in building the first socialist society in history and a sense of furthering the cause of "proletarian internationalism" by remaining loyal to the cradle of the revolution. Now, parties would not be obliged formally to follow the policies of a Central Committee in Moscow despite the habit of doing so for almost a quarter of a century. Togliatti was aware of the importance of this

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new situation. He was especially attuned to the exigencies of political conditions in Italy in the context of the general European situation and with regard to the post war aims of both the USSR and the Anglo-Americans. When in March, 1944 Togliatti returned to Italy to assume the leadership of the PCI he held no illusions about the limits of his immediate powers.

His prominent position in the International had afforded him a vantage point to observe the political objectives which motivated the military operations of both sides of the Allied effort. If, by mutual understanding, the USSR would be permitted to exercise its influence in East Europe it was clear

4. "During the discussions (on the commission charged with dissolving the International) Togliatti posed for the first time the issue of collaboration among communist and worker's parties after the victory over Fascism, in the absence of a Communist International. Few know that the ideas understood subsequently by the nominative "polycentrism" were born at that time, from the reflections which Togliatti made in those days while the International was being nullified. Even then he was wont to draw attention to the importance of bilateral, multilateral and, even more, regional collaboration. Even then he used to underline the importance of collaboration among parties which were operating and struggling in analogous conditions."

Veljko Vlahovic "A Mosca nel 1943: Prima formulazione del policentrismo" Il Contemporaneo/Rinascita (Rome), XXII, No. 34, (August 28, 1965) p. 12. Even if this recollection was made after "polycentrism" became common currency in the communist movement there is no reason to assume that Togliatti did not hold such ideas in 1943 and helps to understand postwar tactics of the PCI.
that Western Europe was to remain under Anglo-American influence. The Mediterranean zone in turn was of particularly British interest for it was the strategic anteroom to the Suez canal and the Empire in Asia and East Africa. Italy clearly fell into this latter zone, as did Greece, and in neither area could the Red army guarantee, as in East Europe, the success of communist control of government even if in the case of both countries this accession to power was more than just a remote possibility. When Togliatti landed in Naples the solution of the "institutional problem" concerning the form of government for liberated Southern Italy was already largely decided by the British (i.e. Churchill).

Churchill, who was well aware of the potential power of the Left in Italy, was adamant in his support of the discredited King and Badoglio whom the Allies had installed in a minuscule "Kingdom of the South" at Brindisi. The British Prime Minister, who prevailed over his American colleagues in Italian matters, resolutely backed Victor Emmanuel in resisting the bids for power of the anti-Fascist leaders on the Committees of National Liberation (CLN) who had loudly demanded his abdication at a CLN Congress in Bari. In the face of this refusal by the tenacious Savoyard, the leaders of the various parties refused to serve in Badoglio's government. Thus the political situation in Liberated Italy in early 1944 was in total paralysis. The break in this political deadlock came from the least expected
source. Two weeks prior to Togliatti's return, the USSR announced formal recognition of the Badoglio government, catching the Anglo-Americans by surprise and thoroughly confusing the CLN parties.

Clearly, such an action was not motivated by sympathy for the royal government. The Soviet recognition foretold the attitude which would be adopted by the PCI upon the return of its leader. On March 28 the Italian Communist Party secretary carried out what has been known as the "svolta di Salerno" or the turnabout at Salerno. Togliatti declared that for the moment the question of the monarchy was of secondary importance. The primary task facing free Italy was to create a united and representative National Front to prosecute the war against the Nazis and the quisling Fascist Republic still in control of more than half of the peninsula. Until the war was over, therefore, the PCI would be willing to enter the King's government and to postpone institutional questions for the time being since it was all too clear that the Allies were not yet prepared to dispose of the compromised royal government.

Both the Soviet diplomatic recognition of the Badoglio government and the "svolta di Salerno" were evidence that neither the USSR nor the PCI nourished the illusion that a

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5. After the Allies achieved general control of Southern Italy, the seat of the Royal Government was moved from Brindisi to Salerno.
revolutionary communist assumption of power in Italy was imminent. At this stage PCI tactics were dictated primarily by the realities of the situation rather than purely theoretical considerations and the "svolta" was in communist terms the most favourable extrapolation of a difficult political problem. The "svolta" became in effect the first step made along the "Italian Road to Socialism" which the PCI would travel for the next two decades under the navigation of Togliatti.

This first step could hardly have been more auspicious for the party. In a stroke it promoted itself into the foreground of the political stage and demonstrated to the other Italian parties the quality of the political leadership with which they would have to reckon. The PCI immediately became one of the principal elements in the new government formula. The other parties, perched firmly and stubbornly on their platform of non-participation, found their position cut off from

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6. "Unlike the Bourbons—of whom it was said when they returned to France in 1814 that they had learned nothing and forgotten nothing—Togliatti had learned much and managed to forget what might be embarrassing in the future. From Gramsci and the Ordine Nuovo experience of 1920-1922 he had derived the lesson that revolutions are determined by the balance of social forces and not by violent words. From the long struggle against Fascism he had learned the danger of isolation from the other left wing parties; and from Spain, the potent force of nationalism and the possibilities of multi-class anti-Fascist government which would call itself democratic and not Socialist."

behind and were quickly constrained to come to a temporary compromise on the issue of the monarchy. This flexibility by the PCI was to remain one of its most important instruments in promoting its own cause. Well aware that the British, with Vatican concurrence, were promoting a conservative, preferably royal government in the liberated South, the constant policy of the PCI was to maintain its presence in various cabinets and in government generally. While this collaborationist attitude appears cynical and hypocritical it was prudent. The British on their part had not hesitated in vetoing participation in the government of an outspoken Republican, Carlo Sforza, who was unacceptable to them, but whom the CLN had wished to make Foreign Minister.

Not to have collaborated would have meant abandoning the field to the spokesmen of conservatism; notably to the Christian Democrats and, to their right, the Liberals. In the past these parties had adopted an equivocal attitude towards Fascism and had not had any scruples about entering the first Mussolini ministry. In the South, moreover, the forces of conservatism had an initial advantage over the Left since the Anglo-Americans were clearly on the side of the conservatives.

In the war-torn North, however, the Left was deeply engaged in carrying on with the Resistance. Its military efforts were by no means negligible; but the Resistance also symbolized a radical, reform-minded and, at its extreme, outright
revolutionary, political-social movement in which the prevailing vision of future Italian society was decidedly socialistic. At its maximum strength in the latter part of 1944 and early 1945 the partisans succeeded actually in routing the German armies out of a number of Alpine valleys long before Allied armies arrived.

In the liberated areas tiny "republics" were created and the sweeping reforms inaugurated in them illustrated the general orientation partisans expected Italian society to take after the war. The headquarters for Northern Resistance was in Milan where the CLNAI (Comitato della liberazione nazionale per l'alta Italia — Committee of National Liberation for Upper Italy) was centered. One of the most outstanding of the leaders of this most radical of the Liberation Committees was Luigi Longo. Thus, aside from whatever military value the northern partisan movement possessed, its political extremism and Red sympathy was not ingratiating to the Allies, who feared another Tito-type movement in Northern Italy. Until the Normandy front was opened on June 6, 1944, causing several Allied divisions to be removed from Italy to France, the Resistance did not receive extraordinary support from the Allied Military Command. Toward the final days of the war in Italy the partisans nevertheless succeeded in liberating on their own virtually every important northern city: Bologna, Venice, Genoa, Milan and Turin, winning in the process of leading the insurrections an immense moral prestige with the population.
The symbolic end of this long and painful purification by fire which reduced Italian Fascism to ashes was the exposure of the suspended corpse of its champion to the vengeful abuses of Milanese victims of past Fascist terror.

"Il vento del nord"

At the end of hostilities in Italy domestic politics were characterized by a resuscitation of pre-Fascist parties which represented basically two opposing viewpoints about the manner in which post-war Italian political life should be organized: the old Right, symbolized in Croce, wanted to revive the orthodox pre-Fascist liberal state and, taking a lesson from the past, to start again along the old lines while avoiding the errors which led to Fascism; the Left, symbolized by the Resistance and especially by the revived revolutionary parties, sought to lay entirely new political and economic foundations upon which postwar Italy would be built. It did not want merely to rebuild upon the old foundations buried under the debris of Fascism.

For two years from the time of Mussolini's fall to the end of hostilities two differing ideals concerning the future of Italy rivalled each other. In the North the partisans fought for the sake of one ideal while in the South the conser-
vatives, under Allied aegis, began applying their concepts about the governing of Italy. Thus, by the end of the actual fighting, the two halves of Italy had undergone profoundly different experiences. Ordinary Italians in both areas became even more isolated from each other by these experiences.

In the South the passive, apolitical peasantry, little changed from the way Gramsci described them, strove desperately to make ends meet under wartime conditions but they experienced little of the viciousness of the partisan vs. Fascist bloodletting. In the North the peasantry became intimately involved in the civil strife. While the South was being governed by the spiritless king and the conservative minded Allies, neither of whom were immediately concerned with changing the status quo, the North was being governed by the Leftward-looking CLNAI which lost no time in making changes in the existing order. In areas liberated by the partisans, industrial workers, for example, were encouraged to group themselves into consigli di gestione or management councils to run the factories. This was an indication of Communist influence in the CLNAI (and the unions) and revealed a durable commitment to Gramsci's early ideas of the Ordine Nuovo period. Wherever the partisans gained control, government was purged of its Fascist bureaucracy and local offices were filled by CLN appointees.

When finally the military role of the CLNAI was finished and its leaders could concentrate more fully on the
political consequences of the armed Resistance they had just finished leading, their attention was directed toward the conservative government in Rome about which they scarcely concealed their hostility. Considering the politicians of the South to be stale and timid old men not fully committed to the idea of renewing the Italian political, economic and social structure and to have begun this renewal only half-heartedly the CLNAI declared that it would direct the "wind of the north" toward Rome to clear the air of the putrid atmosphere of compromise and end the hesitancy about reform.

The militancy of the CLNAI leadership, which was underlined by sporadic acts of violence against wealthy Fascist sympathizers by extremist squads of still-armed ex-partisans, caused panic among propertied upper and middle classes who had not fared badly under the orderly regime of Mussolini. For a period these classes lived in real fear of a revolution in which their privileges and possessions would be swept away. The brigades of hardened partisans were still armed in early 1945 and among the communist-dominated brigades a real effort was made to retain these weapons despite Allied requests to surrender them. Thus it was that the threat of revolution appeared to the frightened upper and middle classes to be most seriously posed by the Communists and fellow travelling Socialists (and to a lesser degree by the other partisans led by the Action Party). This fear, la grande paura, lasted for the duration of
1945, a year in which revolution in Italy seemed not only possible but very probable.

Yet the expected did not take place. The principal reason for this was the policy adopted by the PCI itself under Togliatti's leadership. Upon his return to Italy, Togliatti stated to his followers that for the PCI the days of clandestine conspiracy were ended. Without alluding to theoretical motivations he declared to the PCI National Council in April 1944 that: "We are no longer a sect of agitators but have assumed the responsibility of a great party." Responsibility did not suggest inciting revolution as a means of gaining power. The PCI did not discard its aspirations to power but in pursuing them the party was to choose different tactics. In judging its chances for success the PCI was to play its hand carefully, always keeping in mind the final stakes of the game in order to forego the temptation of quick, easy and temporary gains.

The party was not weak: after sustaining twenty years of Fascist violence against it, it was, in terms of organization, stronger than any of the other Italian parties; it had won an immense prestige during the Resistance and it had demonstrated the real support it possessed among the industrial workers of the North who had overwhelmingly accepted its leadership in staging the great strikes of 1943. Nevertheless,

certain facts remained to be taken into account. These facts ruled out revolution regardless of impatient militancy especially among ex-partisans who feared a restoration of the old order. Revolution in occupied Italy was quite simply out of the question. Such an adventure would never be tolerated by the Anglo-Americans even if its success were possible. Soviet military power could not guarantee the success of any revolutionary insurrection in Italy and the civil war in Greece provided sobering evidence to Italian Communists of the futility of going it alone.

Even if Communism had successfully been replanted in fertile Italian soil, in 1944 it was still a relatively weak plant. The prestige of Soviet solidarity and support for the resurgent PCI was necessary until it could bore its roots deeply enough into the political loam of postwar Italy to be able to sustain its own growth and development. With revolution ruled out, therefore, the PCI pursued two goals which in different manner it still pursues today: one was to achieve a "unity of action" with Italian Socialists; the other was to arrive at a working understanding with the mass-based Catholic party to persuade it to govern Italy in concert with the other two "mass parties," the Communist and Socialist.

While a Catholic confessional party would seem to be an unlikely candidate to enter a government coalition with Social-Communists, it was not an entirely inconceivable arrange-
Kent especially in the eyes of Communists. The Democrazia Cristiana was an extremely heterogeneous political alliance of disparate elements united by little more than a common Catholicism which was exploited effectively by the party to win the allegiance of the church-going masses. There was reason to believe that a greater identity of views concerning economic and social reform could be found between the anti-clerical Left and populist Left-wing Catholics than between the latter and the reactionary Right in the DC party. Taking the long-range view the PCI leadership concluded that the forces to be reckoned with in future Italian society would be three: Catholic, Communist and Socialist. If these forces could be brought to cooperate in shaping public policy Italy could rapidly experience progressive reforms. Hence, PCI policy was directed toward achieving this long-range goal.

As for the Action Party, Togliatti correctly concluded that despite its appeal to democratic-minded professionals and intellectuals, it lacked fundamental mass support. The Action Party was a great hope and a great disappointment to radical-minded Italians. Ferruccio Parri, the former Actionist head of the CLNAI and Prime Minister for some five months in 1945, tried to bring about the changes in political orientation implicit in the phrase "il vento del Nord." This included among other projects, for example, breaking up the powerful monopolies which had thrived under Fascism, instituting new taxation plans,
land reform, controlling distribution of scarce raw materials to favour small and medium concerns, and hastening the establishment of a republic, all of which aroused implacable hostility from the privileged conservative classes and their political parties.

On the other hand, the desperate economic misery among the general Italian public caused massive demonstrations by the unemployed and landless who often had been part of the Resistance and who demanded relief from their economic plight. Unwilling to repress the latter and unable to carry out projected plans against the former, Parri was caught in a bind. The impasse was abruptly terminated when the conservative Liberals and Christian Democrats pulled out of the radical Parri government whose programme the latter felt was too closely aligned with that of the extreme Left. Before giving up his office, however, Parri took the occasion to denounce before the public "the fifth column inside his government (i.e. Christian Democrats and Liberals) which after having systematically undermined his position, was now preparing to restore to power those political and social forces that had formed the basis of the Fascist regime."^8

The fall of the Parri government signified not simply

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8. Mammarella, op. cit. p. 104

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the failure of the Action Party to fulfill its potential as an important moderating influence in Italian politics, to become a bridge between the clerical Right and Marxist Left; it meant the end of the period when the militant reformist idealism of the Resistance motivated the leaders of subsequent post-war Italian governments. Parri's fall did succeed in illustrating to extreme ex-partisan Communists the prudence of Togliatti's moderation. Seeking above all to maintain Communist participation in government, Togliatti urged caution in order not to alienate the middle-classes and their parties. An open clash with the already hostile bourgeoisie was to be avoided. The moment was not opportune for the kind of extremism which would frighten off potential allies. Thus, the party was not upset when Christian Democrat Alcide de Gasperi was called upon to form his first government since it was to be basically a tripartite government of Christian Democrats, Socialists and Communists. The PCI ambition to share influence and control in shaping and applying public policy would not be frustrated in such an arrangement. It was the occasion to carry out the responsibilities of a "great, national party."
Premises and Postulates

In September 1917, almost on the eve of the Bolshevik Revolution, Lenin warned in *State and Revolution* that "it is obvious that the liberation of the oppressed class is impossible not only without a violent revolution, but also without the destruction of the apparatus of state power which was created by the ruling class." As Marxist-Leninists, Italian Communists were well acquainted with this classic text. One of its chief aims was to defend Bolshevik revolutionary tactics while attacking the "revisionism" of certain Marxists, particularly some leaders of the German Social-Democratic party, who were urging the adoption of gradualist, non-violent tactics to create Socialism by utilizing existing bourgeois institutions, especially parliaments and trade unions.

It might appear that, in 1946, the PCI by following a policy of collaboration with bourgeois parties which had revealed their hostility to change by toppling Parri's reform-minded ministry, was moving away from Lenin and actually moving towards Eduard Bernstein. This was not the case and certainly the idea would have been ridiculed by Communist and non-Communist alike. True, the PCI was not about to launch a violent revolution and the reasons have already been stated.

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Italy, 1946, simply was not Russia, 1917. This did not mean, however, that violent revolution as such was being permanently rejected: it had its validity under certain conditions. Those conditions, principally a sure chance of success, were at the time lacking in Italy. To have tried and to have failed was felt to be more dangerous and potentially disastrous to the cause than not to try at all. There was, moreover, subtler reasoning behind PCI policies.

In 1946 the PCI had cause to be optimistic about its chances of gaining power for "the destruction of the apparatus of state power which was created by the ruling class" had largely occurred in Italy as a result of the war.

The Italian military capitulation, the collapse of the national government and the internecine war of the Resistance were the substantial equivalent of the "violent revolution." Of course, the particulars of the Italian debacle were somewhat unusual and it cannot be said that the Allied invasion caused everything that was to be swept away before it. In being allowed to "earn its passage" back into the good graces of the victorious allies, Italy was permitted to carry on with something like limited self-rule while the war-front was pushed up the peninsula. But the only instruments of government tolerated by the Allies were the leftovers from the previous state apparatus; the king, his ministers and the bureaucracy and, as has been pointed out, this was not a regime which was
about to "utterly destroy the bourgeois state." Nevertheless, by the time the fighting ended and the smoke had cleared away it was unmistakable that the old order in Italy had emerged from the ordeal in a tottering condition and could not survive intact.

In the wake of World War II, the Italian political situation was one which Gramsci would have described as an "organic crisis" of the State. The unity of dominio and direzione, the prerequisite condition for any ruling group to exercise power, had been ruptured: nor was popular consent to be governed under the status quo forthcoming either spontaneously or by coercion. Much like the situation after World War I, the balance of forces for change versus the forces of reaction were even. It would require little added to either side to upset the delicate equilibrium. In prison, Gramsci had theorized upon this:

...a crisis of hegemony of the ruling class...comes about either because the ruling class has failed in some big political undertaking for which it asked, or imposed by force, the consent of the broad masses (like war), or because vast masses (especially of peasants and petty bourgeois intellectuals) have passed suddenly from political passivity to a certain activity and put forward aims which in their disorganic complex constitute a revolution. One speaks of a "crisis of authority" and this in fact is the crisis of hegemony, or crisis of the State in all spheres.

The crisis creates immediately dangerous situations, because the different strata of the population do not possess the same capacity for rapid reorientation or for reorganizing themselves with the same rhythm. The traditional ruling class which had a numerous trained personnel, changes men and programmes and reabsorbs the control which was escaping it with a greater speed than occurs in the subordinate classes; it makes sacrifices, exposes itself
to an uncertain power, strengthens it for the moment and makes use of it in order to crush its opponent and dispose its leading personnel which cannot be very numerous or well-trained.¹⁰

Thus it happened in specific historical instances, such as after World War I in Italy, that the ruling group(s) could not make the changes quickly or well enough to maintain power in its own hands, i.e., in the hands of its traditional political parties and/or spokesmen. Seeing the handwriting on the wall, it therefore places its confidence (and its interests) in the hands of a single leader. The Leader, heading a party with a heterogeneous social base, succeeds in convincing a whole range of social classes of diverse or even opposed interests that he possesses the theoretical and practical solution of likely disastrous social, political and economic rivalries. Mussolini, in his ideology Fascism, claimed to have solved the problem of the class struggle with the concept of the "corporate state":

When the crisis does not find.../the/...organic solution, but.../finds/...the solution of a divine leader, it means that there exists a static equilibrium (whose factors may be unequal, but in which the immaturity of the progressive forces is decisive); that no group either conservative or progressive had the force for victory and that even the conservative group needs a master.¹¹


¹¹. Gramsci, ibid. p. 522

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After World War II, resorting to the solution of the Leader, *il Duce*, was out of the question: not only were the conservative leaders not prepared to capitulate again, but Italy was now reaping the harvest of having chosen this solution twenty years earlier.

Thus, in arriving at its postwar policy decisions, the Italian Communist Party weighed not only the practicality of the available choices on the basis of a gauge known as *possibilismo*: it did have a theoretical framework from which concrete policies could be deduced and justified. Such conclusions, moreover, were not based upon irrelevant theoretical fabrications. They were based upon the cogitations of a first class mind which was contemplating a situation with which it was intimately familiar. Gramsci's Marxism was not revisionism: in its emphasis on the voluntaristic side of Marxist philosophy, that is, in not insisting upon the rigidly supine relationship of politics to economics, Gramsci and Lenin shared a similar view. That Gramsci's thought was an Italian variant of Marxism-Leninism was a source of encouragement and legitimation for the PCI to pursue the policies it laid out for itself, because for Gramsci:

Politics will always have a philosophical dimension, and revolution will always include cultural creativeness. In plainer terms, the simplification of revolutionary action by (or at least since Lenin), to the strategy and tactics of a minority intent on seizing power is a dangerous approach to the vast work of liberation which must begin with a revolution of ideas, progress through the adoption of a new morality by the masses, and culminate in the
social hegemony of that new ethic.\textsuperscript{12}

If, therefore, the PCI was to make a truly enduring impression on Italian society it must seek to make its ideals permeate the social and economic, intellectual and cultural institutions of this society so deeply that the presence of its ideology, throughout the social fabric became almost palpable. Only in this way could the ultimate hegemony be realized within "civil society," and, consequent to this, be reflected in its political institutions. And, to follow this method meant not to misunderstand the real meaning of revolution: revolution is not a panacean coup d'\textsuperscript{\textit{etat}}, a "thaumaturgical act" as Gramsci would say, in which the degree of success is confused with the amount of violence. Violence \textit{per se} is a chimera. It has value if it brings about the changes desired but there is no reason to prefer it to less painful but equally effective means. There should above all be no prejudice against participating in parliament.

It was true that, in the shadow of an impending upheaval in Russia, Lenin could excoriate "revisionists" and "renegades" who would hold back from demolishing a bourgeois

\textsuperscript{12} "Hegemony" is a key word in Gramsci, implying opposition to "dictatorship" in the sense that cultural predominance can be distinguished from political power. When they coincide, that is revolution. \textsuperscript{12(a)}

state by revolution on the grounds that it was necessary to wait until Capitalism matured mechanically and collapsed under the weight of its own insoluble economic, social and political contradictions. In Russia, this would have taken who knows how long? Furthermore, the possibility of realizing structural reforms within a Russia of which Gramsci had written that “the State is everything and civil society nothing” was not encouraging. Russia lacked the well-rooted, tested public institutions and organizations through which formal political action, antagonistic to the existing State power structure, could legitimately be articulated and projected.

Russia was not an England or a Germany equipped with highly developed legislative bodies; an all-powerful Parliament, control of which was theoretically accessible to a mass-based working-class party; a system of regional self-legislating Länder whose measure of political autonomy was a countervailing force to the central authority; widespread suffrage, giving such bodies a relevance to organized Labour and Social Democratic parties; large, militant and powerful trade union movements to win steady concessions from the Capitalist owners of industry: all these things in centralized, bureaucratic Russia remained in what Gramsci had called a "gelatinous stage." Lenin could not be impressed by the transformist promises of parliament as constituted:

Take any parliamentary country, from America to Switzerland from France to Britain, Norway and so forth—in these
countries the real business of "state" is performed behind the scenes and is carried on by the departments, chancellories and General Staff. Parliament is given up to talk for the special purpose of fooling the "common people." This is so true that even in the Russian republic, a bourgeois democratic republic, all these signs of parliamentarism came out at once, even before it managed to set up a real parliament.  

But, stated Lenin:

The way out of parliamentarism is not, of course, the abolition of representative institutions and the elective principle but the conversion of the representative institutions from talking shops into working bodies.  

The "working bodies" were the Soviets. However, the existing Russian republic was nothing but the oppressive ruling apparatus of the bourgeois classes. It could not be transformed "legally" from within itself, and, therefore there was not any alternative but to attack and smash it "illegally" from without. Having done this the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie would be replaced by the "dictatorship of the proletariat" organized in the system of Soviets. In State and Revolution such was Lenin's conviction that he insisted that:

A Marxist is solely someone who extends the recognition of the class struggle to the recognition of the dictatorship of the proletariat.  

Lenin did not finish State and Revolution. In October he went from writing about revolution to leading one. But

13. State and Revolution, p. 74  
14. Ibid.  
15. Ibid.
three years later, on the eve of the Second Congress of Comin­
tern, he returned to the subject of proper revolutionary tactics: on this occasion, however, he directed all his polemical skill against certain leaders of West European Socialist parties who had adopted extreme revolutionary postures in emulation of what they understood to be the characteristic attitude which brought triumph to their Bolshevik comrades:

In "Left Wing" Communism, An Infantile Disorder

Lenin directed some of his words specifically to the extremist Italian socialist leaders to consider:

...Comrade Bordiga and his "Left" friends draw from their correct criticism of Messrs. Turati and Co. the wrong conclusion that participation in parliament is harmful in general...They simply cannot conceive of a "new" method of utilizing parliament...

The childishness of those who "repudiate" participation in parliament consists precisely in the fact that they think it possible to "solve" the difficult problem of combating bourgeois democratic influences within the working class movement by such a "simple" "easy," supposedly revolutionary method, when in reality they are only running away from their own shadow...

While admitting that a bourgeois institution such as parliament can embourgeois working-class participants, Lenin warned that even successful Communist parties such as his own would be "invaded by a still larger number of bourgeois intellectuals." And since Communism could not be built without the

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"aid of the human materiel created by capitalism" this human materiel, (particularly the intellectuals) must be "vanquished, remolded, assimilated and re-educated," just as it would be "necessary to reeducate the proletarians themselves." This would not be an easy think to do but sooner or later it must be done. Such problems could not be ignored as trifling, to be brushed aside with an easy wave of the hand. Communists by no means must consider themselves to be above this task, immune and uncontaminated by bourgeois parliamentarianism, to consider themselves somehow "pure" in their utter dedication to the proletarian revolution:

You think, my dear boycottists and anti-parliamentarians that you are "terribly revolutionary" but in reality you are frightened by the comparatively small difficulties of the struggles against bourgeois influences within the working-class movement... Like children you are frightened by a small difficulty which confronts you today, not understanding that tomorrow and the day after you will anyhow have to learn, and learn thoroughly, to overcome the same difficulties only on an immeasurably greater scale. 17

The immediate audience to which Lenin directed State and Revolution one month before the October Revolution was not the same audience he had foremost in mind when, one month before the Second Comintern Congress, he wrote Left Wing Communism. In the latter work he made it clear to a world wide audience, parts of which he named specifically, that this was a work to which they must pay close attention. It was this Leninism of

17. op. cit. p. 120
Left-Wing Communism which contained elements close to Gramsci's own thinking and it was this Leninism which had most validity for the PCI in the situation in which it operated after World War II.

It would do injustice to Lenin, Togliatti wrote in *Rinascita*, the PCI weekly:

> to retain his direction and guidance applicable to the tsarist or Kerensky regime and use it in present day situations of the advance capitalist countries or newly liberated nations.  

To be sure Italian Communists considered themselves to be Leninists but this was not to say that the Russian Revolutionary had said everything that was to be said on every problem to be faced by Communists forevermore. To believe this would be a false kind of loyalty and was certainly not Marxism. From Gramsci, Italian Communists inherited an essential lesson that Marxism, "the philosophy of praxis," rather than being an already codified body of canonical dogma, was instead a creative method of dialectical analysis. It was a theoretical instrument by which complex social-political-


From this statement Demaitre draws the conclusion that "the destruction of the bourgeois-capitalist state and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat were no longer indispensable for attaining the goals to which 'the Italian road to socialism' was expected to lead."18(a)

economic realities could be reduced to their basic factors, be studied in their particulars, be understood in their changing relationships and be re-synthesized into their macrocosmic pattern. Thus it was not only possible but foreseeable that any given situation would change enough in time to warrant new relationships for previously discerned factors as they acquired differing relative importance to each other and therefore required that different emphasis be placed on them.

No one had demonstrated the truth of this better than the last survivor of the duumvirs of pristine Marxism, Engels. Engels lived almost into the twentieth century, surviving Marx who died in 1883 by twelve years. Much had taken place since the two men collaborated in writing the Manifesto almost half a century earlier. In March 1895 Engels wrote a preface to Marx's Class Struggles in France 1848-1850. Since he died within a few months of its writing, the preface has sometimes been considered to be Engels' "political testament." It is an important document containing a number of striking statements. It reveals Engels' unsubdued ability to analyze incisively the actual political scene to the extent of realizing how much changed conditions had opened up new horizons for the political advancement of the working class and led him to admit honestly that some earlier conclusions about the revolution had to be reevaluated.

According to their original analyses, revolution had
always been the work of a minority, wrote Engels, "the ruled
majority either participated in the revolution for the benefit
of the former or else calmly acquiesced in it."

But history...has completely transformed the conditions
under which the proletariat has to fight. The mode of
struggle of 1848 is today obsolete in every respect and
this is a point which deserves close examination on the
present occasion.19

The factor which had undergone such a profound trans­
formation was the question of the utility of universal suffrage
to worker parties. The power of the franchise had long been
underestimated by Marxist political leaders. Suffrage was
a "snare" an "instrument of government trickery." As consti­
tuted, bourgeois parliaments were polite charades where the
hypocritical bourgeoisie engaged in games of "parliamentary
skittles." It was common knowledge that the real levers of
power lay elsewhere. Lenin was particularly vehement in
denouncing the "venal," "rotten," "disgusting" "pigsty" of
"bourgeois parliamentarianism" and, according to his own
experience, these words were not too strong. It was otherwise
in Germany, wrote Engels in 1895. After Bismark's anti-
Socialist laws were repealed and the German SPD could openly
resume its political activities and recap the votes of the
huge German proletariat, it

...used the franchise in a way which had paid them a
thousandfold and has served as a model to the workers
of all countries. The franchise had been...transformed
by them from a means of deception, which it was before,
into an instrument of emancipation

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With this successful utilization of universal suffrage... an entirely new method of proletarian struggle came into operation, and this method quickly developed further. It was found that the state institutions, in which the rule of the bourgeoisie is organized, offer the working class still further opportunities to fight these very state institutions. The workers took part in elections...(and) so it happened that the bourgeoisie and the government came to be much more afraid of the legal than of the illegal action of the worker's party, of the results of elections than of those of rebellion.20

Rebellion itself "in the old style" had become to a great extent "obsolete." It had become painfully clear in worker insurrections all over Europe that raising the barricades was a brave but futile act. The spontaneity and determination of angry proletarians was still no match against well-equipped, highly trained and disciplined troops who obeyed orders to fire on the insurgents. The weapons of military suppression were being more and more refined:

even the newly-built quarters of the big cities have been laid out in long, straight, broad streets, as though made to give full effect to the new cannon and rifles. The revolutionist would have to be mad who himself chose the new working class districts in the North and East of Berlin for a barricade fight.21

Still, the "right to revolution" as the only "really historical right" could not be denied, and resorting to rebellion could not in principle be cast aside if, in a given situation, the chances of success were clearly favourable.

20. op. cit., p. 129
21. op. cit., p. 133

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The experience of the Paris Commune of 1870, however, had shown how appallingly dreadful a condition a proletarian insurrection could be driven into by a superior military force. By 1895, few workers could remember, much less have participated in, a raising of the barricades in the streets. No, even in "the Latin countries" more and more was it being realized that "the old tactics must be revised." Now that the capitalist bourgeoisie had armed its guards to the teeth and perfected its methods of suppression the latter could only hope the proletariat would mechanically resort to the old methods of insurrection so that it would be crushed in the streets. But, "to shoot a party which numbers millions out of existence is too much even for all the magazine rifles of Europe and America." Engels at seventy-five, looking back on his own lifespan, could well write:

The irony of world history turns everything upside down. We, the "revolutionists," the "overthrowers"—we are thriving far better on legal methods than on illegal methods and overthrow. The parties of Order, as they call themselves, are perishing under the legal conditions created by themselves. They cry despairingly with Odilon Barrot: la legalite nous tue, legality is the death of us; whereas we, under this legality, get firm muscles and rosy cheeks and look like life eternal. And if we are not so crazy as to let ourselves be driven to street fighting in order to please them, then in the end there is nothing left for them to do but themselves break through this fatal legality.22

To break "this fatal legality" was not as simple as it might seem, for to do so would negate the very "logic" of the

22. *op. cit.*, p. 136
liberal-bourgeois-capitalist state. It would be a step backwards for the bourgeoisie as much as for the proletariat. The liberal state, in dialectical terms, was the superstructural reflection of its economic base, Capitalism. Manufacturing, with its greater efficiency and increased productivity had come to supplant the economic basis of feudalism which rested upon land ownership for agricultural exploitation and on a static system of limited guild production which was not responsive to the market.

But, although the economic foundation had radically changed, the political order did not respond to the needs of the new economic system. The capitalist market economy could not function efficiently, much less expand, if it was required to obey the laws, pay the taxes and tariffs and use the outdated state services created for the benefit of the politically entrenched feudal nobility. The hierarchical autocracy characteristic of feudalism would not do: government had to be made to respond to the needs of the new economic order. It must be open to the influence and control of the new economic Establishment, the bourgeoisie, which had become the richest, most dynamic and most ambitious part of the population. To promote its own interests the capitalist bourgeoisie, socially still part of the "Commons," had to wrench certain freedoms or rights from the "First and Second Estates." It demanded to be represented in the legislating organs of the state which must
be made subject to periodic elections. It must be granted cer-
tain rights so that its participation in the parliaments could be facilitated; be free to organize groups to put pressure on government; have the rights of free speech and free press to fortify the complimentary right of assembly and make it mean-
ingful:

These freedoms could not very well be limited to the men of the directing class. They had to be demanded in prin-ciple for everybody. The risk that the others would use them to get a political voice was a risk that had to be taken. 23

If the "Third Estate" should be granted these new liberties because all men deserved them, although at the time the demands were made only a part of the "Third Estate" really needed them, this could lead to consequences the bourgeoisie was unprepared to tolerate. Universal rights could not "logically" be restricted to a limited class otherwise there was no reason for even the bourgeoisie to have them anymore than anyone else. Such was the "fatal legality" which Odilon Barrot decried. Thus, out of the capitalist economy rose the liberal state and from its inception the liberal state carried within itself the seed of the democratic state which inexorably must germinate and bear its own fruit. It was in the impossibility of reconciling itself to the two concepts that the nineteenth century bour-
geoisie appeared to be deceitful and hypocritical in its loyalty

to the legal "pigsty" of parliamentarianism. It could not repress the pressure for full democracy yet it could not willingly accede to them. Conservatism and Reaction ruled in the name of freedom:

Thus society was left to its own devices which caused progress to be made by degrees and in waves. The assumptions of the preceding (eighteenth) century were taken up by the democratic movement. The latter upheld an ideal and this ideal was of a new society based on the principles of distributive justice and equality before the law, and, for those holding the most advanced views, upon equality in fact. Out of the concept of equality was born the concept of "the people," coupled then to the concept of the people was that of freedom, and in this way freedom was no longer that of procedure or method but that of substance.24

Togliatti's "democratic movement" was not specifically synonymous with the Marxist school; it embraced the whole spectrum of the Socialist movements which were of such great importance to the development of nineteenth century thought. It was the "democratic movement" which grew, under the political and economic hegemony of bourgeois liberal-capitalism, to form the new intellectual and moral hegemony which was so profoundly to transform pristine capitalism in the twentieth century and in fact to culminate in the establishment of societies where the early nineteenth century bourgeois concept of liberal

Disputing Croce's Liberalism, Togliatti proceeded to add: It was not admissible, for Croce, that justice should be placed beside liberty. It was not conceivable for him, that from freedom as method one should attempt to proceed towards freedom as substance, that is to claim the right to change the social order which currently existed. This polemic can furnish whoever wishes to study the issue in depth the elements for judgments concerning the ideological foundations of anti-Fascism.
Ibid.
democracy was reversed. The freedoms which the capitalist bourgeoisie claimed for itself in the name of all were seized from and denied to that same bourgeoisie. The "dictatorship of the capitalists," liberal-democracy, was replaced with the "dictatorship of the proletariat," popular or "people's democracy," which was to last until the elimination of economic classes under Communism made the state itself a worthless anachronism:

This period of proletarian rule Marx called democracy. We are so used to thinking of dictatorship and democracy as opposites that to call this democracy strikes us as outrageous. To call it liberal-democracy would be outrageous, for there was intended to be nothing liberal about it. But to call it democracy was not outrageous at all: it was simply to use the word in its original and then normal sense. This was Marx's meaning when he wrote in the Communist Manifesto in 1848 that the first step in the revolution of the working class is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class, to win the battle of democracy. Democracy was to be a class state, it was to use its power to abolish the legal basis of capitalism and put its productive powers of the whole society, including its accumulated capital at the service of the whole society. 25

But, to return to the original consideration: how was the transformation to be brought about? Was the revolution necessarily to be a violent upheaval? Originally Marx and Engels thought so. In 1848 it seemed to Communists that "their ends can be attained only (my italics) by the forceable overthrow of all existing social conditions." Forty-seven years later Engels was to write, however, that "Rebellion in the old

25. Macpherson, op. cit. pp. 14, 15
style...which decided the issue everywhere up to 1848, was to a considerable extent obsolete."

Engels took enough care not to rule out violent struggle for all cases and thus Lenin could write in 1917 that the oppressed classes could not be free "without a violent revolution." But Lenin too found it necessary by 1920 to rebuke certain "childish" revolutionaries who would not on principle utilize bourgeois political institutions to further communist aims. As for Gramsci, revolution began when the hegemony of the ruling class suffered a crisis which deterioriated the fusion of dominio and direzione. The crisis in hegemony could be aggravated if "vast masses" began to exercise their political power and, passing "suddenly from political passivity" to a certain activity, succeeded in advancing their political interests. Such a transformation in its "disorganic complex" constituted in fact "a revolution." But, even Gramsci admitted that when such crises occur the situation could be "open to solutions of force."

What happened in the latter part of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, when universal suffrage was finally granted and the working-class parties, rather than being classed as subversive, were recognized as legitimate and were allowed to carry on legal political action resulting in the victories which had so impressed Engels by their potential, was to use Gramsci's terms, the beginning of a crisis in the hegemony of
the capitalist bourgeoisie. The *dominio* which it had exercised exclusively began to slip away.

When the liberal state became subject to the open competition for political power among parties which, in the economic sphere of the market economy, was related to the competition for economic profits among individuals, not only the power and predominance of the bourgeoisie was threatened: the liberal state itself was exposed to the legal, and constitutionally deferential, as opposed to extra-legal revolutionary, attack of political movements which had as their fundamental programme the utter abolition of both the capitalist system, and its political framework, the liberal democratic state. The irony lay in the fact that such movements could not be denied their right to do so because of the very principles with which the liberal state had been justified. If the right were denied, the existing order could properly be considered subject to violent revolutionary assault: if the right was granted, revolutionary violence became unnecessary to achieve the same aims. With their own creation, the liberal, then liberal-democratic state, the bourgeoisie placed itself in the fork of a dilemma. "*La legalité nous tue,*" wailed Barrot.
Grooming-Up

Although PCI policy in the post-W.W. II period has been described as amounting to a stifling of "any reiteration of long term revolutionary objectives," such a judgment cannot be swallowed without a pinch of salt. There was no need for the PCI to apologize for its political decisions on a theoretical basis if by a stifling of "revolutionary objectives" was meant the party's decision not to stage an insurrection. As it has been pointed out above the equation, revolution = violence, was both a simplification of the meaning of the word revolution and an overrating of the potentially positive consequences of violence. The course the party chose to follow was not guaranteed to bring success but it seemed at the time to be the most likely to. Had violence been attempted "total disaster would have faced not just whoever had risked it but the country itself." 27

As Togliatti wrote later:

The road to follow was that of maintaining and defending for as long as possible the unity which was created during the Resistance and of setting up for this unity a combination of objectives which would be attainable by a mass movement, starting with the achievement of a republic up to the realization of the pressing economic, political and


27. Togliatti, Il partito comunista italiano, p. 94
social reforms which were necessary for the country and which were claimed by the working classes. 28

In January, 1946 the PCI held its Fifth Congress, the first in fifteen years. Within a few months of its meeting Italians were to go to the polls to make important decisions for the future of the country. Thus the policy statement by the Congress was one which sought to clarify to the voting public communist intentions for Italy and articulate in general terms the programme the party would try to implement. The programme declared that a mere restoration of a democratic parliamentary type regime "in the old style" would not be enough to solve Italy's problems. Italy's problems were equally or rather more of an economic nature than of a political nature and whatever reforms were made in the structure of the state they would have to be ones which would promote social justice and economic improvement for the masses of people which had never experienced either:

This...cannot yet be a socialist State, but it must no longer be a bourgeois State dominated by big property and by the capitalist monopolies. We must be dealing with a new power which is based on the working classes, on the peasantry and on the working middle class, which will destroy the monopoly of the great landowners, which will aim its blows at the monopolies of industry, will transform the structures of the economy...destroy the incrustations of the bureaucracy...and give to the democratic order a new content, which is that of the advancement towards a profound transformation of the economic and social order. 29

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28. Ibid.
29. Ibid.
This procedure was represented as being the Italian road to Socialism, one which "has objectives which are basically attainable through the application of the democratic method."

Despite the party's earlier willingness to enter the king's government it officially demanded the abolition of monarchy and its replacement by a republic having a representative parliamentary system and which constitutionally would guarantee and defend:

the fundamental liberties of the citizen, freedom of speech, of conscience, of the press, or religion, of political, syndical and religious association and propaganda (the equal status of women), the right to work, rest, education and to social security. 30

The new State must extent special autonomy to certain specific Regions, notably Sicily and Sardinia, and allow all the Regions substantial administrative, economic and agricultural self-regulation. Cities, towns and other local administrative organs must also be extended greater freedom. All of this depended upon achieving one basic goal: the abolition of the prefectures. Prefects were the all-powerful agents of the Ministry of the Interior and held the ultimate power in each particular territory in which they resided. In this situation they represented the single greatest impediment to lively local democracy. The selection of individuals to comprise the judiciary was also to be made more democratic, less arbitrary and to be based upon demonstrable merit.

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30. Ibid.
Beneath all of the Communists' demands for democratization of the political apparatus of the state rested unmodified the almost metaphysical conviction that it would be meaningless without a "democratization" of the economic sector as well; that is, without subjecting the economy to public control and preventing it from being manipulated by the plutocrats:

In the industrial sector the Italian Communist Party proposes the nationalization of the large industrial combines, of the large banks and insurance companies, a beginning of national planning and the installation of a system of national control of production whose first task will be the general implementation and recognition of the Management Councils. (Factory Councils)

In the agricultural sector the Italian Communist Party proposes the liquidation of the large absentee-owned landed estates (latifondi) the limitation of large capitalistic ownership, with the starting and stimulation of forms cooperative tenure, a profound reform of agricultural contracts (and) the consequent protection of small and medium property holdings. 31

The policy declaration also contained other proposals regarding education and the southern problem all of which were intended to document the official position of the PCI.

With this done the party prepared itself for the upcoming matches.

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31. Togliatti, op. cit. p. 97-98
CHAPTER IV

ITALIAN COMMUNISM IN

THE POST-WAR PERIOD
As political life in Italy was normalized in the aftermath of war, PCI attitudes and formal policies with regard to a number of particular issues, such as those already mentioned, appeared at first to have been rightly chosen for they resulted in encouraging political advances for the party. In March, 1946, the first open and unobstructed campaign for public support at the urns was carried out among rival parties during partial local elections held throughout the peninsula. This was the first such experience in twenty years and some eighty-five per cent of the electorate chose to participate in it. The results were heartening for the PCI, verifying the party's untested contention that the three major forces to be reckoned with in Italian politics would be the Communist, Socialist, and Christian Democrat. Out of 5,596 communes where elections took place in March, Communist and Socialist candidates running on joint lists won 1,976. Singly, each party won another 140, thus giving the extreme Left control of 2,256 communes altogether. The DC alone won 1,907 while the various smaller parties won, either alone or in combinations, the other 1,433.

But, as important as were the local elections, the March polling was really a dress rehearsal for the far more important national elections which were to follow in June. On June 2, 1946, the first of a series of very important postwar national elections took place; voters, including women for the first time, were to decide not only the composition of
the Constituent Assembly which would draw up a new constitution for Italy, they were to decide also on the settlement of "the institutional question;" that is, the choice between continuing with the monarchy or abolishing it in favour of a republic. The Left-wing parties opposed a referendum on this question and insisted that it should be settled by the Constituent Assembly once convened: monarchist groups on the other hand counted on public sentiment for the glamour of royalty to swing the vote in favour of retaining the Savoys on the throne. It was to be a vain hope. Although on the eve of the election powerful voices were raised on behalf of the monarchy as a Christian bulwark against the subversive forces of Atheism,¹ the Italian electorate chose all the same to do away with it.

The voting was significant for the manner in which political sentiment broke down to fit distinct geographical patterns. The North, where the Resistance had taken place,

¹ "What is the problem?" asked Pius XII. "The problem is whether one or another of those nations, of those two Latin sisters (the Pope's speech referred also to political elections taking place in France the same day) with several thousand years of civilization will continue to lean against the solid rock of Christianity...or on the contrary do they want to hand over the fate of their future to the impossible omnipotence of a material state without extra-terrestrial ideals without religion and without God. One of these two alternatives shall occur according to whether the names of the champions or the destroyers of Christian civilization emerge victorious from the urns." Quoted by Mammarella, op. cit., p. 114
went solidly for the Republic while the South where the king had settled after fleeing Rome and which had fallen early to Allied control voted heavily in favour of the monarchy. Still, the majority vote was against the monarchy.\(^2\)

The June 2 election results for the Constituent Assembly, were also advantageous to the Left. The popular vote for Communist and Socialist candidates together exceeded that for Christian Democrats by over one million. This combined strength helped further to clear the way for the formal renewal of the "Unity of Action" pact which had united the two Marxist parties in the late Thirties, although, for the only time in the history of postwar elections, the Socialist Party won a larger vote than the Communists. Of their combined 219 seats, the Socialists controlled 115. Other parties, excluding the DC with its 207 seats, averaged some twenty each while the Action Party barely survived with only 7 seats.

The pattern of voting for the Constituent Assembly paralleled that of the referendum. The northern industrial areas voted Social-Communist as did the traditionally radical agricultural regions of North-Central Italy. The DC gained support from middle-classes and from the very Catholic North-East. Conservative parties prevailed in the South.

\(^2\) 12,717,923 votes in favour of a Republic and 10,719,284 for the monarchy.
With the two Left-wing parties commanding just under 40% of the votes and pledged to joint political action, the DC with its 35% of the vote had either to come to terms with them or look to the various parties of the Right for allies. To promote the former course was already part of PCI policy but its success in achieving it was not resounding. Nevertheless, the capacity of the extreme Left to influence the content of the constitution was real and this was evident in the final document produced by the Costituente. One of the three official signatories to the constitution, including the provisional president of the Republic, Enrico de Nicola, and the President of the Council of Ministers, Alcide De Gasperi was the President of the Constituent Assembly, the veteran Communist and Ordinovista, Umberto Terracini.

The document, despite Terracini's signature, was not a blueprint for a socialist society. It did, however, contain a number of carefully worded articles especially concerning economic relationships which made the constitution quite acceptable to the PCI. These articles could be implemented by a reform-minded government to carry out profound structural changes throughout the economy. The constitution of republican Italy was in potentia the constitution of socialist Italy as well. The constitution as finally approved was not on the Soviet model but all the same it did recognize:

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3. See Appendix I

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...in a concrete way the right of workers to accede to the management of the State and poses certain conditions which can, wherever they be realized, favour this accession and allow for a noteworthy transformation of national society in a socialist sense. 4

With the constitution written, the Italian Communist Party found itself part of a political framework which was not disagreeable since it was partly responsible for producing it. But this was only one goal which the party had set for itself. It was elementary to expect the PCI to pursue policies which would lead to its participation in the direction of the economy of the country. This could occur first by winning real political power by legitimate means in elections and then by exercising this political power constitutionally to undertake reforms in the economy. The tone of restrained confidence in the above quotation was rooted in an appreciation of certain realities which made the statement an expression of fact.

Because of historical circumstances the economic structure which the Italian republic received from Fascism allowed the State, if it so chose, to exercise a potentially dominant managerial role in the national economy, although so far the economy had remained basically capitalist. During the depression of the Thirties, the Fascist regime had intervened to prevent the collapse of numerous enterprises which were on the verge of bankruptcy. The State simply bought up shares

4. Togliatti, op. cit. p. 103
which had greatly diminished in value and thus became the major stockholder in many companies: banks, industries and financial institutions. In order to administer the shares a special state agency, The Institute for Industrial Reconstruction (IRI) was created. The IRI's intervention was by no means limited or insignificant.

Today, the Italian State owns or controls through IRI the iron and steel industry, ship building naval and air transportation concerns, telephone and utility companies, auto tool and machinery manufacturing companies, textile, glass and chemical firms, road-building firms and broadcast media among many others. Under Fascism, the State, rather than actively manage "its" enterprises, remained instead a passive partner with private capitalists who continued to run their affairs along the old lines.

The arrangement was a very happy one for the latter; in prosperous times, private stockholders continued to receive their dividends; if times were unfavourable, the State acted as guarantor against the collapse of its own enterprise. Thus the industrialists of the country, united in Confindustria, exercised an enormous power in both private and semi-public sectors of the economy. Under a regime such as Fascism, which

5. After the war, another entity, the Italian Hydrocarbons Agency (ENI) drew the Italian State broadly and massively into the petrochemical industry also and has indirectly made the former a protagonist in the international rivalry of giant oil corporations competing for oil exploration rights in many emerging countries.
was not inimical to its interests, Confindustria became a
pressure group with immense influence over government policy.

To restrict severely or break entirely the economic
and political power of Italian monopoly capitalism thus became
part of the programme of all of the Left. The moderate Left
projected a programme of anti-combine legislation leading to
a type of mixed economy; the radical Left intended outright
nationalization of the basic means of production to achieve a
fundamental reorientation of the economy along socialist lines.
If, furthermore, the lobbying influence of the powerful indus-
trialists could be weakened, by a curtailing of their economic
power, an important obstacle barring introduction and implement-
tion of further Left-wing policies could be removed. The
extreme Left was convinced that it had been the enthusiastic
support and prompting of the Italian Capitalists which had
allowed Mussolini to wield his unlimited power with the special
ferocity he reserved for Socialists and Communists especially
in the early years of the Fascist regime when he consolidated
his power.

Another way by which the power of the industrialists
could be curtailed, a method favoured by the PCI especially,
was the system of "Management Councils" (consigli di gestione)
which had been already implemented by the CLNAI in early 1945.
In the eyes of the Resistance leaders this system was eminently
just. The factories had been protected and saved from destruc-
tion by the retreating German armies by workers who had themselves taken up arms, and it was right that these workers should participate in running the factories they had risked their lives to save. As conceived, the management councils were bodies composed of representatives of management as well as of workers who were in the latter case elected by and from the workers of the particular factory. In this system of dual control the councils could settle problems of production, use of manpower and any other technical difficulties impeding efficient productivity.

It was in fact a moderate proposal. The private entrepreneurs did not necessarily have to face expropriation; on the other hand, employees could play a significant role in the management of their own places of work. The importance attached to facilitating increased productivity was a partial explanation for PCI moderation. Italy was economically prostrate and in no condition to sustain any postponement of economic reconstruction. The creation of jobs to absorb the huge number of unemployed and underemployed was imperative. If the PCI adopted positions which would appear to aggravate unemployment the blame for the plight of the workers could be placed on it.

Needless to add the factory owners did not receive the idea of management councils with boundless enthusiasm; it was seen to be merely another indirect attempt by the Social-
Communists to confiscate private property. In fact, this opposition to the installation of the councils hardened and legal recognition was never granted them. The decline of the councils paralleled the rebuilding of the Italian economy along old lines. The outcome of the struggle over what direction economic reconstruction would take was of crucial importance to both the Left and Right.

The electoral successes of the Social-Communists were real enough and their influence in the Constituent Assembly was revealed in the constitution which came out of its deliberations. But there were increasing points of contrast and conflict between the Left and Right which hindered the tripartite government collaboration sought by the PCI. Soon after his assuming the reins of government, Alcide De Gasperi set about to undo some of the actions undertaken by the CLN particularly in Northern Italy where CLNAI control had been more or less exclusive during the Resistance. Specifically, De Gasperi removed CLN appointees in local administration and replaced them with functionaries from the old prefectures which had been the authoritarian administrative apparatus of Fascism in the provinces.

The individuals chosen frequently were of distinctly conservative and anti-communist outlook. For the Left-wing parties of the CLN's (who formed a majority in them) this was as if the Resistance had been fought to no avail since one of
the first acts of the CLN leadership had been precisely the replacement of local officials. De Gasperi's actions with regard to local government were tied to another decision; that of ending the general purge of important Fascist officials within government and industry. This too was to contradict much for which the CLN's had worked. Wherever the latter had been in control, purges against collaborators and willing accomplices of the Fascist regime in both public and private institutions were carried out. The purges were intended to weed out those elements in administrative capacities which had compromised with Fascism and particularly those who personally profited at public expense from this collaboration.

The Italian bureaucracy, which at its worst can be shamelessly venal and arrogant, sheltered many such accomplices. The parties of the Left wished to carry out a broad shake-up of the administrative apparatus of the State and the economy. That many minor functionaries who had passively joined the Fascist party out of practical necessity to secure their jobs could be hurt was seen as an unpleasant necessity. If fundamental reforms in the structure of the Italian State were to be carried out, the old governing class retaining the mental habits of Fascism had to be eliminated for it would only hinder the changes envisaged by the Left. Hence, the parties of this orientation insisted on extensive purges. The moderate and conservative parties in the CLN's (DC and Liberal) were far less
enthusiastic or radical in this matter. The classes from which they expected to receive considerable support would be the principal targets of the purges and, in the eventuality of assuming power in the Italian government after the war, their political power would be severely weakened if they could not rely on the cooperation of the existing bureaucracy (minus, of course, its Fascist hierarchs and flagrant profiteers). This struggle over the question of the purges rumbled on until the purge trials were brought to a definite halt in January 1946.

Connected with this struggle over the reform of bureaucracy there was a debate of far greater importance. Determination of financial and economic policies were of immediate and essential necessity. In order to finance economic reconstruction vast amounts of investment capital were needed. Italy benefitted substantially from UNRRA aid but the major source of financing had to be from taxes levied on the savings and assets of Italians themselves. Two methods were proposed: a public loan and a special compulsory and progressive tax on property. The question of the loan raised little opposition and was floated successfully. The monies it raised were insufficient to the needs, however, and the property tax was expected to help raise the remainder needed.

The taxation project became bound up with a third question on financial policy, that of changing the currency. Both plans met stiff resistance from the conservatives. By
changing the currency, sizeable amounts of money being sent outside of Italy by those rich enough to do so could have been blocked and at the same time, by curtailing the circulation of money within Italy, the serious and increasing inflation could have been checked. Moreover, in both the levying of the tax and the reform of the currency, the Italian government could, as the French government had done, project a long range economic plan to utilize the funds which would be raised.

Economic conservatives, however, wanted reconstruction to be financed privately without public controls on credit or particularly without any hindering by a progressive property tax. To follow a laissez faire policy of this type would have reduced the role of the State in determining economic priorities to a minimum and restricted its managerial powers as well. Furthermore, the economic plans of the government met not only with opposition from private groups but were hindered internally by the resistance of a conservative Minister of Finance. The natural consequence was to delay measures which should have been effected immediately to achieve the originally intended results. The procrastination also allowed time for strengthening the conservative influence on the government. The property tax as finally approved was proportional rather than progressive so that large proprietors benefitted by smaller levies. The currency change was never put into effect. By shelving this fundamental project a basic decision was made concerning the
economic future of the newly-formed republic. Italy would revert to traditional private capitalism with the State collaborating with private enterprise rather than controlling it.

Although industrial productivity was raised as the year progressed, the increased private investment which accompanied the industrial recovery, greatly aggravated the existing inflationary situation. This was particularly burdensome to the mass of the working population which was either underemployed or, in many cases, quite simply out of work. The restoration of industry along traditionally capitalist lines, however, reinforced itself since the rising value of shares attracted even more investment to private industry while less remunerative bonds, floated by the government in order to attract capital for public financing, consequently suffered from lack of public response. To pay its debts the government resorted to printing paper money. The result was an alarming acceleration of the inflationary trend. In one year, June, 1946 to June, 1947, money in circulation increased from some 394.7 billion lire to 577.6 billion lire.

The Break-Up of Tripartism

As months passed it became more and more evident that the chief beneficiary of the De Gasperi government's *laisser
faire attitudes was to be the economic Right and that conversely, nothing would be done to carry out the basic structural reforms sought by Left-wing parties. This inclination placed the functioning of the tripartite Council of Ministers under increasing strain. It was clear to all participants that without any basic unanimity about what programmes the government should properly promote, decisive action of any kind by the government was impossible. Since the "Management Councils" failed to achieve legal status, with the result that workers were barred from any sharing of responsibility in managing their places of work, the Social-Communists placed greater emphasis upon trying to influence the general economic and financial policies of the government.

It was not unreasonable that the two parties, united in a common front, were led to expect that their views should carry some considerable weight in influencing government policies. Extensive successes at the polls, both locally and nationally, had politically reinforced the positions of active leadership they had assumed in the armed Resistance. Their control of the preponderant working-class vote was unquestionable and their important contributions to the deliberations of the Constituent Assembly were generally recognized. It was indeed precisely because of all of these things that the two parties were present in the Council of Ministers.

When, despite the socialist presence in his cabinet,
De Gasperi chose to promote economic conservatism at the expense of socialist reformism, it was with the full appreciation that such a course would meet with determined resistance by the two Left-wing parties. With the choice once made, however, the inevitable consequence facing the Social-Communist Ministers, who objected to the government's general programme, was their eventual elimination from the government altogether. To this, needless to add, they were utterly opposed.

Nevertheless, the writing was already appearing on the wall; the expulsion of CLN officials in local administrations and in the local police forces was the first step. This action was being justified on the grounds that in order to return to "normalcy" and to restore "law and order" it was necessary to reimpose the central administrative authority of Rome. The move also assured that any Red sympathizers in the administration were deprived of whatever decision-making functions they might have exercised. The centrally-approved replacements, frequently amnestied ex-Fascist bureaucrats, were trusted by the Ministry of the Interior and could be counted upon to crush any foreseeable anti-government demonstrations incited by extremist Left parties.

In other words, the radical parties were being disarmed of an important political weapon, that of putting pressure on the government by way of the piazza; protesters would be less willing to risk injury in violent demonstrations if they...
were faced with squads of riot police equipped and determined to quell any such disorders. Not without reason did De Gasperi retain the Interior portfolio for himself or for trusted colleagues.

Such moves against CLN-appointed officials incited numerous protest demonstrations which in turn aggravated the difficult and strained relations within the Council of Ministers. Conservatives, insisted even more strongly that "public order" had to be restored and the results of the November, 1946 elections sustained their conviction that the advancing Left must be checked. In such major centres such as Milan, Genoa, Florence, Bologna and Turin the Social-Communists had won absolute majorities on the communal councils and in numerous other centres just failed to achieve the same results.

In the same areas, moreover, the DC lost substantially not only to the Left but to the Right as well. The event requires an explanation for it signified the revival of Right-wing influence and self-assurance in the shadow of a government which was showing tolerance toward the "small fry" of Fascism. The tense and still unsettled internal situation characterized by the aggressive militancy of the lower classes and the demands of the Left-wing parties, coupled with the inability of the disunited central government to prevent the disruption of "public order," posed for the propertied upper-classes and for the lower middle-classes (who had formed the bulk of the "small
fry") the most menacing danger to their interests and privileges. Both nourished a deep hostility, amounting to reaction, to the new political order which jeopardized their economic and social security.

The hostility became vented in a political phenomenon of transient influence the *Uomo Qualunque* (Average Man) party which achieved a considerable following particularly in Rome, Naples and the South. The simplistic slogan of the party was "things were better when they were worse" and with such a battle cry the *Uomo Qualunque* touched a sensitive chord in the Italian character which aroused a response in significant sectors of the lower classes. These politically unsophisticated Italians, congenitally cynical and suspicious about the State, politicians and human virtues in general, confused and unable to grasp the fundamental struggle between the large parties, and above all caught in a desperate economic bind (no work and rising prices), succumbed to the *Uomo Qualunque* appeal. The party bitterly attacked the existing situation (which was easy enough to do), criticized political leaders for their "immobilism," denounced the Resistance as the root cause of the current mess, jeered at its ideals, ridiculed its values, its parties (especially the PCI), and defended nostalgically the achievements of the past. The *Uomo Qualunque* was soon enough to be absorbed by the blatantly Fascist *Movimento Sociale Italiano* (MSI) leaving exposed in its wake only a disturbing element in
public opinion and bequeathing a new word to the Italian vocabulary which is still frequently invoked to describe its particular mentality: *qualunquismo*.

Besieged, as it was, on all sides, the DC could not survive very long. Both Left and Right were making gains at its expense. In January, 1947, Prime Minister De Gasperi

6. Alberto Moravia, for example, in the context of a recent film criticism tried to give *qualunquismo* a cultural definition: The putrefaction of the old Italian Humanism of Guicciardini and the Renaissance.*

Humanism was probably the last free, original ideology of Italy and hence deep down *qualunquismo* is the kind of mentality which distinguishes Italians from other people. An Italian is Qualunquist as an American is Puritan, as a Frenchman, a Cartesian.

...*qualunquismo* has nothing at all in common with wiseness but is rather a peculiar kind of regressive common sense...

Naturally, these definitions are worth what they are worth, that is little or nothing.

"In giacca rossa e parucca beatnik" *L'Espresso* (Rome) XII, No. 11, (March 13, 1966) p. 23

* Francesco Guicciardini (1483-1540) Renaissance diplomat and historian, was: a man whose moral nature inspires a sentiment of liveliest repugnance. It is not merely that he was ambitious, cruel, revengeful and avaricious, for these vices have existed in men far less antipathetic than Guicciardini. Over and above these faults, which made him odious to his fellow citizens, we trace in him a meanness that our century is less willing to condone. His phlegmatic and persistent egotism, his sacrifice of truth and honour to self interest, his acquiescence to them for his own advantage, combined with the glaring discord between his opinions and his practice form a character which would be contemptible in our eyes were it not so sinister. John Addington Symonds, quoted in "Guicciardini," Edited by John R. Hale, (New York: 1964) pp. 8, 9

Evidently, Guicciardini is the arch Qualunquist of Italian history. His twentieth century imitators unfortunately have only his faults without any of his redeeming intellectual talents.
visited the United States. The trip was an ostensible good will mission and symbolized Italy's restoration to full status in international affairs on the eve of the signing of the Peace Treaty with the Allies. The United States had been, of all the Allies, the most sympathetic toward Italy during the treaty negotiations. This treatment contrasted sharply with the stern attitudes of the Soviet Union which insisted on receiving war reparations in full. Against the background of the tense international situation, characterized chiefly by the increasingly gelid relationship between the two great rival power blocs, the cordiality shown toward De Gasperi by the Americans acquired greater significance than otherwise might have been the case.

Moreover, without denying the Italian Prime Minister's sincere desire to cultivate good will and reconciliation between two ex-belligerents, his visit to Washington had certain other, more specific goals; namely, to ask for economic aid. De Gasperi's petitions were received with sympathetic attention. The Americans extended a $100 million loan from the Export-Import Bank, released Italian property in the United States, which had been frozen during the war, and promised further efforts to help finance Italian industry.  

7. Under the UNRRA programme, which was largely American financed, Italy was to receive over $589 million worth of aid before its termination in June, 1947.
The alacrity with which economic assistance was extended to the Italians did not conceal the string which attached the aid to the expressed American desire that its financial help should aid "the stability and consolidation of the Italian democratic regime." In the context of the period the meaning of this statement was quite clear. About a month after De Gasperi's visit, the Truman Doctrine was enunciated in the American Congress by which the United States pledged itself to "support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressure" and to assist "those free peoples...against the aggressive movements which seek to impose their own totalitarian regimes." This was no more than a "frank recognition" that failure to extend assistance would "undermine...the security of the United States."  

Truman's declaration was specifically designed to justify American military intervention in the Greek civil war but its implications were applicable to the situation in Italy as well. During the expulsion of CLN-appointed officials from the local administration, the new appointees carried out widespread searches for arms-caches known or suspected to have been hidden by Red-sympathizing ex-partisans especially in the "Red 

8. Quoted in Qammarella, op. cit. p. 141  
Belt" in North-Central Italy. The actual discoveries of such caches were seized by the Right-Wing and Qualunquist parties and press as irrefutable proof of a subversive, communist-inspired conspiracy to stage an insurrection against the democratic order (the same order which they never hesitated to denounce violently).

The clean-up hunt, which was carried on for months, further aggravated the already inflamed political climate in the country and intensified the basic division of public opinion into two hostile camps. It also strengthened De Gasperi's public position vis-a-vis the Left arming him with further pretexts for his next major move which concerned ridding his government of its Social-Communist participants.10

A turn of events in Italy seemed almost to fulfill De Gasperi's tactical designs. While he had been in Washington, the Socialist Party was holding its National Congress in Rome. The two old wings of the party, Maximalist and Gradualist, which had been reunited in exile, were again at odds over what direction the party was and should be taking and precisely over the political collaboration with the PCI which had been formalized the previous October. The November local elections had revealed

10. "On a visit to the United States [De Gasperi] had received assurances that his government would enjoy still greater favour in Washington if the Communists were no longer in it." H. Stuart Hughes, The United States and Italy (revised ed.), (Cambridge: 1965), p. 145
that Socialist candidates were losing votes to Communists. This factor alarmed the Right-wing of the PSI which was hostile to the PCI for its long identification with Soviet ideology and particularly with the more objectionable aspects of Stalinist politics both domestic and international.

The Unity of Action Pact, in turn, bound together the Socialist and the Communist parties and blurred their differences to the public. Officially, the Socialist party maintained neutrality with regard to the rivalry between the power blocs, but in practice this amounted to antipathy for Western capitalists and sympathy for the Soviet Union. In the tense atmosphere of the Cold War, which was becoming daily more frigid, this ambiguous attitude toward East and West was intolerable for the "autonomist" Right-wing Socialists whose fundamental political, ideological and cultural preferences were decidedly pro-Western. As a result of this irreconcilable division between the two wings, the "autonomist" wing led by Giuseppe Saragat walked out of the Congress to form what was later to become the Italian Social Democratic Party (PSDI). With Saragat went 50 of the 115 Socialist members of the Constituent Assembly.

Pietro Nenni, leader of the "fusionist" (Maximalist) wing of the party, and De Gasperi's Foreign Minister, subsequently submitted his resignation to the Prime Minister. Since other Socialist ministers followed suit, De Gasperi was given the opportunity to form a new government. Although Communists and
Socialists were not yet eliminated; the opportunity was taken to assure greater Christian Democrat control of the most important portfolios. De Gasperi's tactics were well thought out for the Socialist and Communists were placed in the uncomfortable position of sharing government responsibility for the signing of the Peace Treaty (on February 10) which retained all the rigorous (and unpopular) exactions demanded by the USSR but renounced by the USA and Great Britain. About one month later the Truman Doctrine was proclaimed. Although the doctrine was denounced as "imperialist" in the Social-Communist press it was applauded by those sectors of the Italian public which felt threatened by the Red bloc.

Despite the implications of the Truman Doctrine, De Gasperi's skillful political strategy may not have been well perceived by Togliatti and the Social-Communist group. The PCI still pushed its determination to participate in the government and to cultivate a lasting collaboration with the Catholics to surprising ends. Shortly after the signing of the Peace Treaty the controversial Article VII came before the Constituent Assembly for a vote. In an astonishing break with the Socialists and the anti-clerical "lay" parties, the PCI voted to include Article VII in the constitution.

The party justified its vote by what it maintained

11. See Appendix II
was a correct appraisal of the cultural imperatives of the Italian situation. Neither of the two "mass" Left-wing parties (PCI and PSI) could claim, either alone or jointly, to have a monopoly of political support of the lower or "popular" classes. The DC received most of its support from these same classes as well.

In Marxist terms political parties were the organized reflection of the conflicting political interests of differing socio-economic classes. But, a plurality of parties could still draw their majority support from the same common class. In Italy two such parties, the PCI and PSI, were collaborating on the general basis of a shared ideology. Because it was desirable that this collaboration be extended to embrace the rest of the "popular" classes, it was essential not to rupture the fundamental unity of "the working classes" by offending the religious sensibilities of the third, or Catholic, element.

Undeniably, substantial segments of the industrial workers, of the peasantry and, above all, of the mass of newly-enfranchised women were moved by a profound attachment to what was an intimate part of their personal and social culture, that is, to their religion, with all its demotic traditions and popular manifestations, to its endless hagiolatry and, above all, to la Madonna. Simultaneously, these same people could be hostile or resentful towards the Church as an institution and to its paladins, i preti. To many of these individuals
there was no contradiction in going to mass and voting for Communists. Others could not ignore the monitions of il papa and hence voted for the party which was both Christian and Democratic.

If the Communist Party were to cultivate the support of these masses who voted DC, or even seek not to offend those militants in its own ranks who, though anti-Vatican, were religiously inclined, it could not be aggressively anti-clerical or anti-Catholic. As for the DC itself, though its leaders often voiced the interests of higher socio-economic classes, its mass political support was still heavily based in the popular classes. The needs of these Catholic voters remained the same as those of voters who supported the Social-Communists. In the long run populist Left-wing Catholic leaders, currently overshadowed in their own party, would be forced to articulate the unsatisfied claims of this social-economic base both within the DC and in the larger forum of national politics.12

12. Some of the most prominent of those Left-wing Catholic figures are:

Giovanni Gronchi, ex-President of Italy; Amintore Fanfani, sometime Prime Minister and currently Minister of Foreign Affairs, Giorgio La Pira, ex-mayor of Florence and Giuseppe Dosetti, now a Catholic priest, one time leader of the Left-wing Social-Catholic current within the DC.

De Gasperi himself was a "centrist" in his own party and was constantly absorbed in the wearying task of balancing all the various party factions jostling for power in the party.
Ineluctably, this would necessitate a dialogue with the Communists and with the entire non-Catholic Left. In supporting the inclusion of Article VII, the PCI hoped to avoid jeopardizing this eventuality by demonstrating to its future interlocutors its lack of prejudice and its good intentions.

Regardless of the reasoning behind the PCI action, it was not convenient at the time for the clerical DC to risk a negative communist vote in retaliation for the latter's elimination in a cabinet reshuffling. Thus De Gasperi waited until May, just three months after forming his last tripartite government, two months after the proclamation of the Truman Doctrine and one month after the vote on Article VII to submit his resignation on the grounds that his government could not continue in the absence of any "solidarity" on the part of Communists and Socialists on questions of administration or public legislation and in the face of persistent attacks on him in the Social-Communist press.

De Gasperi's resignation touched off a long political crisis in which two prestigious pre-Fascist Prime Ministers tried to form a government without a major party base. This was impossible and the charge naturally fell back to De Gasperi who began exhaustive negotiations with other parties to form a coalition. He failed on the Right and on the Left. Social-Democrats, Actionists and Republicans refused to enter a government which would leave out important working class
representation as manifested by the Social-Communists. Liberals refused to enter a government with even token Communist representation. Thus De Gasperi decided to form a minority government composed of Christian Democrats with a few "experts" thrown in. The government was still dependent upon other non-DC votes in the Assembly to obtain majority support.

On June 21 this solution was presented to the Assembly for a vote of confidence and with the support of Liberal, Qualunquist and Monarchist votes, De Gasperi successfully evicted the extreme Left from their occupancy of any position in the government. The government which emerged from these manoeuvres was then described to the public as "the government of rebirth and salvation of the country." During the same weeks in France, political developments, which since the days of the WW II Resistance, followed a pattern similar to that in Italy, were climaxed by the identical result: Communist ministers in the French cabinet were forced out of office ending the French experience of tripartite government.

Towards A Day of Reckoning

In simpler terms, "salvation of the country" meant that Communists were now barred from exercising any control over the levers of government power. This much was a fait accompli.
There remained for the proximate future an even more decisive political showdown and the struggle leading up to it was to unfold over the next several months culminating in the momentous elections of April 18, 1948.

During these eventful months Italians were to be absorbed not only in the drama of their own domestic politics, but, ineluctably, were to be participants in the succession of international episodes which initiated what cumulatively would become known as the "Cold War." As early as March, 1946, the realist Churchill, in his celebrated speech at Fulton, Missouri had declared that the alliances which had served during the war to defeat the Axis were already terminated and now had been formed into two new power blocs separated by an "Iron Curtain." Among the first installments in the catalogue recording the actual progress of the "Cold War" must be included the 1947 ministerial purges in Italy and France. Indeed, Italian politics in this period were, to a remarkable degree, international politics and Italy one of the "fronts" of the Cold War. On this "front" the PCI would sustain considerable casualties.

World War II had been a catastrophe for Europe, a disaster for its economy and a shock to its political institutions. This was even more true for those countries where the fighting had been greatest and Italy was among the latter. Even for a victorious country such as Britain, not to speak of France, the near economic collapse caused by the war so severely reduced its
international political and economic power that at war's end only two states could really be called "Great Powers." In Europe both of these great powers had an immense stake in the direction European nations would cast their political lot and neither hesitated in actively trying to influence a choice favourable to its own interests.

Europe, even devastated and prostrate, held the balance of world power. Thus, as a prize, it became divided by the proverbial Iron Curtain and nations falling on either side of it had their destinies bound to one or the other of the two super states. In a few cases the choice was not immediately clear and the final decision hung in the balance until a decisive move was made. This is what happened in Italy on April 18, 1948. So significant is this date in contemporary Italian history that any reference to "il diciotto aprile" is immediately understood by all politically conscious Italians. Up to this date "which way Italy would go" was uncertain. After this date no question remained.

The Truman Doctrine and its implications have already been referred to. This policy, however, formed but one aspect of the American commitment to assure for itself a Europe whose political-economic orientation would be complementary to that of the United States:

Europe's collapse...posed a fundamental question to the United States: Is Europe vital to American security? The answer was never in doubt:...Western Europe controlled the sea gateways vital to American security...possessed
the largest aggregation of skilled workers, technicians and managers outside the United States...maintained the second greatest concentration of industrial power in the world...exercised control over many of the strategic raw materials which the United States needed to maintain its military strength and its capacity to wage war. American security demanded a healthy and strong Europe which could help tip the balance of power.\textsuperscript{13}

If all of this was true for the United States it was no less true for the USSR. Indeed, the latter could only trust that in at least two important countries in Western Europe national communist parties would win the power necessary to prevent their respective governments from responding to the attractive American offers which were being blandished. These offers were contained in the European Recovery Programme, more commonly known as the Marshall Plan, which was announced on the heels of the Truman Doctrine in June 1947. The De Gasperi government accepted the American offer immediately and of the $12 billion dollars put into ERP by the Americans between 1948 and 1952, Italy received $1,515 million of them.

It was in part-fear that the Communist alternative might gain strength which prompted the United States to extend lavish aid to Italy throughout the years of the Marshall Plan's operation—and without that aid the story of the past few years might have been a very different one.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{13} John W. Spanier, \textit{American Foreign Policy Since World War II}, (New York: 1960), p. 40

The Marshall Plan was denounced by the PCI, now growing more militant in the wake of its expulsion from the government. In this, its attitude was identical to that of the USSR. The Marshall Plan was originally offered to all of Europe, including the USSR, since the basic condition of the plan was that European States coordinate their recovery programmes leading to eventual economic integration. This was the instigation for the Organization of European Economic Cooperation (OEEC).

For the Soviet Union (or the states in its sphere of control) to have accepted this condition would have meant first, that it permit some United States (i.e. capitalist) participation in planning its economy, and secondly, that in contributing food and raw materials as its share in the effort it would be contributing in the reestablishment of capitalism in Western Europe.

As for the Americans, extending the ERP to include the USSR was a "risk" which had to be accepted: it had to be the Russians who by their rejection of Marshall Plan aid, would be responsible for the division of Europe. The masterly stroke of tactical genius would have been for the Soviets to have accepted the plan with eagerness, assuring, by the consequent soar in estimated cost to the United States, almost certain rejection of the Plan by the American Congress. "Actually...Molotov did arrive in Paris with a large delegation of experts and he gave American policy makers a momentary scare."\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{15} Spanier, op. cit. p. 43
However, suspicion of western schemes led the USSR to reject the plan (for itself as well as for East Europe) thus taking the blame for aggravating the Cold War and assuring passage of the programme in Congress:

...the Marshall Plan became transformed into an instrument of the Cold War...The American President and his advisers were now free to continue the distortion of the original proposal by presenting it to Congress as the economic complement to the military programme of the Truman Doctrine. 16

Consequently the entire programme became not just a Western European affair but rather a liberal democratic, neo-Capitalist affair. In joining it the De Gasperi government was only extending to the international plane the choices it had already made in its domestic policies. In neither case was the PCI able to prevent the choice. The critical importance of the impending general elections, the first to be held under the new constitution, lay therefore in the still very real possibility that the PCI-PSI alliance would achieve a victory at the polls or at least capture a large enough share of the vote to prevent the centre-right Christian Democratic government from continuing to function without the approval of the Left.

A Social-Communist majority would at the very least "neutralize" Italy in favour of the Soviet bloc and a substantial victory in this direction, especially in the context of the period, possibly could move Italy right into the Soviet bloc.

16. Hughes, op. cit. p. 430
A legitimate electoral conquest of power, moreover, would have incalculable repercussions since it would be the first such achievement in history. A Christian Democratic victory, on the other hand, would accelerate the reconstruction of Italy along the lines already laid down by the government (with the promise of Marshall Plan money) and, on the international level, place it squarely in the Western camp.

Thus, the choice placed before the Italian voter on April 18 was not one of a routine selection from among a group of candidates or party programmes. The most strenuous efforts were made, especially by the pro-government forces, to cause the voter to realize that he was choosing between "East" and "West", between two concepts of society, economics and politics, between two civilizations, two worlds and, not least, between the Church and her "enemies." It is doubtful that many of the voters could grasp the enormity of the decision facing them and, realizing this, the various parties subjected Italians to the most frenzied and acrimonious election campaigns ever staged, one which was to become a classic study in the art of propaganda.

Despite Saragat's defection from the PSI, the Nenni Socialists unhesitatingly renewed their pact with the PCI and in January, 1948 the creation of the "Democratic Peoples' Front" was announced. The DC, Social-Democrats and Republicans on their side made an informal electoral alliance with each other, while the Liberals and Uomo Qualunque parties formed a "National
Bloc." Other parties ran alone. From the beginning, however, the basic contest was clearly between the two great antagonistic parties and the systems they championed. The DC, in fact, used as one of its appeals the claim that, since it was the major bulwark against Communism, any anti-Communist vote not cast for it was a wasted vote.

From the time the PCI was expelled from the government, mass demonstrations, strikes and seizures of land were carried out by Leftist militants throughout the summer and fall of 1947. In November ex-partisans and workers went as far as seizing and occupying the Prefecture of Milan to protest the substitution of the CLN-appointed prefect by a career bureaucrat appointed by Rome. The outburst of extreme rank and file militancy, in contrast to the official moderation of the party directorate, coincided with the creation in September, 1947 of the Cominform.

The latter was also an episode in the progress of the Cold War. The Communist Information Bureau, as an agency for consultation among nine communist parties (those of East Europe plus those of France and Italy), was a limited and much looser resuscitation of the old Comintern. The hardening of attitudes, the increase in mutual hostility and the sharpening of divisions between the Soviet and American camps was thus marked by the partial imitation of a previous institution which had been created at an earlier, more adverse period when Communists had
had deemed it necessary to decide international communist policy from a central authority, one which, at the time of its dissolution, had seemed superfluous against the prospects of communist party successes in the future. The creation of the Cominform was in a sense a return to earlier patterns.

At the founding conference, Italian and French Communists found themselves being severely criticized for their moderation, for not being more assertive in resisting the restoration of reactionary groups to the control of the levers of power in their respective countries and in preventing their countries from slipping into the American camp. The PCI and PCF would need exert greater energy to prevent the existing trend from worsening. In Italy this meant that the party leaders need simply to ease their restraint on the impatient rank and file. But, with the elections impending the PCI chose to follow its moderate course to its logical end. In January, 1948, the PCI held its Sixth Congress and in its final declaration reaffirmed its intention to operate within the framework of the Constitution of the Republic despite the best efforts of reactionary classes to put obstacles in the path of working class accession to power and despite the threat of armed foreign intervention in Italian affairs.17 The declaration added that party sympathizers should be prepared, if necessary, to fight for their rights in the face of intimidating obstacles.

17. Although the Peace Treaty was signed Allied troops were still in Italy at this time.
As the campaign moved into high gear the propaganda mills of all the parties ground out reams of material to sway the voter:

As the campaign began it appeared that the Front would win more votes (about 40 per cent) than any other party or electoral bloc...The Christian Democratic party was expected to get only 30 to 35 per cent of the vote.\(^\text{18}\)

To reverse these prospects required a massive exertion on the part of Christian Democrats and their allies. The pro-government campaign concentrated on a number of issues, all basically variations on the same theme that Italy must stay with the West, foster its advantageous alliance with the United States and defeat communism at home. The DC presented itself to the electorate as the champion of freedom and bulwark against communism whose possible victory was depicted as disaster for Italy. It defended its record in the government and its acceptance of the Marshall Plan for Italy. Above all the pro-government forces repeatedly emphasized that recent events in Czechoslovakia would be the model for Italy if the Front were to win the elections.\(^\text{19}\)

\(^{18}\) Wm. Caldwell "The Press and Propaganda in the 1948 Italian Election Campaign," \textit{Journalism Quarterly}, Spring, 1953

\(^{19}\) In February the coalition Czech government headed by Communists (who formed the largest single party in Czechoslovakia and who were jointed with the Socialist party in a common Popular Front) had undergone a severe crisis. Non-communist cabinet ministers accused their Communist colleagues in the principal ministries of turning the country into a police state and refused to continue sitting in the communist regime. In the week-long confrontation which ensued the non-Communist ministers were kept out of office on communist insistence and consequently Czechoslovakia became a purely communist People's Democracy. In short what was happening in Czechoslovakia was an inversion of the struggle for power in Italy.
The events in Czechoslovakia formed an ideal issue for the non-communist parties in Italy to use against the Peoples' Democratic Front. The touchy questions of the Istrian peninsula and of the City of Trieste, both of which were being claimed by communist Yugoslavia were also played upon in stridently nationalistic tones. Even the fate of some 10,000 Italian troops missing in Russia since the war was exploited as an election issue.

At the grass roots level the most thorough anti-Front campaigning to benefit the Christian Democrats was carried out by the Catholic church which spared no efforts on the latter's behalf. The three million member Catholic Action was mobilized to form "civic committees" in some 13,000 parishes in order to educate the faithful in coordination with the local DC propaganda offices. Churchgoing masses, overwhelmingly female, heard about the evils of Communism from the lips of their parish priests and were exhorted, under pain of mortal sin, to get out and vote. The government radio network, although officially non-political, carried its news slanted to favour the government and to put Communists in a bad light. Finally, the anti-communist crusade in Italy spilled over its borders into the United States where millions of Italo-Americans were urged to write to their relatives in Italy to vote against the Popular Front.

Facing this tide of anti-communist propaganda, the Peoples' Democratic Front aimed its own attacks against the
sources from which the anti-communist offensives were launched, particularly against the Vatican and the United States' State Department. De Gasperi and the DC were attacked as being Fascist, a vassal of American imperialism and a tool of the Catholic hierarchy. The voters were urged to retaliate against the "letters to Italy" campaign by voting for the Left.

One last card remained for the West to play. In March, 1948, the three Western powers declared that since no agreement could be reached on choosing a governor for the Free Territory of Trieste they favoured the city's restoration to Italy. Since the USSR had advocated Yugoslav claims on the city, the PCI would be put in a position of appearing to be contrary to Italian interests if it questioned the justice of the move. Consequently, the Front was reduced to describing the western proposal as an "electoral trick."

Finally, after being subject to weeks of the most intense barrage of campaign propaganda in an extremely charged atmosphere and against a dramatic background of international confrontation on Italian soil, 92.1 per cent of the electorate went to the polls to make their choice.

The choice made on il diciotto aprile is well known.
CHAPTER V

TRANSITION YEARS
Il Secondo Dopoguerra: 1948 - 1953

When the ballots were counted in the days following April 18 a number of conclusions were to be drawn. First and most important of these was the fact that the actual results of the elections turned out to be the inverse of what had been predicted: it was the DC which walked away with 48% of the vote while the Social-Communist Front was kept to 31% of the total. The Front did lose some two million votes to the breakaway Social-Democrats but, even combined, this "socialist" vote would have amounted to only 38.1% of the total, still 10% less than the DC. Italian politics nevertheless remained, fundamentally, a three party affair.

Post-election voting analyses revealed that the DC had made its gains basically in two ways: it had picked up three million votes from the smaller Right-wing parties, which fared poorly in the voting, and had gained another two million "new" votes from women balloters. The frantic crusade to have all anti-communist votes concentrate on the "bulwark" of Christian Democracy was, therefore, a very real success and, considering that the DC, with a relative majority of parliamentary seats, if it chose, could almost have governed alone (it lacked but 3% more to have an absolute majority), the results of April 18 indicated a clear defeat for the extreme-Left led by the PCI. It meant, above all, that there was no chance for Communists to re-enter the government; the DC now
had little fear for its parliamentary life; it need not "come to
terms" with the Communists. The government if it pleased could
proceed full speed ahead to resuscitate Italian capitalism; bind
Italy's destiny economically, politically and soon militarily
to that of the United States, champion the ambitions of the
Catholic Church, ignore the claims of the radical and proletarian
parties and release the controls against resurgent neo-Fascism.

To greater or lesser degree this is what would in
fact happen and, to the extent that all of these things were
utterly against what the extreme Left wanted, the Social-Communist
defeat could be considered all the more decisive. The PCI had
pinned all its hopes on legitimately winning enough political
power to claim a commanding voice in a coalition government.
Instead, after the 18th of April, the party found itself neither
in possession of that power nor in any position to force an
uninterested DC to ask for its collaboration. True, about one
out of every three Italians supported the Front but almost one
out of two Italians had cast a vote against the Front by supporting
its principal rival, the DC. The criticisms of PCI tactics
which had been levelled at the first Cominform meeting were
correct insofar as these tactics had failed to promote the PCI
into positions of real influence within government.

There did remain of course the "Greek road" to
Socialism which might have been taken instead of the "Italian
road" but, in the judgment of Luigi Longo: "it is certain that
had we gone the direction of Greece we should have faced a similar kind of counter-revolution."\(^1\) In the concurring opinion of another PCI leader: "The presence of the Allies can in fact be considered to have been preclusive counter-revolution imported into our country."\(^2\)

For the PCI, April 18 represented a real setback: it had been a crucial confrontation and the DC had emerged victorious as a frankly declared champion of conservatism. If April 18 represented a setback it was not, however, a total defeat by any means. The next general elections in 1953 would prove to be much less of a triumph for the DC and more favourable to the Left. In the five year interval the PCI would bide its time in exercising its power as the major opposition party. Since these same five years would mark the height of the Cold War—with episodes of Hot War (Korea)—the role of the PCI as a formidable pro-Soviet threat to a staunchly pro-American government would have international as well as national overtones.

1. Luigi Longo, "A che punto siamo?" Rinascita, (Rome), (26 May, 1966), pp. 3-7
   Longo adds that: ...the choice was not a simple question of will, it could not overlook actual power relationships... Togliatti laid great stress on the presence of the Allies as a conditioning force on our policies. And this meant not just military presence but also (the) economic...administrative presence for as long as the terms of the armistice and the peace treaty endured.

2. Giorgio Amendola, ibid. Hughes tends to share this view: A decade ago it was still possible to imagine our country's (USA's) armed forces intervening in Italy to cancel the results of a leftist electoral victory. "The New Italy and its Politics" Commentary, No. 4, October, 1964, p.
In biding its time the party would not stand around idly but neither would it embark on any rash adventures. The party leadership stood by its commitment to follow the constitutional road to power. Had this attitude reflected expediency alone, had the leadership simply lacked the chance to follow another tack, the several ideal pretexts for instigating revolutionary insurrections which did present themselves during the course of things would not have been passed up as they were. This restraint in exploiting explosive situations in the face of harsh criticism from the Cominform, which increasingly reflected Stalinist points of view, has even led some non-Communist commentators to accuse the PCI of actually being a party of conservatism.3

Such an opinion, however, is not without its polemical content. April 18 had, it is true, been a verdict. But no one could claim that it was a verdict emanating from an atmosphere of contemplative serenity, free from any trace of engineered hysteria. At least no one espousing a Gramscian point of view would claim this. To refer again to one of Gramsci's writings:

The crisis (of hegemony) creates immediately dangerous situations, because the different strata of the population do not possess the same capacity for rapid reorientation or for reorganizing themselves with the same rhythm. The traditional ruling class which had a numerous trained personnel, changes men and programmes and reabsorbs the control which was escaping it with a greater speed than occurs in

3. Giorgio Galli takes this view in some of his writings, e.g. "The Italian CP: Conservatism in Disguise" Problems of Communism VIII, No. 3 (May-June 1959) pp. 27-34
the subordinate classes; it makes sacrifices exposes itself to an uncertain power, strengthens it for the moment and makes use of it in order to crush its opponent and dispose its leading personnel which cannot be very numerous or well trained.4

Il diciotto aprile had inflicted its wounds, but it did not entirely crush the opposition. However, in the wake of such a dispiriting electoral defeat, one which had effectively prevented the PCI from claiming a legitimate share of government power, and in the grim international atmosphere of the period—one of an impending clash between East and West—the PCI felt more acutely the need for the sustaining moral support and political solidarity of its one time patron the USSR and, if things came to the worst, to demonstrate that its ultimate loyalties still lay with the ideals which the USSR represented.

In the aftermath of WW II, however, Soviet society and government were themselves experiencing internal strains which in later years would have far-reaching effects. After sustaining immense sacrifices to repel the Axis invasion of its territories, the Soviet Union emerged from the war no longer the solitary "cradle of the revolution" but as the head of an entire bloc of states in East Europe. The governments of these states had in the inter-war period frequently been very anti-Russian, philo-Fascist, and in some cases during the war itself, aligned with the Axis. The communist parties in these states

were—if legal—usually weak, or outlawed altogether. Hence it was basically the gubernatorial presence of the Red Army which had assured the postwar establishment in East Europe of communist governments. Quite understandably they remained friendly and grateful to the Soviet Union.

But, rather than feel more protected, the USSR felt even more insecure and, as the Western Alliance, in application of the doctrine of "containment," encircled the country with military bases, a sense of being besieged. The external threat served as the pretext for the Soviet leadership, that is, Stalin (who in his later years especially is reported to have suffered from paranoia) to repeat the kind of behaviour practised during the purges of the Thirties when Stalin ordered the most ruthless crimes—torture, imprisonment, execution—to be committed against numberless victims. Again after WWII supposed enemy spies, counter-revolutionaries, plotters and imagined traitors were liquidated with the barest pretenses of legality and with utter lack of justice. This reversion to police-state terrorism placed the populations of not only the USSR but all of the East European countries under the severest kind of psychological as well as political strain.

In the USSR the reapplication of the tight centralized authority, necessarily weakened under wartime conditions, was characterized by the coercive demand for the most stringent orthodoxy on all matters; political, economic, cultural and
ideological. Such orthodoxy extended to the whole Soviet bloc and was justified and rationalized on the basis of a long cultivated myth that of the infallible good judgment and almost providential sagacity of Stalin's leadership.

In the light of this demand for uncompromising single-mindedness and militant discipline within the Soviet bloc itself, with the unpleasant and oppressive atmosphere it created within this bloc, the PCI could not expect Soviet indulgence for its undogmatic flexibility and moderate line of action especially when it had just emerged from a stinging electoral defeat. Like it or not, if the choice facing the PCI were to be reduced ultimately to one of being either "for" the USSR or "against" the USSR the answer, especially in 1948, could not be equivocated.

To have chosen the latter would have negated the political rationale of the PCI since its creation in 1921. After everything else was said, the October Revolution and its issue, the Soviet state, had been the first effort in history to begin building Socialism, despite the best efforts to "strangle it in its cradle," against the greatest physical odds and at the cost of immense privation and suffering on the part of the Soviet people. This momentous achievement, in turn, animated the struggle of communist movements throughout the world which

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continued to be inspired by the achievements of the USSR and to look to its prestigious leaders for support and encouragement. If these leaders determined that the time called for militancy and discipline, then such was their influence that other Communists could not but become more militant despite their own judgment concerning the proper course of action.

Thus, for a short time, prior to and after the April elections in Italy, public demonstrations by party militants were not discouraged by the PCI. Neither were they encouraged, however, not even when it seemed that a revolution was about to erupt spontaneously. On July 14, 1943, as Togliatti was leaving the Chamber of Deputies, a fanatic and unstable neo-Fascist student, evidently goaded by the violent anti-Communist campaign in the press shot and severely wounded the Communist leader. While Togliatti lingered near death, Italy almost erupted into civil war. Over the entire peninsula riots occurred, and barricades were thrown up in the streets. Industry was brought to a halt when the CGIL called for a general strike. In clashes between workers and police, several persons were killed. To have touched off a full blown insurrection would have required only a word from the PCI leadership. Although there were those in the party who urged this very course, Togliatti himself
restrained such action. The forces aligned against the party—the army (Italian and foreign) and the national police brigades—were too clearly overwhelming to risk the useless bloodshed and inevitable defeat which would have ensued from such an armed clash:

After the events of July 1943, the Italian Communist Party became an opposition party as indeed it had to be within the conditions of the Cold War. But, even so, it avoided any frontal clashes with the government which might have caused it to be outlawed and Togliatti pursued his goal of making the Party the foremost democratic force in Italy.7

To some, for whom "Communism" and "Democracy" remain quite incompatible ideals, the goal of making the PCI "the foremost democratic force in Italy" would seem to be a contradiction and an impossibility. But, the quadripartite government which would rule Italy for the next five years was to be formed by parties either dedicated to perpetuating the economic status quo (Liberals) or by parties which, if reform-minded at all, sought reforms without tears (Social-Democrats and Republicans.)

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6. Togliatti's personal sentiments on this fundamental problem facing the PCI (referred to by Longo in a previous quotation (vide p.167) are revealed in this quotation: Had we aroused the masses to an insurrection...we should have detached from these masses but a small vanguard. The latter would have been met with a fusillade and the rest would have fallen under the influence of conservative and reactionary groups. The entire evolution of our country would have been different. Instead of bringing ourselves closer to a socialist perspective we should have made it more remote. Quoted by Georges Jarlot "Le Neo-Marxisme Italien", Études, No. 324, (Janvier-Juin 1964) pp. 32-46. This is the kind of "conservatism" to which Galli seems to allude.


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The DC itself contained currents which went both further Right and further Left than any of its coalition partners but, as long as De Gasperi held the reins, the DC kept a steady course just to the Right of Centre. Thus, under these circumstances, it was the opposition parties of the Left, and, of these, principally the PCI, which articulated most forcefully the popular demands for reforms and represented the most powerful challenge to the power of the propertied and privileged.

Faithful to its commitments, the De Gasperi government utilized its electoral power to proceed with its policies of financial orthodoxy. The arrival of economic aid under the ERP assisted the Italian government in its goals of stabilizing prices and restoring industrial production to its prewar levels but it did not seek to alter the basic structure of the Italian economy. Unlike France, Italy was never equipped with a long range economic plan and economic activity was revived privately without priorities or plans. The propertied classes, whose wealth was based on ownership of land or industries in fact grew richer during the post-war inflation; on the other hand, salaried classes grew poorer. The savings of the middle classes were wiped out by the inflation: the lira in 1950 had been reduced to about one-fiftieth of its value of 1938. Consequently, it was this latter class which most frequently responded to the appeals of neo-Fascism ("things were better..."). Wage-earning classes were in a somewhat better position than the
salaried middle-classes since their wages could be adjusted upward as the rhythm of industrial production increased and particularly since the vote of these working-classes remained a powerful threat to the industrialists.

A major irony in the political arrangement which resulted from the vote of April 18 was that the PCI—a party denounced by its opponents as being utterly contemptuous of law and order—was cast in the role of being the defender of constitutional legality while the DC—a party whose very name included the word Democracy—felt constricted by a constitution which had been adopted through legal and democratic procedure and resisted its full application. Even today, nineteen years after the constitution has been in existence one of its major provisions, the institution of the Regions has not been effected except in the case of five Regions whose demands for autonomy could not be resisted. Although every kind of rationalization for this state of affairs is put forward, the real reason for it is the fact that there exists across North-Central Italy the famous "Red Belt" of Tuscany, Umbria, Le Marche, and Emilia Romagna. Regional autonomy would place these communist strongholds out of the grips of the Ministry of the Interior.

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8. The five are: Sicily, Sardinia, Val d'Aosta, Trentino-Alto Adige, and most recently, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, all of them either islands or Northern frontier regions with large linguistic minorities.
Other important democratic institutions provided for in the constitution were also delayed as long as possible. The Constitutional Court and Supreme Council of the Magistrature for example were created only eight years after the constitution went into effect.9

These delays by the Christian Democratic regime in making the constitution fully operative, delays which were based upon political convenience rather than technical inopportunity, consequently prevented the extension of popular participation in self-government. The field of local, provincial and regional government remained (and remains) ultimately subject to the centralized authority based in Rome and "Rome" increasingly reflected the will of the DC which was consolidating its own party hegemony over the apparatus of State. Indeed, if there was one issue which kept the various correnti of the DC from pulling apart it was their common accord to use their power to fight off the "communist menace."

The offensive against the Communists extended as well to one of the most important of their strongholds, to the unions.

9. It is Mammarella's opinion that: "In the case of the Constitutional Court and the Supreme Council of the Magistrature, the government and the parties of the majority have delayed their establishment as long as possible in order not to be deprived of important instruments of power, such as for instance the Fascist police laws, which the court should have abolished—although this did occur later. The failure to set up the other institutions—legislation by popular initiative, the popular referendum and regional administration by regular statute—can be explained by the majority's preoccupation with denying an advantage to the Social-Communists." op. cit., pp. 186-187
Ever since the industrial strike of 1942 and 1943 which began the process which led to Mussolini's overthrow, the communist influence in the unions was overwhelming. The actual management of the postwar General Confederation of Italian Labour, like the government, was at first tripartite, joining together leaders affiliated with the Communist, Socialist and Christian Democratic parties respectively. In practice, the highly capable Communist, Giuseppe DiVittorio, exercised his skill in organizing and his forceful ability to communicate his ideas to the rank and file as well as to the leadership to win the two other union secretaries over to his point of view and to have the latter, willingly or with hesitations, follow the policies he advocated.

Since the Communists were not only more aggressive in their promotion of worker interests and demands but better organized, they were better able to staff lesser positions in the union hierarchy with dedicated union workers. Here the Christian Democrats could not compete with the Communist's party man for man, as they could in the rural parishes, for unlike the latter case the DC did not have in the factories the local clergy at its disposal.\textsuperscript{10}

\textsuperscript{10} The same situation in France led to the unsuccessful "worker-priest" experiment where priests took up jobs in factories alongside the workers. To the chagrin of the hierarchy it was found that, rather than workers becoming better Catholics, priests were becoming Communists.
Thus the only way for non-communist union leaders to weaken the PCI hold on the unions was to secede from the CGIL. The pretext arose after the CGIL used the union organization to foment worker demonstrations which were of political rather than economic nature: the demonstrations following the attempt on Togliatti's life, against the Marshall Plan, and against the unloading of military supplies from the United States were examples of such "political" strikes which reflected the communist point of view.

Shortly after the events following the July 14 assassination attempt, the Catholics left the CGIL to form the CISL (Confederazione Italiana dei Sindacati Liberi—Italian Confederation of Free Unions) and, somewhat later, the Social-Democrats left to form the UIL (Unione Italiana del Lavoro).

The Socialists, however, remained and are still joined with the Communists in the CGIL.

In July, 1949 a blow was aimed at the Communists from another direction. From the throne of St. Peter was hurled an excommunication against all those who professed, defended, propagated, published, read, diffused or collaborated by writings, books or periodicals "the theory and practice of Communism."

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11. "These secessions, which were backed by moral and financial support from American union representatives, deprived the CGIL of perhaps a third of its membership." Hughes, op. cit. p. 169
Inexorably, the PCI continued its advance but, now, the advance was achieved not by the old conspiratorial methods but, rather, by becoming openly an enormous mass party, the largest in the non-communist world, which achieved despite every effort to halt its progress a membership of over two and one-half million at its greatest extent. Papal excommunications against "atheistic Communism," especially from a Pope who made princes and counts out of his nephews, convinced only those already opposed to Communism of the need to resist it. While economic and social disparities in Italy remained so acute and unalleviated, pleas on behalf of the defenders of the status quo, regardless of from how prestigious a source they emanated, could not prevent those masses who remained victims of that same status quo from listening to the attacks against the injustices it perpetuated. This still does not explain the endurance of communist power in Italy, assuming that this power depends solely upon the economic deprivation of the population. The PCI today is electorally stronger than it ever was despite the effects of the much advertised "Miracolo Economico" which Italy has experienced.

Any government which might have come to power in 1948, regardless of its political colouring, would have faced the same socio-economic problems and would have had to have taken some steps to solve them, even if only by accomplishing the bare minimum. Agriculture remained the greatest headache. One half or more of the population still remained on the land
and of these the landless *braccianti* (literally "the ones with arms" their only source of income) who worked on a day to day basis for the owners of the *latifondi*, formed alone about one quarter of the agricultural population. These "wetbacks" lived in the most hopeless conditions with no security of employment and were for much of the year in fact jobless. Emigration had traditionally been their only escape. After WW II, however, the *braccianti* in angry desperation began to occupy some of the great estates, particularly of the South, which were semi-cultivated or completely neglected by absentee owners. In the face of this menacing social unrest the De Gasperi government introduced a bill to redistribute the land (with indemnities to the owners) to the landless peasantry. In doing so, the conservatives in the government (particularly the Liberals and Right-wing Christian Democrats) fought the measure at every turn in alliance with the bitterly opposed Federation of Agricultural Employers, Confagricoltura. Although almost two million acres of land were redistributed by the land reforms, they have not brought the resounding success which had been hoped for.

The Christian Democratic land reformers had hoped to create a class of independent peasant farmers of the kind who usually could be counted on to vote DC. Therefore, going against the trend of modern agriculture everywhere, land was distributed to the peasants in small uneconomic parcels instead of joining the peasants together in larger cooperative types of agricultural
enterprises. The latter were particularly suitable for the South where the land was often infertile and required modern mechanized techniques applied with industrial efficiency to achieve a suitable yield. The not infrequent result was that the resettled farmer, unable with his old and inefficient techniques to make a go of his new farm and lacking the investment capital to mechanize even his own small acreage, abandoned his new cottage to return to his squalid village where at least he could share his poverty with others.

Along with the land reform was created a new agency La Cassa per Il Mezzogiorno (The Fund for the South) which was provided with very substantial funds to carry out sorely needed public works projects (roads, aqueducts, power installations etc.) which would provide an infrastructure for future economic advances. Nevertheless, the South was suffering from an immediate excess of population which neither a well-conceived land reform nor serious regional planning of the Tennessee Valley kind could entirely alleviate. An industrialized South might have been the answer, but no such condition existed. Consequently, Italy began to experience an entirely new social phenomenon which is still continuing; the mass migration of millions of Southerners seeking work in northern industrial cities. The Two Italies were finally to meet but not in the manner expected by economists.12

12. This dramatic confrontation between Northerner and Southerner has been cinematically depicted by the highly praised director Luchino Visconti (a Communist) in his film "Rocco and his Brothers."
The less than satisfactory results of the government's various programmes and policies both foreign and domestic soon began to reveal themselves politically. When NATO was officially formed in 1949, the De Gasperi government unhesitatingly committed Italy to the Alliance as a logical application of its general political line and in very short time American military bases were established over the Italian peninsula. By 1953, Italy itself, having assumed onerous military obligations as part of NATO, was diverting 23% of the Italian national budget to military expenditures, an amount whose size disturbed even Right-wing Italians.\footnote{In 1953, while these hundreds of billions of lire were being spent to defend Free Italy from the Communist Menace, a parliamentary commission published its findings on the living standards of the Italian people. In the 'Vigorelli Report' the following facts were brought to light: 11.7% of Italian families were declared utterly destitute; a similar number were "needy"; 65.7% lived in "modest conditions" (for Italy); 232,000 families lived in cellars, attics or warehouses; 92,000 lived in caves or "ricks and most Italian housing lacked even elementary hygienic plumbing facilities. In 1952 the national census showed that some five million Italians were still illiterate and millions were semi-literate. There were at the same time over two and a half million unemployed in the country.}

It was the outbreak of the Korean War which most deeply distressed wide sectors of the population who had had their fill of war and were basically of neutralist leanings.

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To these people, the military rather than the financial implications of the government's foreign policy were the immediate cause for anxiety. Nationalistic-minded Italians disliked the government's lack of an "independent" foreign policy and its obsequious eagerness to please Washington while the angry reactions of the Communists and other Left-wing sympathizers (strikes and demonstrations) unmistakably revealed their hostile attitudes. These and other factors helped to diminish the popularity of the government. Inevitably also the practice of the clientela and parentela, the peculiarly Italian forms of porkbarreling, became rife in what is known as the sotto-governo or "sub-government" of the ministries and numerous state corporations, all of which were usually run by DC appointees. The indications that all of this was not popular with the electorate were first revealed in the local administrative elections held in 1951 and 1952.

The results of both elections showed a substantial decline of votes for the DC which dropped from its 1948 total of 48.5% to 35.9% of the votes cast. The four million votes it lost were picked up mostly by the revivified Right-wing parties such as the neo-Fascist MCI and the Monarchist party, the latter of which actually won the Naples elections. While the Communists held their positions, the PSI made some notable advances which began to stir up anew the autonomist elements in the PSI who wanted greater self-identification from the PCI. The
Social-Democrats showed gains as well. Nevertheless the administrative elections were only the prelude for the battle which lay ahead in national elections of 1953.

The loss of votes suffered by the DC in the 1952 and 1953 elections, as well as losses by the Liberals and Republicans, indicated that the majority enjoyed by the quadripartite coalition had been pared to a bare minimum and, if national elections were to be held soon, even this margin might disappear if the trend continued. In fact, national elections were in the offing and the prospect of losing frightened the Christian Democratic leaders and their coalition partners into introducing a bill in Parliament which ignited an uproar of opposition and exposed the government to an unflattering comparison with the Fascist government of thirty years earlier. In 1923 the latter had rigged the election laws to assure for itself a parliamentary majority. What the Christian Democratic government proposed was a similar electoral law (dubbed by the opponents as La legge truffa (the fraud or swindle law) by which a single party or an alliance of one or more parties (such as the four parties of the coalition) which was able to muster at least 20.012% of the total vote would be given a premium of eighty-five seats thus raising the "winner's" majority to a safe 65% of the seats in the Chamber. After chaotic scenes characterized by very unparliamentary behaviour in both of the Italian Chambers, the law was passed over the violent protests of the opposition parties.
and automatically became the chief issue of the 1953 election campaign. The election took place on June 7 with 93.7% of the electorate voting.

If Il diciotto aprile is memorable for the failure of the Popular Front to vault itself into power by electoral means, Il sette giugno can be considered as the April 13th of the Right since the coalition parties together failed to win even 50.01% of the vote. Thus the new electoral law was made useless. The Social-Democrats and Republicans fared very badly although the DC improved its showing as compared with 1952-53 local elections and won 40.1% of the vote. The PCI and PSI ran on separate lists to emphasize their opposition to the "Swindle Law" and while the former made some gains the PSI gained twenty-three new seats. The other notable advances were made on the Right by the Monarchists who successfully exploited the political illiteracy of enough Southern peasants to jump from three seats in 1948 to forty in 1953.

The 1953 elections form another milestone in the political history of postwar Italy. In a real sense they meant that the struggle between Left and Right could be called a "draw": if the Left had been barred from grasping the power which was just within its reach in 1948, neither could the Right hope to monopolize it after 1953.

Italian Communists were not unused to hearing certain accusations repeatedly levelled at them: they were "threats to
democracy," "totalitarians" and even no less than "enemies of the human race." Yet, when the vilifiers still posed sanctimoniously as defenders of democracy just after having failed barely in their attempt to sabotage the representative nature of the Italian parliament, when they continued to delay putting important provisions of the republican constitution into effect in order to profit politically and especially when they eagerly utilized Fascist police laws against political enemies while posing as anti-Fascists the accusations tended, after the elections of 1953, to emit an odour of mendacity. To these hypocrites the Communists might well have repeated Rigoletto's contemptuous epithet with regard to the assassin Sparafucile: Pari siamo (We are both alike).

The Third Quinquennium: 1953-1958

In 1916 Gramsci wrote:

Every revolution has been preceded by an intense labour of criticism, of cultural penetration, or permeation of ideas through groups of men initially refractory and engrossed with solving day by day their own political and economic problem.14

Attention has already been made concerning Gramsci's thoughts on the competition which exists between groups or

classes for the position of "hegemony" in any given society; and reference has also been made to the considerable political power and influence achieved by the PCI after it returned to public activity in Italy after WW II, a power and influence which the party continues to retain and in fact has succeeded in increasing. Communist power in Italy, however, cannot be measured strictly in terms of percentages of the popular vote in elections, in numbers of parliamentary seats or in numbers of city or town councils controlled by the PCI.

This is not intended to mean that one must not forget, when calculating communist power in Italy, to include other institutions in which communist participation is significant, that is, in the unions, in the extensive system of cooperative businesses, in import-export businesses or in other enterprises such as publishing. These, of course, are very important but in gauging the true extent of the influence of the PCI in Italy such yardsticks do not suffice. They do not cover what is immeasurable, that is to say, the extent of the ideological attraction which the Italian variant of Communism has on Italians. They cannot appreciate, in a word, the extent of the "hegemony" of communist ideology in Italian society for the latter is not strictly identifiable with the political institution which is the PCI. The incalculable attraction of Gramsci lies at the centre of the issue, for his posthumous influence extends far beyond those circles which would be willing to be
identified as communist or at least as supporters of the PCI as a party.

The years after 1953 are profoundly important in Italian political history because they are years in which another svolta in the course of Italian politics began to take place. To use Amintore Fanfani's phrase, the period between 1953 and 1958 were "difficult but not sterile years." This could be said for European or international affairs as well but, for Italy, it signified particularly the period when the groundwork was first being laid for the "opening to the Left" on the part of the Right and indeed for the "opening to the Right" on the part of the Left. Much of this preparation was achieved not so much on the purely political level as on the cultural/ideological level where the Italian intelligentsia, regardless of political leanings, spoke the same intellectual language.

The pre-Fascist culture of Italy, so deeply influenced by Crocean idealism, did not suffer the same fate as pre-Fascist politics which were thoroughly eliminated during the twenty year long regime. To a great extent the former emerged intact because even the "official" Fascist culture and ideology had been created with the same intellectual tools which lay at the disposition of all intellectuals trained in the classical tradition of Italian scholarship.

Giovanni Gentile, the most distinguished ideologist and apologist of Fascism, had once been an intimate collaborator of Croce's until the two parted ways and the latter, as a Liberal,
assumed his "quietist" opposition to the regime. Croce's intellectual opposition was tolerated by the regime not simply because it served as convenient proof that "opposition" was allowed in Fascist Italy, nor simply because this opposition, limited as it was to the tiny elite of scholars conversant with Crocean thought, was quite ineffectual, but also because Croce's immense prestige as the doyen of an entire cultural tradition, shared by Gentile and Gramsci alike, made his suppression unthinkable. When the old man emerged from Fascism with his intellectual integrity uncompromised his prestige was even more widespread among the cultured classes:

The immediate effect of Mussolini's fall, then, was to strengthen the hold of Croceanism on Italian literary and social thought; the position of pre-eminence that the Neopolitan philosopher had achieved in the past forty years seemed only to be confirmed by the destruction of the Fascist tyranny. Yet this leadership was more precarious than it appeared: in most cases it rested on vague respect rather than on true understanding and Croce was by now too old to adapt to the new Italy that was emerging from the ruins of war.15

Croce's thought, while exercising an undeniably widespread and profound influence on Italian culture, had, at the same time, a smothering effect. It was almost as effective as the Fascist intolerance for the non-Fascist ideas which were common currency in the rest of Western Europe and North America not to speak of the USSR. Between Croce and Fascism nothing

15. Hughes, op. cit., p. 238
Hughes gives a very informative while concise account of the intellectual realignments in post WW II Italy in his book The United States and Italy, Chapter 11. For a deeper exposition of Croce's thought see the same author, Conscientiousness and Society (Chapters 2, 3 and 6 particularly).
Thus Croceanism in the immediate post-Fascist era exerted an influence almost diametrically opposed to what it had stood for a generation earlier. In the first two decades of the twentieth century Croce's historical and literary idealism had come as a breath of renewal; in the 1940's it figured as a solidly established cult whose aesthetic formulations masked rather than illuminated the harsher features of contemporary Italian life. It was only a question of time before some new approach to reality would shake up Italy's intellectual world and almost overnight release it from Croce's hypnotic spell.16

Enter Antonio Gramsci. While the PCI was conducting its struggles on the political plane, with the degree of success and failure already described, the body of Gramscian thought began to permeate Italian intellectual life. In it were synthesized the traditions of Crocean philosophical culture, Marxist criteria of socio-economic analysis, and an acute and profoundly humane personal consciousness of the squalor and backwardness which formed so large a part of the Italian reality, a reality which was all the more glaring when no longer veiled by the veneer of Fascist rhetoric.

Artistically, the first reactions were to be seen in the wave of postwar films now known under the generic name of "Neo-realist," films such as Rossellini's "Rome, Open City," "Paisà," and De Sica's "Sciuscià" and "Bicycle Thief" which are regarded as classics and which hid nothing of the truth of

16. Hughes, ibid.
Italian life from the camera lenses. In literature, the writings of Cesare Pavese, Alberto Moravia, Elio Vittorini, Carlo Levi, Vasco Pratolini, Pier Paolo Pasolini and others all reflected a preoccupation with the interaction between the characters in the novels and the social situation. Usually the protagonists were simple people of poor station or else well-to-do characters bored and corrupted by the hollowness of their easeful lives. But, while these engage creations could and did express a deep sympathy for the poor and oppressed they could not be "political" as such.

Gramsci's own work was more immediately connected with political and social theory, even if his aim was to relate this theory to the needs of the same masses from which the neo-realists took their characters. Gramsci's desire was to create a proletarian ethic which would overcome all other rival ideologies and raise the working classes to a position where they could exercise the cultural as well as social, economic and political hegemony over society. To achieve this in the Italian context, Gramsci thought, required that he come to grips with Croce:

It is necessary to practise on the philosophy of Croce the same reduction that (Marx and Engels) practised on the Hegelian philosophy. This is the only historically fruitful way of bringing about an adequate renovation of the philosophy of praxis (i.e. Marxism), of elevating that philosophy, which has been "vulgarized" for the immediate needs of practical life, to the level it must attain... (namely) the creation of a new integral culture which will have the mass-character of the Protestant Reformation and the French Enlightenment as well as the character of Greek culture and the Italian Renaissance, a culture that will... synthesize...politics and philosophy in a dialectical
unity...For us Italians, to be the heirs of German philosophy means being the heirs of the Crocean philosophy...

The above statement, has been explained as arising from Gramsci's conviction that Marxism "had suffered a 'materialist' degeneration in his time." This degeneration had been caused in three ways: firstly, Stalinism had reduced its metaphysics to a "mechanical materialism;" secondly, cultural, social and ethical factors in social change had been reduced to a "narrow political interpretation" in Leninism; and, thirdly, in order "to win the support of the plebs whose intellectual capacity or incapacity, reflected merely vulgar prejudice and naive realism" Marxism had been simplified for purposes of mass indoctrination. Political practice and speculative idealism had to be fused, not one time for all but "by each generation at higher levels." Gramsci's immediate task then was to achieve such a fusion which for Italy would "take the form of an anti-Croce written by a Marxist."

Such a concept does not indicate a totalitarian, ideological or political order. As suggested by a French Jesuit, Italian Communism refuses to assume a strictly

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17. Gramsci's "Il materialismo storico e la filosofia di Benedetto Croce" quoted by Neil McInness in "Antonio Gramsci" p. 10. McInness gives a good short summary of Gramsci's thought in his article relating it to other Marxist thought and to the PCI's position today.

18. McInness ibid.
proletarian colouring for it seeks to attract to itself not only the masses but the elites as well. Hence, according to the same writer "pluralism is necessary" to the PCI not simply because of the numerical realities of Italian politics but "doctrinally as well":

Marxism necessitates, in order that it purify itself both dialogue and dialectic. Hence, praxis. For the latter, thought is action and action is thought: the dialectical progression does not consist of destroying the thesis by means of the antithesis, but of saving all that is positive furnished by one and the other, and to raise both one and the other to a synthesis which is entirely positive. (Aufhebung)19

Thus, with regard to the "narrow" or political Leninist version of Marxism, despite its historical indispensibility, Gramsci felt about the same way "a theologian does about simple minded 'popular religion'."20 This did not diminish the importance of the Leninist type party because the latter remained the most important instrument of political action. Even a revolutionary movement of mass participation whose goals are cultural and ethical must be subject to the discipline of organization and leadership which is provided by a party. This is not to say that the party will be authoritarian. There must be a reciprocity, almost a dialectic, between the leadership, which must remain sensitive and responsive to the aspirations of the mass base, and this same base whose self-consciousness is concentrated in

20. McInness, op. cit. p. 11
its leadership. In such a praxis the party becomes the medium through which thought, which ideally exists in individual minds "becomes actual, lives historically, that is socially."\(^{21}\)

A philosophy such as Marxism must seek its "proof" by conquering mass support as a way of living. And at a crucial point in that effort "it will need a Machiavellian Prince to incarnate the collective will that has opted for its morality."\(^{22}\)

To use Gramsci's own words:

The modern Prince, the myth-prince cannot be a real person, a concrete individual; it can only be an organism, a complex element of society in which the cementing of a collective will, recognized and partially asserted in action has already begun. This organism is already provided by historical development and it is the political party:...It is necessary to define collective will and political will in general, in the modern sense: will as working consciousness of historical necessity, as protagonist of a real and effective historical drama. One of the first parts (of a study of modern revolution) ought in fact to be dedicated to the "collective will" posing the question in this way: "When can the conditions for the arousing and development of the national popular collective will be said to exist?" The Modern Prince must, and cannot but, be the preacher and organizer of intellectual and moral reform, which means creating the basis for a later development of the national-popular collective will towards the realisation of a higher and total form of modern civilization.\(^{23}\)

In this notion of the party, Marxism is anything but a crude materialist economism. The latter becomes rather an

\(^{21}\) Ibid.
\(^{22}\) McInness, op. cit. p. 13
\(^{23}\) Gramsci, *Note sul Machiavelli* (*The Modern Prince*) quoted by McInness, op. cit. p. 13
element of a more integrated critical consciousness which is diffused throughout the social collective. In seeking to bring about a fundamental moral and intellectual regeneration of society as well as in pursuing immediate economic social and political reforms the myth-prince becomes the instrument or medium through which critical awareness (thought) becomes programmatic (action). Through such a complete commitment the "higher and more total form of modern civilization" will be realized.

The party conceived by Gramsci remains voluntaristic enough to be considered Leninist and didactic enough to be considered Stalinist. On the other hand Gramsci's party seems to go beyond purely political concerns occupying itself with the

24. In this connection see Togliatti's comments on the obligations of the party worker, Chapter I, p. 33, footnote 33.
much vaster questions of culture and civilization. Such a "goût de la culture" could not but attract the attention of the apolitical intellectual, especially in an environment such as that of postwar Italy, where the ideals of the Resistance were struggling bitterly with the conservatism which had been the mainstay of the earlier regime.

25. Gramsci has not infrequently been described as an "heretical" or "open" Marxist usually by non-Communist intellectuals who would like to "claim" him as one of their own. The implied sense is that had he not been isolated in prison Gramsci would surely have broken with his party during the Stalin years. However, the closest approximation of what a profound cultural and moral, as well as political-economic, regeneration of society seems to be being made by no one as much as by the "Stalinist" Chinese Communists. According to a competent and impartial observer of Chinese affairs, Han Suyin, the Chinese Revolution, with all its political, economic and social implications, is not simply the result of the leadership of the Communist Party willing change. The latter is convinced that social change predicates irreversible changes in attitudes, a self-conscious planning on a philosophical as well as material scale. This furthermore assumes the perfectability of man through education; an education moreover to be carried out on a mass basis otherwise the vast masses of the population will remain untouched and unmoved by whatever progress is achieved by the well-prepared elite. Such a dichotomy would separate the basses and the elite on a material as well as spiritual basis. To this may be traced the importance attached to intellectuals doing physical labour and perhaps some of the remoter roots of the "Great Cultural Revolution" which seems to be as much political as "cultural" in context.

Vide Han Suyin, Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, V. XXII, No. 16, (June 1966), pp. 80-85

26. Jarlot, op. cit. p. 35
It is most apparent, therefore, that the impact of Communism in Italy was not superficial, nor limited to the unhappy and dissatisfied working classes. Its impact was broad and deep and, until the Italian intelligentsia began later to catch up with the most advanced non-Marxist social economic thinking, almost overwhelming. The ideological confrontation took place not only with the intellectuals of the "lay" tradition.

Catholics, that is to say the Catholic intelligentsia, still exercised a profound influence in Italian society. No one realized this better than Communists. But while the "lay" intelligentsia with its traditional anti-clericalism could not (or refused to) enter any dialogue with the "clericals," Communists were prepared to do so on an ideological level. The political actions of the PCI with regard to the insertion of Article VII in the Constitution have already been referred to. This, however, had little, if any, ideological overtones. It was simply a tactical effort to keep the door open for future efforts towards achieving some understanding with the Catholics. Such an understanding took time to mature but the maturation did take place. These were the "difficult but not sterile years" and the difficulty lay in the tortuous political developments which took place among all parties Left and Right.
Towards the "Openings"

While it would be interesting in itself to trace in detail the political contortions which took place among the government parties after the 1953 elections, these do not lie within the immediate scope of this discussion. It is, however, necessary to indicate major developments as they relate to the position of the PCI.

The Christian Democratic loss of its parliamentary majority was not without its victims and the first of these was De Gasperi himself: after ruling the country more than seven years he found himself unable to conjure up another "combinazione" by which his eighth ministry could win a majority of parliamentary support.

The search thus began for another way out of the political impasse with attempts to govern by monocolore (single party) government (i.e. Christian Democratic ministries) or by reviving the old quadripartite formula. Until the next general elections were held in 1958 one short-lived ministry was succeeded by another in a vain effort to find some kind of majority based on Centre-Right support. This meant that extreme Right-wing parties usually lent their tacit support by not voting against the government. In turn, the government had to be careful not to antagonize its Right-wing support by appearing too zealous about economic and social reform.

The result was that successive governments all suffered
from an immobilism which frustrated even non-Communists who were sincerely interested in seeing some progress made. For a long while apologists of the Centre-Right were able to rationalize this inertia by conjuring up before the anti-Communist public an alarming vision of the only other alternative: government of the Left. While the very mention of such a thing no doubt caused some Italians to have nightmares about a Great Dividing-Up Day in which their pockets would be emptied by the Bolsheviks, the prospect of a government including the "democratic Left" appeared to more and more people as the only rational alternative. The reasons were many. While the governments which succeeded each other after every few months were distinguished by one common feature, paralysis, on the level of internal party politics the common characteristic of all parties seemed to be change, fluidity and clarification of trends. This was true for both Left and Right wing parties.

After De Gasperi's fall the phrase "apertura a sinistra" which was coined by Pietro Nenni, secretary of the PSI, became one of the most frequently used terms in the Italian political vocabulary. While Nenni had used the phrase to mean that his party was prepared to arrive at an understanding with the DC if the latter were willing to collaborate, the term assumed a wider significance. The opening to the Left meant not only the possible inclusion of Socialists in government but meant that within the DC itself the Left-wing tendencies were beginning to
come into their own. This was indirectly due to a clarification of the position of the Liberal Party which had frankly become the spokesman for business and industrial interests, thus stealing some important support from the DC Right.

Simultaneously in the DC personalities (such as Amintore Fanfani) who were leaders of the Left or "popular" currents in the party were assuming positions of power and influence: in 1954 Fanfani was elected secretary of his party. Slowly the DC began to move leftwards while within the PSI trends indicated a reciprocal move to the Right. Such political manoeuvrings had the effect of bringing the much thought about "opening to the Left" closer to realization.

One of the most decisive "pushes" towards the Left occurred in 1955 when Giovanni Gronchi was elected President of Italy in succession to Luigi Einaudi. Gronchi was a Christian Democrat but he was not the official choice of the DC which had chosen a conservative with good business connections as its official candidate. Gronchi belonged to the Left wing of the Christian Democratic party and it was a humiliation to that party's Right-wing when, with Communist and Socialist support, he was elected to the presidency of the republic. 27

27. The Italian Constitution stipulates that a president must be elected by a two-thirds majority of both Chambers. After the third ballot, if no one is elected, a simple majority becomes sufficient. This makes the political weight of the Left decisive in presidential elections since alone it controls more than one-third of the vote in the parliament.
With Gronchi's election the Christian Democratic Right lost the dominant position it had held in the party since the end of the war. Conversely, the DC Left began to play an increasingly important role in deciding party policy although as yet it was unable to dictate any policy. On the other side of the Right-Left dividing line the PSI continued its slow separation from the PCI. Part of the reason for this was the clear possibility that Socialists might finally enter the proverbial "control room" and might share in shaping public policy. But this was only part of the reason. As attractive as participation in government appeared to the Socialists, other reasons for the disengagement from the PCI were very decisive and perhaps most can be traced to the momentous year of 1956. For the international communist movement the year 1956 has profound significance especially when one considers the relationship of one national communist movement to another.

Within the USSR, the years following WW II were characterized on the economic level by a tremendous growth under the Fourth and Fifth Five Year Plans (1945-1955). During these years the immense damage done to the Soviet economy during WW II was not only repaired but the rhythm of industrial production was increased to such an extent that a comparatively prosperous and comfortable life was beginning to become a reality for the masses of Soviet citizens. Agriculture, the perennial Soviet victim of under-investment, lagged behind industry in produc-
tivity, but as a consequence the agricultural problem was increasingly to receive the close attention of Soviet planners.

But these achievements had not been without cost: decades of privation and sacrifice had gone into building the bases for the abundant life which was promised by the leadership. By the early Fifties an entire generation of Soviet citizens had been born and had grown up under a communist regime, had been educated to a degree which was later to surprise the world and had sustained dreadful suffering during the war to defend what they had collectively built. The old rulers of the USSR, however, did not develop with the economy and, after the war, resumed the old methods of governing a modern and growing industrial society with a young and more sophisticated population than that of the earlier era. Repetition of 1930 slogans about capitalist encirclement and internal dangers to the Revolution no longer carried the same weight with the younger population straining restlessly under the limitations and restrictions placed on personal expression.

Finally, in 1953, Stalin, the figure who came to symbolize both the achievements as well as the despotism of the Soviet regime, died and the ferment began. After a series of struggles among personalities representing currents of opinion in the CPSU, Nikita Khrushchev emerged as the new leader, a compromise between the "liberals" (Malenkov) and the "hard liners" (Molotov). To move forward Khrushchev found it necessary
to change the old methods of ruling symbolized by the constipated party apparat built up under Stalin. To do so meant that the halo which had been placed over the head of Stalin during the long years of his reign had to be removed and this occurred on February 25, 1956 when Khrushchev delivered a "secret" speech to the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU.

That the speech was meant to be secret can be understood by its content for Khrushchev shocked and surprised even his audience of party members by denouncing a list of crimes which had been committed by Stalin during his life in power, crimes which had long been the objects of accusations outside the USSR but the subject of eloquent silence within the USSR. The secret demystification of Stalin to Soviet Communist Party members was probably part of a gradual long range plan to ease further the controls on Soviet society particularly in cultural matters (literature, the arts, etc.) which were already in the process of a "thaw." That the speech was intended to remain privy to a restricted few testifies to the understanding the Soviet leaders had about the probable consequences publication would cause especially outside Soviet borders. In June 1956, however, the American State Department published what it claimed was Khrushchev's speech. Events then took their own course and

26. The most sinister aspect of Stalinist rule, police terrorism, personified by the chief of the Secret Police, Lavrenti Beria, was eliminated shortly after Stalin's death. Beria himself was liquidated and the independence of the Secret Police restricted.
and in East Europe led to the well-known eruptions in Poland and Hungary during October and November.

As has already been mentioned, the communist regimes governing East Europe originally owed their establishment to the presence of the Red Army in each of the various countries. In some of these countries, such as Poland and Hungary, where anti-Russian sentiment was traditional, the Soviet deus ex machina behind the new regimes was bitter enough to accept. But the imposition of a stifling orthodoxy by leaders who were perhaps more Stalinist than Stalin made the extreme social economic and political transformations occurring in the Peoples' Democracies even more indigestible. Such leaders had built their power on Stalin's support and while he was alive basked in his approval while carrying out highly unpopular measures (e.g. collectivization of agriculture in Poland.)

With the death of the Soviet roi soleil the hard-liners in East Europe were already living on borrowed time. When news of Khrushchev's astounding speech destroying Stalin's aura of infallibility filtered down to the ordinary people, all the bitterness and resentment, pent-up during the hard years of radical and ruthless change, sought expression. While the first eruptions occurred in Poland in October, it was in Hungary that the most extreme reactions took place the following month. Whereas in Poland a compromise was found and moderate "national-communist" leaders (i.e. Gomulka) took over from the Stalinists,
the Hungarian Stalinists held on tightly until popular demonstrations in Budapest forced the latter out and swept "liberals" into office.

While the Hungarian movement no doubt was partly animated by Right-wing Hungarians hopeful of a reversal in the political order, it seems most correct to characterize the Budapest events as a movement of nationalist and intellectual protest by Hungarian Communists who were chafing under narrow Stalinist tutelage (Gyorgy Lukacs, the most eminent living Marxist philosopher, for example, sympathized with the insurrectionists). Hungary might have been Poland excepting for two facts: firstly, the Hungarian regime, by pulling out of the Warsaw Pact, was going, or threatening to go, further than the Soviet leaders were willing to tolerate and secondly, the crisis over Suez diverted more world-wide attention (especially in the ex-colonial "Third World") to itself than did Hungary. These combined circumstances resulted in the quick suppression of the Budapest uprising by Soviet tanks. The "settlement" of its Hungarian problem then allowed the Soviet leadership to concentrate on the invasion of Egypt and to issue its ultimata to the Anglo-French Israeli invaders to cease their attacks.

What, one may properly ask, has all of this to do with Italian Communism? The answer is: much. The consequences of the events of 1956 occurred on four levels or in four areas: within the PCI itself, between the PCI and other Italian socialist
parties, between the PCI and other national communist parties, and on particular personal levels affecting mainly intellectuals.

While Khrushchev's "de-Stalinization" speech will probably remain the most famous document of the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU, the Congress had also adopted other resolutions which were of immense significance for parties such as the PCI. In particular one resolution seemed to reflect Italian views exactly. Proceeding from an analysis of the world which revealed: that Communism, although no longer isolated in one country, had grown powerful enough even in the one country to challenge the capitalist world on equal terms and could resist "imperialist encroachments" on socialist countries still too weak to resist alone; that working classes in capitalist and colonial countries were gravitating more and more towards communist and socialist ideas; and, that in fact, in several countries the balance of political force was such that national communist parties posed a real challenge to the political status quo, the Congress inserted the following resolution into the party programme:

In a number of capitalist countries the working class, headed by its vanguard, has, in present conditions, a real opportunity to unite the overwhelming majority of the people under its leadership and to ensure the transfer of the basic means of production into the hands of the people. The right-wing bourgeois parties and the governments formed by them are suffering bankruptcy more frequently. In these conditions the working class uniting around itself the toiling peasantry, big sections of the intelligentsia, all the patriotic forces and resolutely rebuffing the opportunist elements, who are incapable of giving up a policy of compromise with the capitalists and
landlords, is in a position to win a solid majority in parliament and turn it into a genuine instrument of the people's will.29

This statement could hardly have approximated the point of view of the Italian Communist leaders more closely without referring specifically to Italy and the PCI. It vindicated unequivocally the line taken by the PCI since 1944 and indicated approval of the PCI's adoption of constitutional and parliamentary methods of pursuing power. The leadership of the PCI for its part welcomed this declaration and indeed the work of the whole Congress with understandable enthusiasm. In his report to the Central Committee of the PCI shortly after the end of the Twentieth Congress, Togliatti dwelt at length on the international situation and on the possibilities offered to communist movements by what he termed the abandonment of "ideological schematicism" and "worn slogans" in favour of new initiatives in thought and actions warranted by the new and favourable conditions in which the world communist movement found itself. It was, of course, necessary to maintain and defend the fundamental principles which had always guided the communist movement but not at the risk of transforming these principles into sterile formulae applicable for all time and all places: "What we are doing today would have been neither right nor possible thirty years ago."30

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29. Fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism, (Moscow n.d.) p. 504

In the same report, Togliatti also dwelt at length on a critical examination of the life and work of Stalin in which he sought to extract from Stalin's achievements his positive accomplishments while indicating the serious degenerations both in the Soviet party and government caused by the uncritical adulation and personal exaltation of the Soviet leader. In discussing the gravity of the distortions caused in the CPSU and in the Soviet government by the cult of Stalin, Togliatti never gave them the interpretations which arose in other quarters notably among Socialists and Social-Democrats. The latter groups sought to attribute the crimes which Stalin committed not simply to the flaws in the character of the Soviet leader but described them as products of a Soviet society which they argued was so deficient in democratic guarantees that such crimes were facilitated. While it was just and necessary to condemn some of Stalin's actions it was quite wrong, in Togliatti's view, to broaden this into a general condemnation and rejection of Soviet society and the Soviet state. From his own criticisms and from the declarations of the CPSU at its Twentieth Congress, the Italian communist leader stated his hope that the PCI would see the lessons to be learned and proceed towards making even greater achievements in the future than it had in the past in searching out "an Italian road towards Socialism."

Thus the first effect of the Twentieth Congress in Italy was to foster a spirit of renewal, of liberalization and
revitalization in the PCI. The rejection of Stalinist methods and excesses was a reassurance to those Left-wing intellectuals who while attracted to the PCI and its traditions hesitated before the party's past identification with Stalinism. This assertion of self identification was further emphasized a few months later in June when Togliatti gave an interview to the publication *Nuovi Argomenti* (co-edited by Alberto Moravia). It was during this interview that Togliatti first enunciated his famous thesis of "polycentrism" in the international communist movement. Togliatti explained that, while not diminishing the importance of the CPSU and the Soviet Union, it was no longer necessary to consider the Soviet Union as single guide for other socialist countries nor the CPSU as the only model for other communist parties. The world had become so diversified that to consider any one way of action as the only possible way was quite simply impossible:

The entire system is becoming polycentric and even within the communist movement itself one cannot speak in terms of any single guide but rather in terms of progress which is made by taking paths which are often diverse.

One general problem which is common to the whole movement has resulted from the criticisms levelled at Stalin—the problem of bureaucratic degeneration, of the suffocation of democratic life, of the confusion between constructive revolutionary forces and the destruction of revolutionary legality, of the separation of the economic and political leadership from the life, the initiatives, the criticisms and the active creativity of the masses...It will be up to us to work out our own ways and methods so that we too may be protected against the dangers of stagnation and bureaucratization in order to solve together the problems of freedom and social justice for the working masses.31

31. Togliatti "L'Intervista a "Nuovi Argomenti" Problemi internazionali...p. 116-117

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During the summer of 1956 Togliatti amplified and elaborated these positions.

By shattering Stalin's myth of his own greatness, his wisdom, his goodness and infallibility, by shattering, in a word, the prestige which he had amassed for himself and the party he led, the iconoclastic Soviet leaders of the Twentieth Congress inevitably weakened their own prestige and that of the CPSU. But, for parties such as the PCI, with long and rich ideological and political traditions of its own, the possibilities presented by the programme adopted by the Twentieth Congress and the anti-Stalinist declarations of Soviet leaders were limitless. It would be correct to say that it was precisely because of its ideological and political traditions that the PCI was better prepared than some other parties (such as the French CP) to carry the possibilities of deStalinization and polycentrism to its most fruitful conclusions.

Togliatti lost no time in clarifying publicly lest it be misunderstood by anyone, that while the party unequivocably accepted and defended the Soviet system itself, even while reserving serious criticism for some of its aspects, Italian Communists were not bound to emulate or imitate the example or experience of any other state or party. The PCI was now even more prepared in other words, to increase its flexibility of attitudes, to minimize its sectarianism and to offer its cooperation to other parties in their common struggle towards
achieving a new "Left" majority in government. The price of its cooperation was to have a voice in determining the goals towards which the new majority would address itself. The year 1956 began well for the PCI. It ended less happily.

The events in Hungary already have been described. The effects of the Hungarian events in Italy were widely and deeply felt and by June the PCI was experiencing some electoral losses during municipal elections in such traditional electoral strongholds as Milan, Turin and Genoa. While the ferment caused by the Twentieth Congress and the Khrushchev speech continued within the PCI and outside of it throughout the summer months the events of October and November caused the party its most serious crisis. Declarations clarifying party orientations were able to arrest the effects of the Hungarian uprising neither within the ranks of the PCI nor within the wider context of the Italian Left.

Within the PCI, two tendencies were formed: one to the Left of the "official" party position, the other to the Right. Of the two, the latter tendency was by far the most important. From this group a number of articulate younger Communist leaders (such as Antonio Giolitti) broke with the party and entered the PCI. The Hungarian uprising caused a small amount of confusion and contradiction among Italian Communists. The PCI's "official" public position, reflected by the party daily "L'Unita", was to interpret the violence in
Budapest as the work of neo-Fascist clericalists prodded on by foreign capitalist imperialists intent on igniting a wave of counter-revolutions in Eastern Europe. Other pro-Communist papers, groups of Communist intellectuals, even some leaders of the CGIL, on the other hand, expressed solidarity with the Hungarian insurrectionists. For its part, the PSI condemned the Soviet suppression of the uprising vigorously and "without reticence." 32

It was the solidarity which the leadership of the PCI expressed for the Soviet position on Hungary which caused dissident Communists such as Giolitti to react so decisively against the party. By defending the ultimate rightness and necessity of the Soviet actions in Hungary, as it had in the past uncritically defended Stalin and the Soviet Union against all enemies, the PCI, in the view of the dissidents, was preventing itself from becoming the advocate of liberal democratic ideals which it approved and sought to pursue in Italy. During this period the PCI lost many of its most discerning and intelligent supporters, some 300,000 or so formal members. That the exodus was not larger than it was perhaps can be attributed to the crisis occurring simultaneously over Suez where the last gesture of nineteenth century colonial imperialism was revealing

32. The profound emotions felt by so many European intellectuals over the Hungarian events were given a most eloquent expression by Albert Camus who coined the phrase "socialism of the gallows" to describe the regime which ruled Hungary before the uprising. Camus' eloquence articulated the feelings of many of the Italians who broke with the PCI over the Hungarian question.
itself to be as ruthless against Egypt as the Soviets were against Hungary. To be against the stance of the PCI did not mean approving the behaviour of the other side. Caught in this bind was the PSI to which many of the disaffected Communist intellectuals turned.

The Hungarian events finally ruptured the Socialist-Communist alliance which had already suffered a great strain ever since 1953, from the time of De Gasperi's fall, Nenni had been intimating to parties of the Centre and Right that the PSI was willing to move from the opposition into the ranks of the government. After Hungary, Nenni returned to the Soviet government a Stalin prize which he had been awarded when his relations with the Communists had been closer and, in a series of articles in "Avanti" and other socialist publications, Nenni and other socialist writers sought to express with greater clarity the ideological divergences which separated the PSI from the PCI and in these writings the question of Stalin was treated more as the point of departure than as the kernel of the problem. The Socialists sought to justify the autonomy of the PSI on the basis of deeper differences. In this polemic the Socialists even returned to some of the criticisms directed by Karl Kautsky against Russian Marxists.

Kautsky, and by inference the Italian Socialists who referred to his positions, had insisted that in doctrinal terms a socialist revolution was impossible in Russia for it would
not be based on the imperative preceding bourgeois and industrial revolutions carried to their most advanced stages. These criticisms, Togliatti replied, were but: "Old absurd heresies, with which we have been acquainted for a long time, but which in the face of a record of forty years of successes, of victories, of progress toward Socialism cannot today provoke anything more than a smile."33

In reviving this old issue at its Thirty-Second Congress in early 1957, the PSI was resurrecting its Maximalist dilemma. Two choices had always faced the PSI after 1921, choices which created unsolvable approach-approach conflict: one choice was to accept the Bolshevik revolution and to assume the consequences of defending it like it or not, as the PCI had done, or to accept the implications of Kautsky's criticisms and hence move towards Social-Democratic positions. In the past the PSI had always hedged on both but final choice was to come shortly and is in fact now being made. In 1957 the PSI was still unable to take any dramatic step even though the record showed that since 1946 the PCI had been absorbing Socialist supporters into its ranks to an alarming degree.

On the other hand, interest in PSI-PSDI reunification was aroused when during the summer of 1956 Nenni and Saragat

33. Togliatti "Le decisioni del XX Congresso e il Partito socialista italiano," Problemi internazionali, p. 284
held a series of conversations at a resort town where both were passing their holidays. The hopes aroused in many quarters that the reunification was imminent were to prove as yet premature. A major reason for this was the existence of a large and influential Left-wing in the PSI which wanted neither to break with the PCI nor to reunite with the Social-Democrats particularly if reunification occurred on the latter’s terms. For the next few years therefore the PSI would become engaged in a slow and anguishing move to the Right which would lead eventually to the much desired *apertura a sinistra* and most recently to a final process of reunification with the Social-Democrats. In this process the PSI Leftwing was to break off from the party giving Italy a fourth Socialist Party: the Italian Socialist Party of Proletarian Unity (or PSIUP).

The PCI emerged from 1956 badly shaken but still remarkably intact; indeed the party was chastened by its crises. By 1957, the fortieth anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, prospects seemed brighter: 1957 was the year of Sputnik I, the year Soviet schools graduated over 50,000 engineers (more than the US figure for the same year), and the year when finishing touches were being worked out for the new Seven Year Plan by which Soviet industrial production was to be increased by 80% (at a time when the West was experiencing its recession of the late Fifties).

Inevitably, just as the PCI shared the faults of
Soviet policies it benefitted from its achievements. Distasteful as the events of Fall 1956 were to many Italians, and as serious as was the damage these events caused to the PCI, greater distance in time tended to place "1956" in the context of painful time of readjustment for the Soviet Union, the PCUS (and the PCI) after Stalin's disappearance from the political scene. And, the more politically conscious intelligentsia realized, after the polemical furor died down, that something had changed. The ideological statements of the PCI remained on record as a possible point of departure for new attempts to break the inertia which characterized Italian politics, an inertia whose chief cause was the exclusion of the PCI from being seriously considered as an active element in the sistema.

These new appraisals of the positions of the PCI by the more politically evolved sections of the Italian public was not necessarily an indication that the Left-wing intelligentsia in particular had been reconvinced of the rightness of PCI policies any more than it was convinced that the PSI for its part was taking the right course of action. Many of these individuals as a result were to feel most comfortably in the small but influential PdIUP.

The first indicator of what effect all the ideological confusion and political turbulence of the last years was to have on the Italian electorate (especially on the Left) came with the elections of 1958.
CHAPTER VI

THE ROAD TO ARTEK
New Horizons

The 1958 election results revealed several trends of which the most fundamental was an unmistakable though gradual shift of political sentiment to the Left. The three Right-wing parties (the neo-Fascist MSI and two Monarchist parties) together obtained less than 10% of the popular vote. Some of their losses were picked up by spokesmen for the Confindustria, the Liberal party, but most fell further left to the DC which on several occasions in the preceding parliament had formed majorities with the open support of Monarchists and neo-Fascists. The very last (Zoli) ministry before the elections lasted for a year on the basis of such support and Right-wing Italians consequently felt more confident about the good intentions of the DC. Their votes helped in turn to strengthen the position of the Right-wing within the Democrazia Cristiana. Ironically such support came at a time when the DC Left was coming into its own within the party and was laying the groundwork for the apertura a sinistra.

In sum, the DC obtained a total of 42.2% of the vote, not as good as in 1948 but better than in 1953; the miniscule Radical and Republican parties, which had joined together for the election, managed barely to survive with a total of six seats between them; the Social-Democrats advanced slightly (about half as much as the Liberals in terms of their popular vote); the PSI improved its showing also and won 14.2% of the
vote compared to its 12.7% in 1953. The PCI, despite 1956, held its own. The PCI actually obtained over half a million new votes but this only increased its share of the popular vote to 22.7% from 22.6% in 1953.

While the voting pattern tended towards the Left, the 1958 elections produced no dramatic surprises. More than anything else it consolidated the party positions from which negotiations leading towards l'apertura would proceed. This is not to say that all was smooth sailing from then on. On the contrary, in the next few years some very difficult obstacles were to be encountered, though overcome, by proponents of the "opening."

While the Leftward reorientation of Italian politics met with the vigorous opposition many expected, it did, on the other hand, receive quiet but effective support from a most unexpected quarter. A few months after the Italian elections, in October 1958, Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, Patriarch of Venice, assumed the title of Pope John XXIII. Papa Giovanni had spent most of his life as a diplomat of the Holy See mainly in the politically turbulent Balkans and, after WW II, as papal nunzio in France. His experience and intimacy with the realities of international politics was therefore more than superficial. Roncalli's family origins were humble and, despite the exalted position he personally was to achieve, his brothers continued to live, as had their parents, as peasant sharecroppers near Bergamo in Northern Italy.
With this background, the papal personality of John XXIII was to reveal itself as being radically different from that of his austere and aristocratic predecessor, Pius XII. Where the latter seemed to embody the posture of the Church Militant the former seemed the incarnation of the Church Tolerant. This was particularly true with regard to their attitudes towards the conflicting ideologies dividing international and national societies and especially with regard to their attitudes about the individuals who championed them.

Italian Vaticanologists, who, perhaps not unrightly, claim to be the most sensitive to the slightest nuance in official Vatican positions, soon realized that Pacelli and Roncalli were two different personalities. Just how different was not long in being demonstrated when John XXIII suddenly threw open the Church's shuttered windows flooding it with the light and fresh air which he hoped would bring about its long needed aggiornamento. While in religiously pluralist societies the Johanine spirit of ecumenism was correctly interpreted as an invitation to collaboration among Christians, in Italian terms ecumenism was interpreted as an invitation to collaboration between the two real Italian faiths, one sacred, the other secular: Catholicism and Socialism. In five brief years John himself succeeded in laying the foundations for both confrontations: in the religious sphere by summoning the Ecumenical Council and in the political sphere by promulgating his two great encyclicals Mater et Magistra and, a few months prior to his death, Pacem in Terris.
For Italian politics there is no question but that the encyclicals took priority in immediate importance over the Council itself. With as much concern as his predecessor Leo XIII had shown for the same problem, John reaffirmed, in *Mater et Magistra* his Church's profound desire to see alleviated the unjust social and economic misery in which so much of mankind was condemned to live. Not only did this reinforce the commitment of the Italian Catholic Left to work for social and economic justice but it reanimated Italian Communists in their heretofore largely frustrated efforts at achieving a dialogue with the Catholics on personal as well as an organizational bases. Such considerations became increasingly amplified in the official programmes of the PCI.

The PCI had never made atheism a condition of membership in the party. Anyone who accepted the political programme of the party could become a member regardless of his religious convictions. This was the official position of the PCI since its earliest Congress after WW II and in succeeding Congresses the policy of the "outstretched hand" became even more prominent. At the party's Tenth Congress in 1962 delegates were asked to debate the thesis that "the aspiration toward a socialist society...can find a stimulus in a religious conscience anguished by the dramatic problems of the present day world." It now became increasingly necessary to appreciate that the possession of an acute social conscience was not the exclusive possession
of any one or any group. *Hater et Legistra* had shown this clearly and the need to cooperate with the Catholics was therefore all the more pressing:

In Italy, the Catholic Church and the Catholic movement guide not only some sectors of the labour movement but above all a large party of the peasantry and the middle classes who today can and should be participating in the building of a new society. This is why the victory of socialism in Italy being bound as it is to a bloc of forces considerably larger and more articulated than the alliance of workers and poor peasants, the effort to arrive at an understanding with the Catholics is considered to be one aspect of the *Italian road to socialism*...\(^1\)

One could almost think that the dialogue between the PCI and the Catholics was being conducted on one side by Pope John personally. Several months after the Tenth Congress of the PCI, in the summer of 1963, the encyclical *Pacem in Terris* was published. In it all of Pius XII's uncompromising severity towards atheistic Communism and its nefarious advocates seemed to dissolve in a new attitude of loving one's neighbour as oneself. After surveying the political condition of the world in *Pacem in Terris* John concluded that Catholics must seek to co-exist in societies not only "with Christians separated from this Apostolic See" but also "with men of no Christian faith whatever" who nevertheless were "endowed with a natural uprightness of conduct":

In such relations let the faithful be careful to be always consistent in their actions, so that they may never come to any compromise in matters of religion and morals. At the

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1. From the "Tesi per il Xo Congresso del PCI" in "Le Neo-Marxisme Italien," Jarlot, *op. cit.* p. 39

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same time however, let them be, and show themselves to be animated by a spirit of understanding and detachment, and disposed to work logically in the pursuit of objectives which are of their nature good, or conducive to good.  

In the practical application of such general principles governing human relations, the Pope continued, there lay a danger. It was to confuse individuals with the things they advocated:

...one must never confuse error and the person who errs...
The person who errs is always and above all a human being, and he retains in every case his dignity as a human person; and he must be regarded and treated in accordance with that lofty dignity.  

It became imperative to distinguish between "false philosophical teachings" and movements of an economic, social or political nature even if the movements were animated by the aforesaid "false teachings." Movements of this sort were ultimately subject to change because the conditions in which they operate change:

Besides, who can deny that those movements, insofar as they conform to the dictates of right reason and are interpreters of the lawful aspirations of the human person, contain elements that are positive and deserving of approval.  

Sincere pleas for understanding and conciliation by both sides further catalyzed efforts to achieve what had been desired by so many for so long and today this is one of the most fascinating aspects of Italian intellectual and political life.

3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
The willingness of Italian Marxists to engage in the
dialogue stemmed not from a Machiavellian desire to convert
Catholics to Communism nor to trick innocent Catholics into
supporting the PCI but rather from the confidence that Marxist
humanism could hold its own with transcendental Catholicism.
They did hope that out of such a dialogue Catholics would at
least come to realize that their religion should not be subor-
dinated to any particular political or economic point of view
nor that their Church should protect and defend the vested
interests of any one class, that Catholics would see with Pope
John that, without abandoning their faith, Catholics could
decide "the ways and degrees in which work in common with
Communists might be possible for the achievement of economic
social and political ends which are honourable and useful." 6

For their part Italian Communists utterly rejected
any kind of primitive or "totemistic" view of religion, rejected
the idea of official State Atheism and publically defended the
idea of full freedom of religion without any civil discrimina-
tion being imposed against believers. From what convictions
did such a confidence in the validity of their own point of
view arise?

To speak honestly we do not believe that the building of
a socialist society carries within itself the disappearance
of the religious fact. We recognize that religion has pro-
found and complex roots in the human mind; that like all

6. *Pacem in Terris*
phenomena of the superstructure it has its own autonomy with regard to the structure. We speak of the decline of the religious conscience not as something to be brought about by a struggle nor as a mechanical consequence resulting from the disappearance of capitalism, less still by an act of suppression by the State. We believe that the validity, the vitality of all ideological positions and thus of all religion, still depend above all on their capacity to offer an explanation, a solution for the problems which history successively poses to mankind.

In other words, if Catholicism as a body of religious thought can successfully maintain its pertinence and validity to man as he marches through history its value will be self-evident and positive. If it fails to do this its decline will be inevitable and will occur as fast as it fails to explain and solve the problems which history will successively present to the human race:

Let us be clear about this much. Catholicism cannot cease being a religion of transcendence any more than Communism can cease being an atheistic humanism. It is in its very dialectic that it (Marxism) must find the justification for religious tolerance, not as a temporary tactic but as an exigency of dialectical materialism.

The challenge put to the Catholics by the Communists was seductive: if you Catholics have enough confidence in your religion as we have in our doctrines let us begin now to work together to build the more humanely ordered society we both desire and let us see which of our convictions will withstand the heavy demands the future will inevitably bring to bear on them. Let

7. L'Unità, 8-9 Oct. 1964, quoted in Jarlot op. cit. p. 40
8. Jarlot, op. cit. p. 41
us seek to co-participate in a new hegemonic relationship. In this, we, for our part, will admit that your beliefs will be as necessary to us as our own because our convictions are not static. They require praxis to live and to continue evolving. But in meeting us on common ground do not keep on throwing dogma in our faces. Try to see where your dogma has lost any trace of objective meaning. We, in turn, remain prepared to discard whatever elements of our own thought become negated through the process of our dialectical reasoning, a process in which the positive elements of your unilateral religious sentiments will survive synthetically with what remains positive in ours. We already share after all, even if from very different positions some few analogous views of man from which we might proceed.

You, as Catholics, believe in the ultimate dignity of the human person and in the value of freedom; one need only to refer to the great Church encyclicals and to the teachings of Pope John to verify this. But the freedom you defend is not that of the capitalist bourgeoisie whose concepts you have opposed from the time of Pius XI and Leo XIII; yours is not an individualist freedom it is a communal personalism. For you, freedom is earned as a redemption from sin achieved through personal acts of asceticism. Your freedom is the luminous freedom of the children of God. Each personal triumph is not simply personal but is social for you believe in the unity of
of the mystical body, of its edification in common. For you the history of Man is the history of a struggle from evil to the Good and in this every personal act of virtue becomes amplified in the mystical body:

Well then let us build Man together. Together let us help him in his conquest of freedom, struggle together against Man's collective enslavement through Man's exploitation of Man, by war. Together let us build this future society without exploitation because lacking classes: in freeing Man from his fellow Man and from Nature the true freedom of each individual will result. ⁹

The elaboration of the "dialogue" did not occur at once as if both sides were bursting with a pent-up desire to have it all out. It began slowly, modestly, quietly and at first only among restricted groups and small circulation periodicals. During the last few years it has acquired a greater elaboration and fluency of expression. It has gained a wider audience and continues to evolve. ¹⁰ The important fact is that it began at all and that it did begin is due to an incalculable extent to the influence of John XXIII. Papa Giovanni also helped accelerate the already initiated movement towards the opening to the Left and by attempting so much in such a brief time John XXIII earned the title of "Red pope." The nickname was not meant to flatter particularly since it was applied by

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⁹. Jarlot, op. cit., p. 44

those groups and classes who were enjoying social status and economic privilege under existing conditions. Even (or especially) among some Catholic circles John's actions caused anxiety, consternation and no little opposition. Powerful conservative Italian prelates in the Curia romana and in the Italian episcopate closely connected to the Catholic Action and, consequently, to the DC Right were unprepared, unwilling or unable to adapt to the new attitudes of conciliation and accommodation with the arch enemies of the Church, especially after having participated in nearly two decades of Pacellian intransigence.

The existence of such powerful pressure groups made the first efforts to form a Centre Left government extremely difficult and the strain of accommodating so many opposing tendencies in one Catholic party almost brought about the fragmentation of the DC. The internal balance of the DC had to undergo a delicate transformation before the Centre Left experiment could begin. The transformation resulted in a modus vivendi agreed upon by the three main party currents. Balancing the extreme Right with the restless Left, sometimes called the White Communists, was a cautious, moderate, centre group led by the inscrutable Aldo Moro, Italy's current Prime Minister. The Moro wing was at least willing to try the Centre Left experiment even if without the enthusiasm of the Fanfani Left. Amintore Fanfani was personally convinced (and tried to convince his centrist colleagues) that the course which Italian politics had
been following since the War had reached a dead end.

With the outlook of a political economist (which subject he professed at the University of Rome) Fanfani was able to look penetratingly at the unchanged realities of Italian life which the *miracolo economico* was failing to influence; namely, the continuing imbalances in economic distribution among classes, Regions and occupations. Without serious planning to coordinate investments through which certain social and economic needs would receive priority attention the continuing disparities in Italian society could attain insoluble proportions.

With the shrewd eye of an expert politician, Fanfani also realized that since 1948 and the rejection of "tripartism" the political base on which the DC and its allies were operating was being steadily eroded. If Christian Democratic governments continued to base their majorities on the open or tacit support of the reactionary Right, which was not prepared to cooperate in carrying out the reforms which were imperative, the immobilism of the government would deteriorate into general paralysis and the advance of the Communists would be ineluctable. For the DC but one course of action remained. Since the PSI was showing its increasing autonomy from the PCI and was offering its collaboration the time for the centro-sinistra was now mature.

When, for a variety of reasons, the first couple of ministries formed after the 1953 elections collapsed, the DC
found itself at a fork in the road. The directions in which the party could choose to continue on were either Left or Right, but not Dead Centre. The party did eventually turn Left, but not before making some final explorations on the Right, a move which proved to be far more imprudent than must have been imagined. During a two month impasse in 1960 both Fanfani and Antonio Segni failed in their attempts to create "transition" cabinets with the support of the democratic Right. Since it was well known that the DC was merely grooming itself for an impeding opening to the Left, the Liberal party refused to lend itself to any such scheme.

President Gronchi then made the mistake of charging a DC "notabile" Ferdinando Tambroni to form a government. Tambroni, an ambiguous figure with no real following in the party turned out to be an ambitious opportunist. Not restricted by party loyalty or personal scruples Tambroni was fully prepared and did in fact welcome the support of the neo-Fascist MSI to give his government its parliamentary majority and to perpetuate the life of what was expected to be only a temporary government.

Furthermore Tambroni revealed himself to be as ready to crush any Leftist-inspired disturbances with the same ferocity as had been used around 1948 and the early Fifties by De Gasperi's Minister of the Interior, Mario Scelba. In May and June of 1960 the installation of American missiles in Italy resulted in public demonstrations in a number of Italian cities.
demonstrations, also involved wage disputes and in both cases Communists figured prominently, if not exclusively.

When Tambroni ordered the demonstrations to be put down, the Prime Minister's orders were carried out with a will and in the ensuing police repressions a large number of demonstrators were injured. This in itself aroused great hostility. Tambroni, however, made another move which aggravated public hostility even more. In July, the InSI was given government permission to hold a national congress in Genoa, one of the cities where the war-time anti-Fascist Resistance had been strongest. Verbal protests which arose from all quarters were ignored and the permission was upheld.

When the congress was about to open, violent mass demonstrations reuniting all the old parties of the Resistance flared up in Genoa and spread to other major Italian cities. In Rome, the uproar occurring in the streets overflowed into the Chamber of Deputies. The whole country was put into a state of such tension that the fear of civil war crossed more than one mind. In the face of such an overwhelming public demonstration of violent anti-Fascism the compromised Tambroni, who was accused by some of nourishing sinister political ambitions, was toppled and the country settled back to catch its political breath.
Finalmente

If anything positive came from the Tambroni adventure it was surely the clarification of public sentiment about any further compromises with Fascism. The trend towards the centro-sinistra was reinforced more than ever and on August 2, 1960 Amintore Fanfani appeared before parliament seeking approval of a new ministry to succeed that of Tambroni. Because the Fanfani cabinet would reject extreme Right-wing votes for its majority, by prior understanding, the PSI abstained from voting against the government and thus was breached the first small opening to the Left. The first actual centro-sinistra ministry was not formed until a number of months later. Before it came about two events took place and further eased the way: the first was the holding of municipal elections in October 1960 and the second was the Christian Democratic Congress of January 1962.

The elections were important because the parties directly concerned with the hypothetical Centre-Left majority hoped to hold "dress-rehearsals" for the national experiment first on municipal levels. Thus, although the Tambroni affair caused all the Left to win some substantial gains in such centres as Milan, Genoa, Florence and Palermo, the PSI broke away from the traditional opposition bloc it formed with the PCI to elect, in conjunction with the DC, the PSDI and smaller radical parties, Centre-Left municipal executive committees (giunte). In a few instances the new combination meant that
the PCI could not participate in the new giunta. While this aroused a natural resentment within the PCI certain elements in the PSI (the faction which was later to form the PSIUP) were also unhappy with their party's official line and tried to resist it.

A majority of the party followed Nenni's leadership nonetheless and the latter began to steer his party towards its historic appointment with the DC. The second important event preceding the Centre-Left experiment, was the Naples Congress of the DC. On this occasion Moro himself used his considerable forensic skill for some five hours to harangue his party into accepting the new course the party was taking. When the Congress adjourned, the DC was publicly committed to trying the centro-sinistra formula.

The way was now clear: both major participants had given public demonstrations of their good intentions and indications from the Vatican were favourable. Only the terms needed to be worked out. While Socialists still remained the outside buttress of Fanfani's new cabinet, the PSI promised to give the government the support it needed if it carried out certain measures which the PSI wanted. The latter concerned domestic matters; in foreign affairs the Socialists were willing to suspend their opposition to the government's commitment to uphold the Atlantic alliance.

The programme Fanfani presented for parliamentary

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approval included among proposed measures: establishment of the Regions; nationalization of the powerful electric industry; formulation of a national economic plan; school reforms and new agricultural measures. So pledged, the Fanfani ministry, basing its parliamentary majority on the Socialist pledge not to vote against it, took office on March 10, 1962.

When the term of the Fanfani government was ended by the scheduled national elections of April, 1963 its record of legislative action was not unpromising. The hydroelectric companies had been nationalized, a tax aimed at curtailing land speculation was placed on real estate profits and a withholding tax of 15% was imposed on stock dividends (which usually remained undeclared on income tax forms), the school system was partially reorganized to make education less of an elitist affair a government committee for national economic planning was created and the amount paid to old age pensioners was increased.

As necessary as these measures were, they were akin to feeding aspirin to a victim of cancer who required major surgery. The one important measure which would have made any kind of lasting structural modification of the centralized Italian state, the creation of Regional governments, was not even introduced in parliament for discussion. If the Regions were freed from the DC central control which was exercised through the Ministry of the Interior acting through the provincial prefectures, the only effective support for the DC in many areas
would have been severely jeopardized.

Regional autonomy would mean that in at least three Regions the executive giunta would be likely formed by Communists (or by Communists with Socialists, a major cause of many Right-wing reservations about the whole Centre-Left business.) In other Regions communist power would still be such that even in opposition the PCI would influence the programme of the Regional giunta. For these reasons the DC procrastinated; moreover, since the national elections were approaching the party could not afford to antagonize its Right-wing support more than it had already done.

Thus, when it became clear that the DC was not prepared to fulfill all its promises, the PSI declared itself no longer bound to support the government. It was also more convenient for the PSI not to have to appear before the electorate as the chief underpinning of Christian Democratic power. The centro-sinistra idea was not abandoned, however. It was hoped that the elections would confirm it even more. The PSI, particularly, expected that its line would be approved because finally a working class party was again about to become an active element in the government leaving the PCI still isolated in opposition. With such expectations the election campaigns began.
Il Miracolo

During the decade of the 1950's Italy appeared to all the world as the epitome of the "Good Life" offered by Western European "neo-Capitalism"—capitalism of the masses. Italy was the land of La Dolce Vita, Gina Lollobrigida, "Roman Holidays," Vespa, Olivetti typewriters and Olivetti industrial paternalism. Italy was Sophia Loren, sunny beaches, lakes and mountains, artistic cities ("see Italy first") Fiats, Pirelli tires and Pirelli Towers, Necchi sewing machines, pizza, luxury liners, magnificent traffic jams, Nervi architecture, high fashion. The "Italian line" became a synonym for a new sybaritic style of life. The prosperous decade seemed fittingly capped with the Olympiad of Rome in 1960 and, in the following year, by the national centenary celebrations held in Turin. And indeed the decade has been dazzling.

Italian per capita income had increased in the ten years alone almost as much as it had in the preceding half century. The national annual growth rate became one of the highest in the world (13% in 1960); industrial production tripled and exports had increased fourfold. In this same period the majority of Italians ceased being employed in agriculture and the bigger cities groaned to accommodate their swelling populations. As farmers turned into factory workers and Southern migrants sought jobs in the North, unemployment fell to a third of its former figure. Some industries even experienced manpower shortages.
for lack of skilled workers. Demand for consumer goods zoomed and new Italian appliance industries mushroomed from practically nothing. The population became physically mobile, first on the Vespa scooters and later, when instalment buying permitted, in small Fiats. Italians became better clothed and better fed. They began to have more to spend on diversions; even publishing became an industry under the impact of "il boom."

Riding on the crest of so enormous and unprecedented a wave of economic expansion, the exponents of those policies of economic liberalism which facilitated such a development might well have been led to look back on their achievements with complacency. But Italy has always been a country of sun and shadow. La Dolce Vita, sweet as it was for those who could live it (though even this was questioned by Fellini) did not correspond to the continuing struggle of those many Italians still caught in la miseria. And while the salutary effects of il benessere (well being) did reach most Italian families to greater or lesser degree, the serious shortcomings of the boom lingered. The most naive but fundamental mistake made by the economic liberals was to think that by creating an abundant consumer-oriented market economy for a fully (or almost fully) employed population, the working classes would be satisfied and pacified and their demands for a better life would be drowned in the clamour for more bread and circuses.

It did not require any special skill to understand why
a "semi-submerged" population, suddenly faced with both an opportunity to work and an opportunity to buy would set about acquiring all the goods and gadgets which previously it could only look at longingly with its nose pressed to the window pane. Studies made in some northern Italian cities among migrant families revealed that frequently, despite greater earnings, family diets continued to be based on the cheap but monotonous staple of pasta and, rather than spend new income on improving the variety of diet, families preferred to continue eating its pasta while watching the new television set or while listening to the voice of a blaring pop singer on the new phonograph.

Increased buying power, in a country such as Italy where such power was rarely granted, inevitably pushed up demand even more quickly so that the cost of living rose faster than wages. But demand did not abate and the diminished capacity to buy only frustrated newly-roused hopes and newly-awakened tastes ("Howya gonna keepum down on the farm...?"). And when it became evident that the system which had successfully aroused the new demands to share in il benessere remained indifferent to the very problems it created, the urge for a better life moved from the purely quantitative consideration in the direction of a general desire for a reform of the entire system itself.

The growth had undoubtedly taken place, but not without its price. Italy changed from a predominantly agricultural country to an almost industrial one, but in the process millions
of Italians were forced to pull up the deep roots previous
generations of ancestors had put down in the land to move to
Northern urban environments where their reception was frequently
one of hostile misunderstanding. The almost complete abandon­
ment of countless Southern villages did little to alleviate the
disparity with the North and was small help to the implementation
of the agricultural reform.

Urban building underwent an incredible growth and
cities teemed with hundreds of thousands of new apartment dwellers.
But without enough strict supervision to enforce even the inade­
quate urban plans in existence, the big Italian cities sprawled in
every direction like oil stains. The countryside around the
cities disappeared under tidal waves of reinforced concrete
poured by real estate "developers" who scrupulously avoided
wasting perfectly usable building land on parks and playgrounds.

Forced to live in the "periferia" of the cities for
economic reasons, urban workers had to wait for slow, crowded
and inadequate public transportation to carry them to work in
the Centro. Italians saved to become mobile in their own Fiats
only to get caught in paralytic traffic jams. Thousands of
families continued to live in wretched housing conditions while
thousands of newly-built apartments entirely beyond their finan­
cial reach stood empty for lack of takers. Italians began
enjoying vacations by the sea, only to watch the pristine beauty
of Italian coasts become enveloped in miles of squalid commercialism.
Italians became used to lurid scandals often involving corrupt high government officials caught with their hands in the public till, while having to suffer bureaucratic insolence for the sake of obtaining even simple documents. While the fruits of economic abundance were welcomed by all Italians they found that the benessere which the centro-sinistra promised to extend was not all it could be. The elections of 1963 revealed this state of mind with unmistakable clarity. But the promise of the centro-sinistra was to dim not just by the qualitative shortcomings of Italian "neo-Capitalism." By the time the Socialists and Christian Democrats had courted each other long enough to be ready to take their vows, the Italian economy, which had risen to unprecedented heights, was entering the downward phase of the business cycle and the centro-sinistra found itself facing immense problems of a purely economic nature.

Much of the industrial expansion of the fifties had been built on the abundance of cheap labour available in Italy. By the end of the decade this reservoir was beginning to dry up and increasing demands for wage raises put double pressure on the employers. The push for better wages was animated by the big trade unions, led by the CGIL, which, after years of subdued activity, rekindled their militancy.

In the CGIL, Communist and Socialist union leaders collaborated to work out a strategy of maddening work slowdowns and hiccough strikes which permitted workers to earn part of
their wages while making life miserable for the employers. Union policy was that local grievances could be settled locally according to the requirements of each case, but the national policy would be to win a general pay raise for all workers, obtain equal pay for equal work between male and female employees and, most importantly, to force employers to recognize the union as the only spokesman for the workers.

After months of these tormenting tactics, which kept nearly three million workers of all categories occupied in a game of musical strikes, the employers finally capitulated. Because one of the largest groups of strikers belonged to the civil service, one of the biggest of the employers was the government. The agreement which was signed in February 1963 sanctioned an immediate wage increase of 10% for government employees, industrial workers and agricultural labourers. Other increases were to follow. In the case of some women workers, the parification of their earnings with those of their male counterparts brought pay increases of up to 40%.

Concrete victories like these greatly enhanced union bargaining power, particularly that of the CGIL which had been in the forefront of the struggle. Pay increases equalled some two billion dollars and not surprisingly augmented the buying power of the workers who benefitted from the pay boosts. If Italy was not an "affluent" society, it had become an acquisitive society and, with more money around to spend, consumer demand rapidly exceeded national productivity.
On top of this, crop failures helped boost food prices. Imports to meet both the food shortage and the sustained consumer demand increased so greatly that the favourable Italian trade balance was reversed from surplus to deficit. The trend was alarming but a government hoping to win greater popular support by promising the working classes a larger share of the national wealth could not say 'Enough and no more' to the working classes right after they had won their first substantial wage increases since the end of the war. On the other hand, the profits which had been based on cheap labour were now disappearing and Italian competitiveness in the international market began to feel the strain. The other alternative was to increase productivity through expansion which would permit more earnings from export sales. Expansion, however, required capital and in the inflationary Italian economy what money was being invested went where prices could be expected to rise most with the inflation, in property. But there was another reason which caused capital to become scarce.

The nationalization of the electrical industry had been an act of good faith by the DC to show the PSI, which had insisted on this action, that its intentions were serious. The nationalization was not only very expensive for the national treasury (it cost $25 billion), but politically it cost the DC dearly. Seeing that Fanfani was determined to carry out the Centre Left adventure the business community stiffened in hostile
opposition and, fearing that the power companies were only the first of a long list of PSI victims, worried investors quickly sent their money to safer Switzerland. In 1962 alone about half a billion dollars in lire was sent abroad. Later the figure doubled. Some of this returned to Italy as Swiss reinvestment but most stayed out of the country. Thus, short of investment capital, industrial improvements were curtailed, expansion was slowed and unemployment began to creep up again. It was against this dramatic background of contradictory trends that the 1963 elections were held.

The Elections

The outcome of the national elections of April, 1963 surprised everyone but particularly the DC and PSI. Both of the chief exponents of the Centre-Left formula lost votes: the DC lost 4.1% of its vote dropping from 42.3% in 1958 to 38.3% in 1963, the second lowest share of the popular vote it had ever won; the PSI managed to hold its lines but still lost .4% of its vote falling from 14.2% to 13.8%. Monarchists suffered most severely falling from 4.8% to a decimating 1.7%. In the winner's circle stood all the other parties. On the Right, the MSI advanced by .3% to win 5.1% but the PLI did no less than double its share of electoral support by winning 7.0% of
the total. On the Left the PSDI advanced by 1.5% to win 6.1% of the vote, but the greatest surprise was the support given to the PCI.

In 1963 one out of every four Italians voted for the Communists; this despite all the vicissitudes the party experienced during the preceding few years—deStalinization and its effects, Hungary and its aftermath, the break with the PSI and the unprecedented prosperity caused by the boom. But perhaps the greatest consternation over the communist advance was caused by the failure of the Centre-Left government, after almost a year and a half of power, to break the PCI hegemony of working class support. The party not only held its positions but gained over a million new votes (1958: 22.7%; 1963: 25.3%).

Although the parties of the Centre-Left won a combined total of 59.6% of the popular vote (this includes the 1.4% of the Republican party) the 1963 election results could not be taken as an unqualified endorsement of the incipient *apertura a sinistra*, at least as it had developed up to that point. On the Right the doubling of the vote for a party which spoke for business interests was itself eloquent of conservative sentiment since many of the votes lost by the DC are thought to have gone to the Liberals. On the other hand the utter failure of the PSI to lure any communist votes away from the PCI indicated that even many Socialists were displeased with their party's relations with the DC.

The PCI had also benefitted elsewhere partly by winning
the votes of the internal migrants. The Monarchist vote was split in two ways: unsophisticated peasants, influenced by relatives who returned home from jobs in Germany, Switzerland or France to vote, probably joined them to support the PCI while all but the hard-core of nostalgic Monarchists, realizing the futility of their cause switched to the MSI. Social-Democratic gains came from both Right and Left; from Right-wing Socialists anxious to get on with l'apertura and from middle class progressives who were impatient with DC cautiousness.

Shortly after the elections Togliatti was asked his opinions about their outcome particularly about why it seemed that prosperity had not favoured the fortunes of the centro-sinistra. The reasons, Togliatti, thought, were not very obscure:

Italy is in the process of rapid economic and social transformation. But this process is taking place in a society dominated by big business and conservative political forces and therefore creates more problems than it solves...change has itself created...the desire for a better life and a more just social and economic order and hence has driven (the electorate) towards the Left.

What is more, economic development has accentuated and clarified a whole series of social contrasts and injustices of which the workers are victims. These cannot be rectified within the framework of our present antiquated society which has been overtaken by its own economic development. Thus powerful forces are now driving towards a renewal and a reform of the structure and its institutions. These forces are simultaneously reformist and revolutionary. They are reformist because they include precise demands of a democratic and social nature. But they are also revolutionary because of the resistance of the ruling class which is obstinately conservative and whose own conduct demonstrates the need for a new class to control the country. We made gains in this election
because we offered the people both satisfaction for their economic and social demands and an opportunity to share in the control of society.11

Regardless of its partisan origin this analysis of the background of the election results seems correct. To have accurately discerned the problems of Italian society was not to exercise in polemics. In reviewing the same question a correspondent of the French radical journal L'Express arrived at a similar conclusion:

The success of the PCI cannot be interpreted as a cry of protest; rather it bears witness to the attraction exercised on the Italian people by a party which offers it a new society, qualitatively different from the old while the parties of the Centre-Left offer a larger quantity of material possessions.12

The International Aspects

Aside from bewilderding certain circles in the West, who could not understand why or how a party like the PCI could continue to make the advances it did, even when growing Italian prosperity was alleviating the economic distress of so many Italians, the successes of Togliatti's party had other implications. These were related to the international communist movement.


The grave and complex problems faced by the international communist movement after the critical events of 1956 have already been partially related, particularly as they affected the PCI. The questions raised in international communist circles by the crises of 1956 did not abate with the passing of years. On the contrary the problems became more acute and profoundly altered relations among communist states and communist parties. The most widely known aspect of this is the Sino-Soviet ideological dispute which has caused relations between the two countries seriously to deteriorate. The complex causes of the dispute are all but clear and some aspects remain impenetrably recondite even to those whose studies on this subject are more than superficial.

"What is really maddening about the Russians," a Czech Communist recently told me with a sigh, "is that we barely ever know what they are up to. We don't even know what really happened between them and the Chinese." 13

Some explanations which have been offered are interesting in themselves but, to review, in the context of this paper, all the elements of the Sino-Soviet falling out is impossible both for reasons of space and because it is only incidental to the immediate subject matter. Yet, the dispute does bear on the problems of Italian Communism and, to the extent that the former has a bearing on the position which the PCI was to adopt in its regard, the causes which initiated the whole conflict

must be touched on briefly.

History, according to Marxism is a record of changing relationships. Changing conditions of economic production change the social and political texture of the community whose economic underpinning has altered. The changes in the political and social disposition of the community in turn modify the cultural "superstructure" (philosophy, literature, religion, the fine arts, etc.). Put in another way, it slowly changes the way people think about things, the way they see things, even though some old ideas persist for a long while even under the new conditions, a phenomenon which, as we have seen, fascinated Gramsci. The "superstructure," while possessing a certain autonomy of its own, always reflects, more or less, its genesis during particular historical moments.

This "dynamic" of history is eventually spent but only after historical evolution arrives at the ultimate stage of "pure" Communism. Until this last stage is reached the social and political contradictions of imperfect societies remain implacable motives for continuing modifications which are achieved peacefully or violently, depending on circumstances.

To utilize such an analytical framework, it is possible to suggest that those very societies where Marxism possesses the status of an official ideology have become the very elements of the historical dynamic described. Elsewhere in this narrative, the conditions out of which the first revolutionary socialist
state in history was created have been briefly described. How the Soviet Union existed for almost thirty years as the unique example of such a socialist state and what effects the peculiar conditions of its development had on its internal structure have also been related. And, finally, the very subject of this paper has necessarily required that the relationship between the PCI and the CPSU be attentively delineated because the historical development of the PCI was for so long a while intimately affected by the vicissitudes of the CPSU and the Soviet state itself.

Latterly, the attempt has been made to particularize how the PCI evolved from a tiny conspiratorial group into the largest non-ruling communist party in the world, how the peculiarly Italian variant of Marxism, exemplified by the thought of Antonio Gramsci, has helped to achieve this success and how the suitability of the "Italian road to Socialism" for Italy has ultimately won the approbation of the CPSU itself.

At the height of Stalin's power and prestige, when the distinction between Communism and the USSR became so blurred that defense of Soviet raisons d'etat sometimes became confused with defense of the Marxist idea itself, the political and ideological authority of the Soviet centre became unassailable truth.

14. The Indonesian CP is perhaps more correctly the largest non-ruling party but the recent massacres and dispersion of Indonesian Communists connected with the power struggle in Indonesia suggests that the power and influence of that party has been severely curtailed at least for the present.
for all sections of the Communist International: it was the chief adhesive for all communist movements in the world, a source of pride and encouragement ("the International shall be the human race"). The International embodied, so to speak, the universalized ideological "superstructure" of Socialism in one country.

But, History, unsatiated, continued its tireless evolution towards the one goal which alone could satisfy it. During its progress a plurality of socialist states were created in its wake by an historical agent, the Red Army; states, where peculiar internal conditions had created different problems and required different solutions but where, because the ideological superstructure of Socialism of One Country remained so influential, inappropriate solutions were borrowed and indiscriminately applied by emulators of the USSR. One important exception helped to change this: the Chinese Revolution. Here, the internal dynamics of Chinese social and political contradictions matured autonomously to create a socialist revolution. It was an independent development unsubordinated as elsewhere, to the exigencies of Soviet power and there was no necessary identification of Chinese interests with Soviet interests. The independent rise of communist China ended the uniqueness of the USSR as a centre of doctrinal authority even though the Chinese were prepared to concede Soviet priority in this area because of the immense prestige the latter had accumulated during all the years it stood
alone as the single bastion of Socialism.

But, with a plurality of states well on their way to creating socialist societies, the ideological centralism of an earlier era, when communist parties were still struggling for their existence, now seemed unnecessary. The one factor which sustained the preeminence of the CPSU remained its unchallenged historical prestige. When, therefore, in 1956 the exigencies of internal Soviet growth and development induced the Soviet leadership itself to destroy the prestige which had been won by Stalin and his party, they destroyed the basis upon which they themselves could continue to base their own international authority: if Communists had to stop believing in the past infallibility of Stalin (and hence the CPSU) when the fate of entire national communist movements had depended so much on the unquestioning acceptance of his decisions, for what reason should Communists continue uncritically to adhere to the Soviet counsels now when conditions were so much more favourable for autonomous development. If Stalin had made mistakes in the past who was to say that current leaders could not do likewise.

Thus, a vacuum of authority was created in the apex of international Communism and there existed no personality of Stalin's stature to refill it. None, the Chinese suggested, except Mao Tse-Tung. Togliatti, on the other hand, thought that the change was more fundamental. Socialism was no longer limited to one country; therefore, the superstructural reflection...
of that one historical-political moment had become outmoded: "The Soviet model can no longer be considered obligatory." The system was now "polycentric" and this required new attitudes, especially concerning the possibility of diversity in the various national approaches to Communism. The "Italian road to Socialism" was but one example of this diversity which in the peculiar context of one national was not without its value.

In the past, the unity provided by fidelity to the Soviet vanguard of revolution had been an indispensible source of strength and this strength in unity remained indispensible for communists movements today. For a number of reasons it could not exist in the institutional manner of the past but it had to be maintained nonetheless.

Lacking any overriding central authority and with the existence of a plurality of communist states, any incipient disputes between these states over method, interpretation or application of doctrine not to speak of conflicts arising out of surviving sentiments of nationalism, could not be settled, as in the past, by acceding to the directives of the authoritative centre. Therefore, to avoid conflict, the principle of unity in tolerant diversity had to be the idea binding communist parties and communist governments.

The USSR could not be denied the prestige and respect which were due to it but, in a polycentric context, the unhappy negative effects which Stalinism had left in Soviet society had
to be eradicated to that a regenerated USSR could win spontaneously the solidarity which in the past it obtained through historical circumstances. Standing in the way of this were the Sino-Soviet disagreements.

It is at this point that we must be satisfied to say that for a number of reasons: ideological, political, economic, diplomatic, organizational and military, the CPSU and the Chinese Communist Party and then the USSR and China engaged in a dispute which has been aggravated today to incredible degree and has strained Soviet-Chinese relations almost to the point of rupture. While the dispute began after the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU, it became more serious and public after the Twenty-Second Congress of the CPSU in 1961.

For its own reasons the Soviet leadership was ready to renounce its role as monitor of the international communist movement whereas for other reasons the Chinese insisted on the necessity for a central doctrinal authority to enforce ideological unity. At first the Chinese hoped that, by giving unqualified support to the USSR during the crises of 1956, the Soviets would pay greater heed to Chinese views even while the former remained the acknowledged leaders of the world communist movement. In perpetuating the authority of the Centre there could be little toleration for national deviations from Leninist fundamentalism such as the line followed by the "revisionist" Tito and the flexible Togliatti. But it was precisely the Stalinist insistence
on unsuitable orthodoxy and uniformity which had led to the eruptions of 1956 in the People's Democracies of Eastern Europe.

For these international and other internal reasons the Soviets renounced the idea of reviving the Centre and were willing to tolerate heterodoxy in non-Soviet communist movements. When the Soviet position became clear the Chinese sought to assume the mantle of authority on their own since the CPSU was "revisionist" and the USSR "bourgeois."

In the torrent of words which flowed around these questions the extreme language used by the CPC against its ideological adversaries became, at times, quite vehement and vitriolic and in the source of the debate some of the choicest words uttered by the Chinese were aimed at the figure who seemed to incarnate the "rightist" viewpoint: Comrade Togliatti.15 At first, attempts were made to patch up the dispute through meetings of all the international communist parties. In 1961 eighty-one communist parties met in Moscow and tried to work out a compromise statement. This turned out to satisfy no one and the debate continued. As it unfolded the PCI was, at times, to become very actively involved because acceptance of the Chinese theses concerning the proper method of carrying out revolutionary activity would have meant the complete rejection

15. In this regard the Chinese views are amply stated in "More on the Differences Between Comrade Togliatti and Us." Written in 1963, it is a long polemic against the political strategy followed by the PCI with all the proper references to Chapter and Verse from the Texts to prove that the PCI was not Marxist-Leninist.
of "la via italiana al socialismo" which the PCI had so carefully been plotting out since the war. But, on the other hand, the Italians were equally disturbed when the Soviet leaders, wanting to have it out with the Chinese, invited national communist parties to a meeting which was to have been a preliminary for an international communist conference. The unwelcome implications were clear: the conference would have amounted to a showdown and, led, inevitably, to a disastrous schism.

Out of this dissent with both Chinese and Soviet positions an "Italian tendency" arose. This was not an official position promoted by the PCI to rival either the Chinese or Soviet theses but, nonetheless, it exercised a deep influence within communist circles and was greeted with widespread approbation when it became known publically. The "Italian" interpretation of the problems facing Communists in the sixth decade of the twentieth century and the solutions with which it suggested the problems be approached were basically the public profession of what were private thoughts. The latter were expressed by Palmiro Togliatti with such candour that what became his last political act was assigned an unexpected status of a public document with ramifications which continue to bear fruit.
Il Promemoria

In the summer of 1964, during a visit to the Crimea, Togliatti took occasion to dwell upon problems which had arisen over the last several years and sat down to record them on paper. Although Togliatti could not know it at the time, the twenty-two pages he was to fill with his reflections became one of the most significant documents of contemporary Communism.

Since the Italian party secretary was scheduled to meet with Chairman Nikita Khrushchev, the thoughts he expressed in the notes probably were intended to serve as a memorandum to be communicated to the Soviet leader. Thus, Togliatti surveyed a very wide panorama of issues which he felt were of deep concern not only to the PCI and the CPSU but to the entire communist movements.

Almost immediately Togliatti expressed his serious reservations about the wisdom and timeliness of calling an international conference of communist parties to deal with the dissension with the Chinese, reservations which were equally shared, he noted, by other parties. The problem was not of opposing Chinese positions but of opposing them while avoiding an undesirable rupture in the international movement. By holding an international conference such a consequence might be hastened rather than avoided. Togliatti therefore suggested what he felt would be more fruitful methods of combatting the "erroneous political positions" and "splitting activities" of
the Chinese party. It was necessary, he wrote, never to discontinue the polemic against points of principle and policies of the Chinese; but in doing so the verbal violence used by the Chinese in their sweeping denunciations had to be avoided. Instead, the debate should be based on concrete issues and carried on in an objective and persuasive manner and "always with respect for the opponent." This could best be carried out by holding at the same time a series of meetings with groups of parties belonging to various sectors of the movement (West Europe, Latin America, the Third World and of the Peoples Democracies) so that the problems raised since 1957 could be reviewed collectively and common interests and responsibilities could better be defined.

After this had been carried out over a year or longer, then the advisability of holding a general conference could be raised. In the interval the Chinese Communists could have been isolated by confronting them with a more united movement possessing a better defined general policy line for use in common as well as a better understanding of the tasks to be faced in each sector. With this much having been accomplished the idea of holding an international conference could have been given up if this seemed necessary to avoid a formal split.

Togliatti regretted that this line had not in fact been followed by the Soviets: Chinese attacks had instead been answered in kind "with ideological and propagandistic polemics"
and these results of this he judged as being "none too good." If, instead of countering Chinese attacks with more attacks, more time was spent on developing and applying actual positions of policy, the Chinese could have been answered with facts and not words. Defeat of Chinese positions could most effectively be accomplished by concrete political initiatives. For example, the universal welcome reserved for the signing of the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty revealed world-wide approval of the Soviet doctrine of "peaceful coexistence."

This type of action would be of great value to communist movements in other countries also. If Western communist parties and representatives of communist and progressive movements from the "Third World" were to meet to elaborate a concrete policy regarding the cooperation and forms of aid which the former might extend to the latter this too would be to answer words with actions. During internal debates in the PCI, Togliatti noted this strategy had always rendered Chinese positions "completely indefensible and powerless" because the greatest success occurred when the shift was made from "general questions (the character of Imperialism and of the State, of the motive forces behind revolution etc.) to concrete policies currently being followed (the struggle with the government, criticism of the Socialist Party, unity of the labour unions, strikes etc.).

The gist of the entire matter, Togliatti argued, was that in continuing the struggle against the Chinese theses,
even if a conference were in fact to be convened, political initiatives which could contribute to defeat of Chinese positions should never be abandoned and such initiatives could most easily arise out of discussions among various sectors of the world movement concerning their mutual and particular problems. From these considerations, Togliatti moved to considerations about the international situation in general which he viewed "with some pessimism" since the problems facing international communist movements existed within the larger context.

The American presidential campaigns were disturbing, not just because one candidate (Goldwater) included "war as a part of his programme" and "talks like a Fascist," but because the latter's offensive "was pushing the American political front further to the Right" and was strengthening the tendency to regard greater aggressiveness in the international sphere "as an escape from domestic crises" of which "the race conflicts between Negroes and Whites was but an element" and as "a basis for an understanding with reactionary elements in Western Europe." This made the world situation quite dangerous. In Western Europe the monopolistic concentrations "of which the Common Market was the instrument" was being "accelerated by American competition" and this formed the basis for increasingly reactionary policies of authoritarian regimes which intended "to prevent any advances of the working class." In the international sphere this rivalry was resulting in deep conflicts of which the crisis
in NATO was one expression.

Such contradictions might be exploited but there was no cause for any great optimism since "all these groups tend to greater or less degree...to engage in neo-colonialism and impede the economic and political advancement of newly liberated African states." The crisis over Vietnam was revealing how "we could suddenly find ourselves facing...dangers in which all communist and working class movements in Europe and the entire world will have to commit themselves to the hilt."

All of this had to be realized when dealing with the Chinese:

The unity of all socialist forces, regardless of ideological differences, joined in a common effort against reactionary imperialism is an urgent necessity. We cannot imagine that China and the Chinese Communists could possibly be excluded from this unity. We must, from now on therefore not place obstacles in the way of this objective but rather make it easier. Let us not break off our polemics by any means, but let us always keep as their point of departure the evidence based upon today's realities that the unity of the entire working class and the communist movement is necessary and can be achieved.¹⁶

Concerning communist movements in Western countries, Togliatti declared that they should not be depicted in an overly optimistic light. Even if in a few specific countries, such as Italy or France, progress was being made, communist forces frequently were "not up to the tasks which they must face" and

¹⁶. Togliatti, Promemoria Di Yalta (Roma: 1964) p. 10
instead of having an effective influence on the life of their countries parties were reduced to carrying on propagandistic types of activity. It was urgent to overcome this by forcing Communists out of their relative isolation and to insert themselves actively in the political system by becoming effective mass movements. This being the case the consequences of a split in the international movement were to be feared: a split in the international movement would inevitably result in splits within national movements. All parties, especially the ones with weak bases, would then be forced to dedicate a great part of their energy and already limited resources to carrying on internal polemics with pro-Chinese factions. "This would cause much discouragement among the masses and would place great obstacles in the way of the development of our movement."

Objectively, the conditions for the advancement of the communist movement among the masses and in public life in general did exist but it was necessary to know how to exploit the conditions; to have enough courage to overcome political dogmatism; to be able to face new problems in new ways using methods which were suitable to the political and social environment in which rapid and continuous transformations were taking place.

This was particularly valid for the situation in which the PCI had to operate and which was valid for most Western European parties; a situation resulting from the problems of
capitalist economic development which the ruling classes were unable to deal with using traditional methods. The bigger countries particularly were faced with problems of centralization of economic management and attempts were being made to solve them through economic programming made, in the interests of big monopolies, from above, through state intervention. "This issue is the order of the day throughout the West and now there is talk about international programming...by leading bodies of the Common Market."

Such were some of the new problems which the working classes had to learn to deal with in new ways. "We have to fight in these areas also" and there were concrete ways of doing so. It required that the immediate claims of the working classes be combined with proposals for reforms in the economic structure (such as agrarian reforms, nationalizations etc.) placed within a general plan for economic development designed as an alternative to capitalist programming. This would not be socialist planning but it would be a new form and a new means of struggle making progress towards Socialism. The possibility of making successful advances in this direction depended greatly on how the whole problem is posed then solved:

Political initiative in this direction could make it easier for us to achieve greater influence over the broad sectors of the population which have not yet taken the path of socialism but are looking for new possibilities.17

17. op. cit. p. 13
The fight for democracy, in this context, comes to assume a greater concreteness which is tied to the reality of economic life because "capitalist programming has in fact always been tied to anti-democratic and authoritarian tendencies," against which a democratic procedure in the management of economic life must be adopted.

But, besides all of these areas of endeavour open to the communist movements there are others of great importance where Communists must operate with greater courage especially by abandoning old formulae which are not related to today's conditions. This is particularly true with regard to relations with people of religious conviction:

In the Catholic world both within organizations and among the masses there was a clear shift to the Left at the time of Pope John. Today a countershift to the Right has taken place at the centre (of Catholicism). But at the lower levels the pressures for a shift to the Left remain strong and this we must realize and encourage. For this purpose the old atheistic propaganda is useless. The very problem of the religious conscience, of its content of its roots in the masses and of the way it must be overcome must be posed in a different manner than the past if we wish to reach the Catholic masses and be understood by them. Otherwise our "outstretched hand" will be taken to be an expediency and almost as a bit of hypocrisy.18

The problem of relations with the Catholics was related to another, that of relations with the world of culture. There, opportunities for the penetration of communist influence still

18. op. cit. p. 15
remained largely open if Communists became the real champions of freedom in intellectual life, of artistic expression and of scientific progress. This required the understanding on the part of Communists that those in the intellectual world who see things differently are not enemies or enemy agents.

Mutual understanding reached by continuous discussion adds to our authority and prestige and at the same time helps us to expose our real enemies, the pseudothinkers, charlatans in art, etc. In this area much help could come to us—which is not always the case—from those countries where we already direct public life.19

The point of departure for all of these considerations remained the resolutions of the Twentieth Congress but the latter needed to be developed and deepened:

For example, deeper reflection on the issue concerning the possibility for the peaceful transition to socialism leads us to clarify what we mean by democracy in a bourgeois state, how the limitation of freedoms and democratic institutions should be broadened and what the best forms for participation by the working masses in economic and political life would be within the framework of a state whose bourgeois nature has not change and hence whether a struggle aimed at gradually transforming this nature from within is possible. In countries where the communist movement is already strong such as our own (and in France) this is the central issue of our political struggle...My own view is that in line with present day developments and general prospects (for the advancement and victory of socialism in the whole world) the concrete forms and conditions for advance and victory of socialism will today and in the immediate future be very different from what they have been in the past. At the same time the differences between one country and another will remain great. For this reason every party must know how to operate in an independent manner. The autonomy of parties, of which we are most vigorous advocates, is not only an internal necessity of our movement but is essential for our progress

19. op. cit. p. 16
under present conditions. We would therefore be against any proposal to create a centralized international institution. We are determined champions of unity in our movement and in the international labour movement but this unity must be realized through a multiplicity of concrete policy positions that correspond to the conditions and the levels of development of each country.20

Isolation among parties was the opposite danger but it must not be prevented by an international communist conference adopting rigid formulae for all conditions. These would only prove to be impediments to further advance. Let there be instead meetings and exchanges of ideas between parties in order to study common problems of politics, economics, philosophy, history, etc. and let debates among responsible spokesmen of socialist governments even occur publicly so that public opinion can become interested. This could only add to the prestige of the spokesmen and their governments. But, in holding such debates, the rudeness and vulgarity displayed by the Albanians and Chinese must have no place.

Finally, Togliatti wrote with regard to the problems faced by the socialist countries that "it is wrong to say that everything is always going well in the socialist countries" when in fact "difficulties, contradictions and new problems are always coming to light." These should be presented in their true light. "The very worst thing is to give the impression that everything is always going fine when all of a sudden we find ourselves faces with the need to discuss and explain difficult situations."

20. op. cit. pp. 16-17
The criticisms of Stalin must not be hidden for they have left scars which are deep enough already and have made even those elements who would be closest to the communist parties cynical about new economic and political achievements:

Besides this there remains unresolved the problem of the origins of the cult of Stalin and how it was possible that it occurred. No one accepts the explanation of everything having risen out of the serious personal defects of Stalin. The inclination is to examine what political errors could have led to the origins of the cult. This debate is occurring among historians and qualified groups within the party. We are not discouraging it because it tends towards a profounder understanding of the revolution and its problems. We do advise prudence when arriving at any conclusions to keep in mind the publishings and researches being made in the Soviet Union.

But the problems which arouse the greatest amount of attention...today in particular is that of the suppression of democratic and personal liberties which Stalin carried out. Not all the socialist countries present the same picture. The general impression is one of slowness and resistance in the matter of returning to the Leninist norms which used to guarantee within the party and outside of it broad freedom for expression and debate in the field of culture, art and also in politics. This slowness and resistance is difficult for us to explain especially in view of the present situation when capitalist encirclement no longer exists and economic construction has made tremendous advances. We have always proceeded from the idea that Socialism is the system in which the workers enjoy the greatest freedom possible and actively participate in an organized way in the management of all social life. We welcome therefore all the positions of principle and every fact which shows us that this is the reality of every Socialist country and not just the Soviet Union. On the other hand those facts which at times indicate the opposite damage the entire movement.21

Finally Togliatti lamented what he called the "manifestation of a centrifugal tendency" among socialist countries.

21. op. cit. pp. 20-21
regretting that there was "without doubt a renascent nationalism. We realize however that national feeling remains a lasting fac-
tor in the working class and socialist movement for a long time even after the winning of power." At the end Togliatti again urged a greater critical spirit which would lead to better understanding and greater unity within the government. Reminding himself that these ideas and others of purely Italian concern would have to be elaborated with greater detail verbally, Togliatti finished his memorandum.

A few hours later, on a visit to the international camp of Young Pioneers at Artek, near Yalta, the Italian communist leader was stricken with a cerebral hemorrhage. A few days later, after guiding the destinies of the Italian Communist Party for forty years, Palmiro Togliatti died.
CONCLUSIONS
In a very real sense, that which has been written up to now is but a preface to what could be written on the same subject taking the Yalta Memorandum as point of departure instead of point of arrival. If Togliatti wrote what became his "political testament" it was probated by his successors in the PCI.

When Togliatti's funeral bier was carried in procession through the streets of Rome over a million Italians followed it to the cemetery gates and "the depth of their grief was striking." At the height of the emotional exequies the new secretary of the PCI, Luigi Longo addressed the mass of mourners and it was then that the existence of the Togliatti commentary became known to the public. Later the text itself appeared in the pages of Rinascita and was ready not only by the fascinated Italian public but in international communist circles where Togliatti "was regarded with an admiration—approaching reverence."

Our enemies, Longo later wrote, ...found themselves in a difficult position on seeing the collapse of their anti-communist propaganda" because "the frankness of the Memorandum caused consternation among those who accuse us of not being able to call a spade a spade while the internationalist spirit permeating it embarrassed those who think that the autonomy of the Communist parties implies a break with the international Communist movement and rejection of proletarian internationalism."

2. Ibid.
Calling a spade a spade did not help very much in preventing any further aggravation of the Sino-Soviet dispute but perhaps it is significant that the *de facto* split has never been formally acknowledged by either side. What remains most remarkable about the document is that, in being made public, Togliatti's private rebukes to the Soviet leadership over its policies, while being delivered "with respect for the opposition" became what has been called, the "Magna Charta of Neo-Marxism."

For Togliatti's heirs in the PCI and, indeed, for the leaders of other national communist movements, especially for those in power, the "testament" articulated, once and for all, the unspoken feelings of many Communists who, while remaining sincere in their convictions, were no longer prepared to accept tutelage from outside their own movements because in the past this had already "left scars which are deep enough."

This "declaration of independence" was itself a remarkable enough achievement and that it should have come with such an eloquent conviction from spokesmen for the Italian Communist Party was a fact of great significance; a fact of significance but not of surprise. At least the hope is that the reader of this paper will not have found it surprising: the writer has aimed throughout to show how such a development could come from the PCI, to show why it should even be expected to have come from the heirs of Gramsci and Togliatti.

It is perhaps not incorrect to believe that the Soviet
leadership itself, or part of it, accepted the accuracy of Togliatti's criticisms. The last Soviet personality with whom Togliatti spoke before his death was Leonid Brezhnev. It was Brezhnev who accompanied Longo in bringing Togliatti's coffin back to Italy; it was Brezhnev who first learned of the contents of the memorandum, and it was Brezhnev who was later to substitute Nikita Khrushchev as First Secretary of the CPSU when the latter submitted to his political defeat at the hands of younger men in the Soviet leadership. Would it be wrong to infer a connection between these circumstances?

Togliatti's memory remains highly honoured in the Soviet Union today. The new Fiat auto works which will double automotive production in the USSR when they are finished are to be built in the ancient city of Stavropol whose name has been changed to "Togliatti." This would not be done if someone were being bitterly remembered as a heretic. On the contrary, these facts attest to the new maturity which has been reached in the relations among communist parties, relations based on tolerant respect for diverse opinions which Togliatti urged so forcefully.

In the Italian context also the "testament" left a rich bequest one which has not been, is not being, squandered by the present leaders of Italian Communism. Since the summer of 1964 Italian politics have been undergoing a metamorphosis whose rapidity has not made its implications superficial. Commentators are speaking of the "crisis of the PCI" as it has not been spoken of since 1956; of the party's "isolation," of its
"unsolvable contradictions." What seems to nourish such judgments is the spectacle of vigorous and unprejudiced debate occurring among Italian Communists in public, debates which take as their point of departure Togliatti's specific exhortations that such events take place ("with respect for either side,") "on the basis of objective arguments."

Some of the current objective arguments arise from the very character of the political transformations occurring in Italy. The principal result of the changes some have discerned to be an incipient "bi-partism" in Italian politics. The PSI, minus the Social-Proletarians, has continued the evolution begun after 1956. What this seems to mean more than anything is the final disappearance of Italian "Maximalist Socialism" into a Social-Democratic oblivion. The PSI and the PSDI are on the eve of their reunification, a reunification which seems to be taking place under terms most congenial to the positions of the PSDI which has over the years tended to become an undistinguishable appendage of the Italian political Centre still dominated by the DC. At the same time the PSDI lost what little rapport it ever had with the working classes. Perhaps the PSI will succeed in carrying over its working class political base and out of the union will come a party which can finally challenge the political power of the DC. The outside help of the PCI is admitted to be a reserve power to the PSI-PSDI alliance in this confrontation even though the PCI still remains "outside the game."
On the other side of the foreseeable bi-partisan realignment will stand the DC and the Liberals who have more or less absorbed the support once given to the small Right-wing parties. Italy too will then have a political system which will approximate a balance between two "acceptable" democratic alternatives.

Out of this situation is seen to stem the "crisis of isolation" facing the PCI. The erosion of its political base is seen as an inevitable consequence of the Socialist reunification. Whether this really does occur can only be seen in 1968: the results of 1963 would not tend to confirm this in advance nor would the increasing support obtained by the PCI in every election since 1948. This is one of the great riddles of current Italian politics.

But Togliatti's heirs particularly the younger ones are not sitting on their hands to see what turns up. Abandoning the "old formulae which do not correspond to today's conditions" party personalities such as Giorgio Amendola and Pietro Ingrao are vigorously leading the debates which have excited imaginations within the PCI and outside of its ranks. Both men are aware that despite the current power of the PCI and despite the slow advances which it has made, Italian politics at the root remain characterized by a rather depressing stagnancy.

The problem both men are posing is how to make the one quarter of the electorate controlled by the PCI mean something more than just the largest political opposition group.
The economic crisis which began in 1962 got worse before it got better and taught Italians the meaning of a new word which they were to hear often: congiuntura, meaning a complex of circumstances leading to economic recession. Yet, despite the congiuntura, the centro-sinistra became a going concern and Communists were being left out of it.

Togliatti had raised the question of whether the advance of socialism were possible inside the framework of a bourgeois state. After his death this problem was carried further into a deeper examination of the nature of the state particularly with regard to Lenin's interpretation of it as contrasted to Engels' and Gramsci's interpretation. Out of these scrutinies the Gramscian characterization of the state as "apparatus of hegemony" took on greater relevance in the actual Italian situation than Lenin's depiction of it as purely a repressive instrument offering no possibility of internal modification.

Gramsci (and Engels) interpretations suggested rather the real possibility of internal mutation through utilization of universal suffrage and parliamentary power. Thus, concluded both Amendola and Ingrao echoing Togliatti, the question was how to find allies for the PCI to collaborate in forming a mass bloc which would revolutionize the capitalist bourgeois state

not by frontal attacks (as urged by Lenin) but by achieving intermediate changes which would foreshadow socialist transformations.

Ingrao and Amendola agree on the problem but not on strategy. Ingrao thinks in broader philosophical terms of a massive realignment of Italian politics which would result in the creation of a substantially new Left based upon an ideological understanding between the Catholic Left and the Communists.

In this effort both the DC Left and the PCI would have to subject themselves to critical self-examination. For the DC Left it would mean to follow its socialistic inclinations to their logical conclusions; that is, to break away from the party whose leadership has frustrated and sabotaged efforts to achieve social reform by exploiting the bogey of a totalitarian, atheistic, communist threat to Catholic survival. Now, the PCI, through its own self-examination has reduced the latter to a ludicrous piece of prejudiced propaganda. The dialogue with the Catholics has become an irreversible fact of Italian cultural life and a book *Il dialogo alla prova* (Dialogue put to the Test), in which ten Catholic and Communist intellectuals each contributed a chapter in a collective discussion about possible understanding between both groups, was testimony to the commitment to follow through the tendency to its ultimate degree wherever it led. If this could convince the Catholic Left to break off from the DC and form a new "hegemonic bloc"
with the PCI the rest of the Italian Left would have to adhere. The future of Italian politics would be revolutionary.

For Amendola, Ingrao's abstract goals and the method of attaining them, by placing the political nature of the PCI in an amorphous ideological parenthesis while undertaking its own ideological self criticism would be both a danger to the integrity of the party and would not guarantee the successful attainment of the proposed entente with the Catholic Left. Amendola's strategy is another; more pragmatic but no less radical. The solution Amendola proposes is based on the concrete political realities of the country. Considering that those parties who more or less constitute the Italian Left (excluding the DC's Left wing) command 43% of the popular vote (based on the results of the November 1964 administrative elections) Amendola speaks in terms of forming "a new party" of the Left. But the implications of his proposals are truly startling:

Today the exigencies for a single party of the Italian working class are born out of a critical awareness; neither one of the two solutions presented to the working class in the capitalist countries of Western Europe during the last fifty years, the social-democratic solution and the communist solution, has shown itself up to now as being valid for the goal of achieving a socialist transformation of society, or a change in the system. If we do not proceed from this admission which is critical and self-critical at the same time we will not be able to understand the pressing need for a radical change which will permit the overcoming of the causes which for fifty years have prevented the working class movement of advanced capitalist countries from giving its determining contribution to the advance of socialism in the world.5

5. Giorgio Amendola, "Ipotesi sulla riunificazione" Rinascita (23 November, 1964) p. 8

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The reasons for this are historical and arose from particular conditions. The problem today is to see if new conditions have been created which would permit "a different grouping of the forces of the working class, and, in Italy, a new reorganization of the political array on the Left." When Amendola's declarations were published a minor earthquake occurred in Italian political life. A month earlier, the London Economist had written, with regard to the Italian Communist party, that "the Italians are banking on becoming a successful mass radical party at the risk of losing their communist character." Amendola showed just how great a risk he was willing to take.

Since the Eleventh Congress of the PCI, held in January of this year, Amendola's theses have prevailed over Ingrao's, although Longo himself devoted a great part of his address to the Congress to invite the Catholics to extend the dialogue which had already been initiated to ever wider areas. In this, the PCI itself was prepared "to risk losing" its communist character. But to risk and to lose are not the same thing: what Amendola is proposing is a pragmatic agreement among parties of the Italian Left as they are already constituted.

What he is urging is an abandonment of the old partisan prejudices which in the past nullified the political efforts of both the communists and social democratic movements which instead

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achieved their greatest success in splitting the unity of the European working class. There was no reason why these parties could not now join together, on pragmatic bases, to collaborate, according to their own particular tendencies or inclinations, to build a mutually desired society which would embody shared principles of economic and social justice. If it were desired, Longo was to declare, the PCI would even be willing to change its name.

What should be made of all this? Is it all mere expedience to win power at any price, to seduce the opposition by dazzling feats of ideological contortion? This is not the opinion of the writer. He prefers to interpret current day Italian Communist politics as the maturest articulation of a political line that can be traced back to *L'Ordine Nuovo*, a line which has been leading to an unchanging goal, that of realizing in Italy a society based on economic, social, political and cultural justice among men.

The Italian Communist Party has pursued its self-imposed goal with a tenacity unmatched by any other Italian party including the PSI and has paid with great sacrifices the price of perpetuating its struggle, at times against overwhelming odds. In its political and ideological history, the PCI had, from its inception, possessed an intellectual vigour which was never completely extinguished not even when the exigencies of a hostile environment demanded that it be subordinated to a greater
need for political solidarity with the movement which incarnated the hopes of Communists everywhere. It did not succumb to the shackles of a twenty-year prison sentence.

From the time the PCI emerged from its clandestine existence after the end of the Second World War, the party gave the greatest articulation to the aspirations of the Italian masses and the latter remained attached to "their" movement despite the onslaughts directed against it from every direction. Much of the confusion of modern Italian politics can be better understood if in the background one looks for the consistent efforts on the part of the anxious powers who govern to stave off the communist advance by any means available, violence notwithstanding. The best that was ever achieved was the political stalemate which exponents of the PCI have untiringly been seeking to break.

It is this writer's opinion that the PCI cannot be prevented much longer from claiming its share of public power which mass support has made legitimate. Even an "opening to the Left," if it excludes the communist Left, will not reduce the pressure of public demands for greater justice in Italian society unless the claims elaborated by the PCI are satisfied. And if these claims are satisfied the "opening to the Left" will have included the communist Left even without the PCI.

It is the writer's thesis that the Italian Communist Party has revealed itself to be eminently qualified to share
in the governing of Italy, qualified politically, intellectually, ideologically and historically. The PCI does not seek to impose totalitarian rule on Italian society but seeks to exercise its rightful role in shaping the destiny of the Italian people. It is hoped that the justification for this thesis has been demonstrated in this paper. With this hope, the reader is invited to share it.
APPENDIX I

Some of the key articles in the constitution were:

**Article 3** ...It is the task of the Republic to remove the obstacles of an economic and social order which, limiting in fact the liberty and equality of citizens, prevent the full development of the human personality and the effective participation by all workers in the political, economic and social organization of the country.

**Article 39** The organization of trade unions is free...

**Article 40** The right to strike is exercised within the sphere of the laws which regulate it.

**Article 41** Private economic initiative is free. This may not develop in conflict with social utility or in such a manner as to cause damage to security to liberty, to human dignity.

The law determines the appropriate programs and controls in order that public and private economic activity may be directed and coordinated toward social ends.

**Article 42** Property is public or private. Economic goods belong to the state, to organized groups, or to individuals.

Private property is recognized and guaranteed by law, which determines the methods of its acquisition and enjoyment and the limitations designed to assure its social functioning and render it accessible to all.
In cases prescribed by law, and on the basis of compensation private property may be expropriated for reasons of general interest.

**Article 43** For the purpose of general utility the law may originally reserve or may transfer, by means of expropriation and with indemnity, to the state, to public bodies, or to communities of workers or of utilizers, specified enterprises or categories of enterprises which relate to essential public services or to sources of energy or to situations of monopoly and which have a character of pre-eminent general interest.

**Article 44** For the purpose of securing a rational exploitation of the soil and of establishing just social relationships, the law imposes obligations and restrictions on private property in land; it fixes limits to its extension according to the region and agrarian zone it promotes and requires reclamation, the transformation of latifundia, and the reconstitution of productive units; it aids the small and medium scale proprietor...

**Article 45** The Republic recognizes the social function of cooperation conducted on the basis of mutuality and without purposes of speculation for private gain. The law promotes and favours its extension by suitable means and assures its character and permanence subject to appropriate controls...
Article 46  With a view to the economic and social advancement of labour and in harmony with the requirements of production the Republic recognizes the rights of workers to collaborate in ways and within limits established by the law in the management of business enterprises.
APPENDIX II

The constitution also contains an article, number seven, which is probably the most controversial of the entire document. The position which the PCI adopted regarding its insertion brought down upon it a barrage of criticism and accusations of expedient hypocrisy by shocked anti-clericals and other "lay parties."

Article 7 reads:

"The State and Catholic Church are, each in its own order independent and sovereign.

Their relationships are regulated by the Lateran Pacts. Modification of the Pacts which have been accepted by the two parties do not require the procedure of constitutional amendment."

Although the Constitution adds in Article Eight that all religious confessions are "equally free before the law" the very nature of the Lateran Pacts act as a substantial negation of Article Eight. The Catholic Church under the terms of the Lateran agreements is quite unquestionably given a position of privilege for Article One of the Pact declares Roman Catholicism to be "the sole religion of the state." The Church is given special rights to teach religion in state high schools as well as to run its own private schools. Furthermore, Italian law concerning marriage and divorce was to conform to canon law. The latter was particularly offensive to non-Catholic religious
minorities who were placed in an inferior status since their desire to dissolve a marriage was regulated by the religious court of a Church to which they did not belong. Finally, the Pope and Princes of the Church were given special privileges in Italy which amount to rights of censorship since numerous works of arts and letters can be sequestered on charges of contempt for the state religion or "defamation" of the person of the Pontiff.

The PCI rationalized its vote for retention of the Lateran Pacts as a gesture of good will towards the Catholics with whom Communists sought to collaborate and to whom they wished to show their lack of anti-clerical prejudice. Be that as it may, Article Seven of the Italian republican constitution has time and again been cited as justification for censorship in the arts and letters and caused more than one Communist to be brought to court on charges of "defamation" of the papacy or "contempt for the state religion."
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1941  Aldo Marchini, son of Pietro Marchini and Cesarina Bertona was born in Windsor, Ontario, April 3, 1941

1946 - 55  received primary education at Prince Edward School in Windsor

1955 - 60  attended Patterson Collegiate Institute also in Windsor

1960 - 66  studied at Assumption University, later the University of Windsor, receiving a Bachelor's Degree from Assumption in 1963. As a graduate student in Political Science, he has held Ontario Graduate Fellowships during the academic year 1964-65 and during the summers of 1965 and 1966.