

DONALD L.M. BLACKMER  
SIDNEY TARROW

# Communism in Italy and France



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## **Communism** in Italy and France

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*Edited by Donald L. M. Blackmer  
and Sidney Tarrow*

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## Preface

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This book has been germinating longer than most. In retrospect it is clear that the seeds were sown more than a decade ago, in Rome, when the editors first met to trade ideas about the research they were pursuing on Italian communism. It was a stimulating exchange, in part because we were approaching our common topic with substantially different intellectual interests and backgrounds. One of us was investigating the Communist party in the south of Italy using insights acquired in the study of comparative politics and problems of development, the other was trying to understand the party's international behavior from a perspective largely derived from the study of Soviet policy and international Communist relationships. To some degree we talked past each other, and yet we also came to recognize that in an important sense we were interested in much the same thing. By our quite different routes we had been led to ask the same basic question: how were we to comprehend and communicate the dual and ambivalent reality of a party that was, on the one hand, avowedly *Communist* in ideology, in organizational style, in international loyalties, and on the other hand, most obviously *Italian* as well?

Continued exchanges of view over the intervening years helped make each of us less certain of his own verities and more receptive to the other's insights and criticisms, until it was no longer certain to either of us where a particular idea had originated or what had happened to it as it passed back and forth between us. For better or for worse, the entire structure of this book, as well as the introductory and concluding chapters, reflect this mode of collaboration.

But the book is a collaborative venture in far more than this sense. Anyone who has experienced the satisfactions and frustrations of putting together a volume based on a conference knows that the organizers and editors must rely on the indispensable assistance of a host of persons, visible and invisible, at every stage of the way.

The book owes its existence, first of all, to the initiative of the

## PREFACE

Planning Group on Comparative Communist Studies, which was sponsored during the seven years of its existence by the American Council of Learned Societies by means of a grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York. In 1969 the Planning Group, then under the chairmanship of Alexander Dallin, established a subcommittee on nonruling Communist parties which held a small conference at Columbia University's Arden House to discuss the status of research on these parties and to test the feasibility of a larger international gathering. The discussion, taking off from Joseph LaPalombara's stimulating agenda paper, convinced most of us that the time was not yet ripe for global comparative studies in this field. It also generated great enthusiasm for the idea of a conference devoted to the French and Italian parties, as is explained more fully in the Introduction. The Planning Group agreed to this proposal, and in accordance with its usual practice delegated to one of its members—in this instance, Donald Blackmer—principal responsibility for organizing the conference. He promptly coopted Sidney Tarrow, and in due course the conference took shape. We are most grateful to the ACLS, represented by its vice-president Gordon B. Turner, to the Planning Group as a whole, and particularly to its last two chairmen, Robert Tucker and Richard Burks, for the encouragement and the intellectual and financial support we have received throughout this enterprise.

The conference was held at M.I.T.'s Endicott House in Dedham, Massachusetts, in October 1972. The contributors to this volume made up the largest number of participants, but a number of others contributed in major ways to the debate and helped the authors to hone their ideas against the judgments of a sharp, but not abrasive audience. These participants, many of whom presided over panels as well, have our special thanks. They are Suzanne Berger, Piero Bolchini, Peter Courevitch, Thomas Greene, Stanley Hoffmann, Juan Linz, Alessandro Pizzorno, Jean Ranger, and Nicholas Wahl.

The editing of conference papers into a reasonably coherent whole, intellectually and stylistically, is no simple task. The first steps were taken by Judith Chubb, who converted her feverishly written conference notes, along with those made by Robert Berrier and Alan Posner, into a useful record to guide the editors in assisting the participants with their revisions and in preparing the introductory and concluding chapters. Susan Tarrow labored

to translate the distinctive, but different French prose styles of Annie Kriegel and Georges Lavau into something like the same English. Ellen Offner did a masterful job of editing each of the revised papers, raising sharp substantive questions as well as putting order into a diversity of styles and usages. At Princeton University Press, Polly Hanford has been unfailingly helpful and courteous in seeing the volume through the publication process. Always ready to help in ways large and small, Judith Chubb stepped into the breach once again to prepare the index and the list of abbreviations. And throughout the process, Lisa Martin has been indispensable as coordinator of a complicated communications network, impeccable proofreader, typist of semi-legible manuscripts, and much more. We are greatly in the debt of all these people.

More time than we like to recall has passed between the presentation of the papers to the Endicott House Conference and the publication of this volume. In part, there were the usual delays due to publisher's readers and publication schedules. Equally important, however, were the editors' ambitious expectations for revisions and each contributor's dedication to stylistic or substantive perfection. That the revised papers collected here will justify that effort is not for us to judge, although we heartily hope so. In any event our last and greatest debt is to the colleagues and friends who collaborated with us in this enterprise. Working with them has been one of the greatest pleasures of our professional lives, and we thank them for their hard work, their insight, and for the patience required of them in awaiting publication of their work.

DONALD L. M. BLACKMER  
 SIDNEY TARROW  
*Cambridge, Massachusetts*  
*Ithaca, New York*  
*April 1975*





## Preface to the Paperback Edition

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Since the original edition of this book went to press, less than two years ago, the pace of change in Western Europe has been unusually rapid. The French and Italian Communist parties have been substantially affected by national and international developments and have themselves contributed to the general sense of movement by the important changes they have undergone.

In the early 1970s, it appeared that both parties, along with their respective political systems, had for the time being settled into a stable and unexciting state, a period of recuperation after the traumatic years of student unrest, labor strife, and conservative backlash. By mid-1975, however, everything was in motion again. To the domestic economic strains touched off by the industrial conflicts of the late 1960s were added an international economic crisis and a rampant inflation, especially in Italy where the inflation rate jumped to 20 percent or more. In both countries a severe fiscal crisis threatened the survival of the extensive systems of social welfare erected over the past thirty years. These economic and environmental shocks had important political counterparts, especially in Italy.

The divorce referendum of 1974 and the regional elections of June 1975 were the first tangible signs that the Italian political stalemate might be on the way to being broken. The electoral and social support of the Democrazia Cristiana (DC) appeared to be declining, along with the religious allegiance that had replaced many voters' ideological or programmatic party loyalty. The DC's decline was especially marked among younger voters frustrated by its failure to introduce reforms, cope with corruption in government, or take substantial measures to meet the economic crisis. Conversely, the patient and moderate policies of the Partito Comunista Italiano (PCI) seemed finally to have overcome the barriers of anti-Communist sentiment in the electorate. National elections in 1976 consolidated PCI gains in many important cities and regions and made it clear that the party had at last become not only a possible but an almost inevitable

*partito di governo*. Since the 1976 elections, the PCI has become part of a curious "government by abstention," counselling and practicing restraint and cooperation in a situation that is tolerable only because the currently visible alternatives appear worse to all concerned.

Not surprisingly, the Italian party's international strategy has been revised to reinforce its domestic gains. Earlier, the PCI's identification with pro-Soviet and anti-American positions had provided an unanswerable argument to those seeking to prevent its entrance into the government. Particularly constraining at a time when "historic compromise" was the slogan of the day was the party's long-standing opposition to the Atlantic Alliance and its call for Italy's withdrawal from NATO. In a significant reversal of policy, therefore, the PCI announced in 1976 that it would respect Italy's alliances, and that unilateral Italian withdrawal from NATO would upset the strategic balance between the two competing blocs and threaten detente. In its relations with the USSR, the PCI has continued to voice forcefully its unorthodox views, using even the XXVI Congress of the Soviet Party in March 1976 as a forum in which to dissent from certain aspects of Soviet ideology and practice. And in increasingly open ways, the PCI has tried to open lines of communication with the United States, which—along with West Germany—remains the strongest external constraint on its future entry into an Italian government.

The recent outspokenness of the PCI toward Moscow should not be attributed exclusively to its strengthened domestic position. A significant change has also occurred within European Communism generally, in directions distinctly favorable to the Italians. The revolutionary tactics of the Portuguese Communists failed, much to the PCI's relief; the transition to a post-Franco regime brought into prominence a Spanish CP that was verbally as democratic and pluralist as the Italian and even more outspokenly critical of the Russians; and most surprising of all, despite its reversion to type in supporting the aggressive Cunhal strategy in Portugal, the French party began to voice essentially "Italian" positions with respect to a number of domestic and international issues. In late June of 1976, at the long-delayed Conference of European Communist parties, these three Western parties, in company with the Yugoslavs and Rumanians, obliged the Soviet leaders in substantial measure to recognize and accept

their terms concerning future relations among European Communist parties.

What are we to make of the recent changes in the French party? It would have been rash to suppose, much before mid-1975, that the French Communists would soon publicly disavow the classic slogan of the "dictatorship of the proletariat" and proclaim a "Socialisme aux couleurs de la France" which seemed to borrow substantially in spirit from their more innovative Italian comrades. The French took another leaf from the Italian book when they criticized the Soviet party about forced labor camps and other issues of civil rights under "socialist democracy."

A number of internal developments have accompanied the French party's recent change in policy line. Both the number and the composition of its membership have changed rapidly, with a far greater middle class component and an increased appeal to young people and women. But the basic reason for the party's recent organizational adaptation is external: the very real threat to its position represented by the rapid growth in influence of the French Socialists. Given the dynamic leadership and enhanced popular support of the Parti Socialiste, in fact, a victory of the French Left seems at this point more likely to be a Socialist than a Communist triumph. A new image for French communism—in terms of program, ideology, and organization—seems a prerequisite, though by no means a guarantee, of a successful PCF response to the Socialist challenge.

But the changes in the PCF, though they appear dramatic and far-reaching when compared to its relative orthodoxy in the 1960s, may still lack a solid substratum in the attitudes and habits of party militants at all levels. In contrast to the comparable PCI adaptations, which were preceded by two decades of internal and programmatic evolution and have become firmly rooted in party practice, those so far found in the PCF are recent and largely symbolic—as was the formal denunciation of the dictatorship of the proletariat—and thus far have had little impact on the way the French party operates internally. Further changes in internal orientation are not to be excluded, but caution should be exercised in assuming that the PCF can, in only a few years, travel a route that the PCI took two decades to traverse.

Our purpose in mentioning the recent changes in both Communist parties is twofold. First, we wish to signal that some important developments have occurred in recent months which are not

## PREFACE TO THE PAPERBACK EDITION

reflected in the body of the book. Had they been given the opportunity, some of our authors (certainly the editors themselves) would have chosen to bring a few references up to date and modify or rephrase certain judgments. Most importantly, however, we wish to express the belief that our fundamental observations and analyses remain valid, despite the changes that have taken place.

Our approach has been to avoid global generalizations about these two parties, emphasizing instead what we called in the introduction "the critical differential impact of national environmental conditions" as well as the complex interactions among each party's political strategy, its international relationships, its organization and membership, and its various local and regional expressions. The recent changes in European politics have led many journalists, and at least some scholars, to accept the global formula of "Euro-Communism" as an adequate shorthand for explaining the current situation. Certainly, the overall strategic situations of the French, Italian, and Spanish Communist parties have much in common, inclining them to respond similarly, in certain ways and at certain times, to the pressures of domestic and international politics. Moreover, the sense of being relatively close to a share of governmental power seems almost certain to induce each of these long-time opposition parties to accentuate its potential for domestic political alliances and to increase its distance from the USSR.

But is there some underlying uniformity which seems likely to determine the emergence in the near future of a common strategy for these parties, with their very different histories and political-institutional settings? We think not, and we continue to resist interpretations and generalizations which in our view give insufficient weight to differences of history, party composition, the nature and alignment of political forces, and other important environmental circumstances. We do not believe that it will help us much in interpreting the recent past, or in intelligently anticipating the near future, to speak of the French party as becoming "Italianized" or of the Iberian ones becoming "Westernized." As the strategy of the Portuguese party in the 1974-75 period showed, national differences and internal party traditions can be decisive.

To illustrate this point, three essential differences in the situations of the French and Italian Communist parties can be cited.

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First, since Italy and France bear a different relationship to the western alliance and to the center of Western Europe, international changes are bound to affect their Communist parties differently. The impact of this is clear in the continued greater “nationalism” of the PCF vis-à-vis the greater support for European integration found in the PCI. Secondly, despite the economic and social trends of the past few years, France still has a stronger and more compact bourgeoisie, which implies that the forces opposing Communist entry into government are certain to be greater there than in Italy. Third, the basic strategic difference in the two parties’ search for power has, if anything, widened with the ripening of the PCI’s historic compromise strategy. While the PCF continues to count on what is essentially a Popular Front strategy, the PCI hopes with increasing credibility to enter a government alongside its Christian Democratic opponents. The effect of these international, class, and strategic differences will best be understood through sustained close analysis of each party’s internal life, its domestic alliances, and its international strategy. It is this approach that we and our co-authors have tried to follow in this book.

DONALD L. M. BLACKMER  
SIDNEY TARROW  
*Cambridge, Massachusetts*  
*Ithaca, New York*  
December 1976



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## List of Abbreviations

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ACLI	Associazioni Cristiane dei Lavoratori Italiani
APB	Artigianato Provinciale Bolognese
ARCI	Associazione Ricreativa Culturale Italiana
CC	Comitato Centrale
CERES	Centre d'Etudes et d'Education Socialiste
CFDT	Confédération Française Démocratique du Travail
CFTC	Confédération Française des Travailleurs Chrétiens
CGIL	Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro
CGT	Confédération Générale du Travail
CGTU	Confédération Générale du Travail Unitaire
CI	Commissione Interna
CIR	Convention des Institutions Républicaines
CISER	Centro Italiano di Studi e Ricerche
CISL	Confederazione Italiana Sindacati Lavoratori
CLN	Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale
CNJA	Confédération Nationale des Jeunes Agriculteurs
CNR	Conseil National de la Résistance
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
CUB	Comitati Unificati di Base
DC	Democrazia Cristiana
EEC	European Economic Community
EGF	Electricité et Gaz de France
ERIS	Etudes, Recherches et Information Socialiste
ESI	Editrice Sindacale Italiana
FEN	Fédération de l'Education Nationale
FFI	Forces Françaises de l'Intérieur
FGCI	Federazione Giovanile Comunista Italiana
FGDS	Fédération de la Gauche Démocrate et Socialiste
FIM	Federazione Italiana Metalmeccanici
FIOM	Federazione Impiegati Operai Metallurgici
FLN	Front de Libération Nationale
FN	Front Nationale
FO	Force Ouvrière
GAM	Groupes d'Action Municipale

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

KPD	Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands
MLN	Mouvement de Libération Nationale
MODEF	Mouvement de Défense des Exploitants Familiaux
MPL	Movimento Politico dei Lavoratori
MRP	Mouvement Républicain Populaire
MSI	Movimento Sociale Italiano
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OURS	Office Universitaire de Recherches Socialistes
PCF	Parti Communiste Français
PCI	Partito Comunista Italiano
PDIUM	Partito Democratico Italiano di Unità Monarchica
PDM	Progrès et Démocratie Moderne
PLI	Partito Liberale Italiano
PNM	Partito Nazionale Monarchico
PR	Proportional Representation
PRI	Partito Repubblicano Italiano
PS	Parti Socialiste
PSDI	Partito Socialista Democratico Italiano
PSI	Partito Socialista Italiano
PSIUP	Partito Socialista Italiano di Unità Proletaria
PSU	Parti Socialiste Unifié
PSU	Partito Socialista Unificato
RPF	Rassemblement du Peuple Français
SFIO	Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière
TVA	Taxe sur valeur ajoutée
UDI	Unione Donne Italiane
UDR	Union des Démocrates pour la République; 1968— Union pour la Défense de la République
UFD	Union des Forces Démocratiques
UFF	Union des Femmes Françaises
UIL	Unione Italiana del Lavoro
UNEF	Union Nationale des Etudiants Français
UNR	Union pour la Nouvelle République
WFTU	World Federation of Trade Unions

## **Communism** in Italy and France

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## Introduction

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DONALD L. M. BLACKMER

This volume was conceived during a conference held several years ago at Arden House under the auspices of the Planning Group on Comparative Communist Studies. The conference had been called to test the proposition that a group of specialists on the world's nonruling Communist parties could design a framework for research on this group of parties, as had been earlier attempted, with some success, for the Communist parties in power.<sup>1</sup> In terms of that goal, the Arden House conference was a failure—stimulating and thoroughly enjoyable, but a failure. By and large the participants went home prepared to agree that we had neither adequate conceptual tools nor sufficient empirical data for effective comparative analysis of even the major types of nonruling Communist parties.

Difficult though it is to compare Communist parties governing political systems at widely varying stages of development, with quite different cultural and political heritages, one can at least make some reasonable assumptions about the similar functions that parties in power must perform in any system. It became clear at Arden House that not even this much could safely be said about the Communist parties out of power. Despite similarities in rhetoric, there seemed no convincing reason to suppose that they shared or meant the same thing by such apparently obvious goals as “coming to power,” “modernization,” or “radical social and economic change.” It was clear, moreover, that there existed a serious data problem. Research on the nonruling parties was sparse and uneven in quantity and quality, concerned more with doctrinal matters and interparty relations than with the more essential questions of party organization and strategy.

A more modest approach to the problem was then proposed. Why not begin by looking comparatively at the French and Ital-

<sup>1</sup> The results of that summer study have been published in Chalmers Johnson (ed.), *Change in Communist Systems* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1970).

## INTRODUCTION

ian parties? No two Communist parties were likely to be any more comparable than these, and the amount of research already carried out, or then under way, on these two parties was substantial. Under the Planning Group's auspices once again, a three-day conference accordingly took place at M.I.T.'s Endicott House in October 1972. This volume contains revised or completely rewritten versions of most of the papers presented there, plus the concluding comparative chapter and one new contribution stimulated by the discussions.

As we planned the conference and the book, we had three broad purposes in mind. The most straightforward of these was to make more widely available the results of a number of empirical investigations we knew had recently been carried out on the Italian and French parties. These studies seemed to us not only to provide valuable evidence about what was happening to and within these parties but also to demonstrate convincingly that Communist parties, contrary to general belief, could in fact be studied as effectively, and with many of the same techniques, as other political parties. It would in itself be useful, we believed, to challenge the assumption of inaccessibility that may have restrained many from exploring the nonruling Communist parties at all and that may have limited others to microscopic analyses of what *was* readily accessible—their doctrinal and other public statements.

A second purpose was to make as much progress as we could toward careful comparative analysis of the two parties. This proved to be more difficult than we had expected. First, we succeeded in finding virtually no one who had actually worked on both parties and who could be persuaded to undertake a directly comparative study. Second, we had less success than we had anticipated in uncovering parallel, directly comparable pieces of research by different authors. Given the limited number of studies on the two parties, this should probably not have been surprising. It was revealing, however, to discover that researchers on the two parties had generally gravitated toward different topics, a circumstance no doubt reflecting intrinsic differences between the parties as well as their relative accessibility to study. We responded to the situation by commissioning papers that would, we hoped, be as nearly comparable as possible. We then organized the discussion at the conference itself to emphasize

comparisons and browbeat our authors (with occasional success) to revise their papers in a more explicitly comparative mode. What we have learned on this score is primarily to be found in the concluding chapter, where Tarrow (with Blackmer acting as critic-collaborator-sounding board) has attempted to develop a framework for comparative analysis of the two parties.

Our third general purpose was to explore a particular theme. Like most of those who come to grips with the issues of working-class politics, we have been fascinated—and frustrated—by the classical dilemma faced by the Communist and Socialist parties in Europe. Can they somehow remain “revolutionary,” in at least the minimal sense of working effectively for the economic, social, and political transformation of their societies, or are they fated to become (if this has not happened already) largely or totally integrated into those societies, adapting to existing institutions and values rather than seriously challenging them? This was of course the central issue underlying the great debate over revisionism at the beginning of the century, and for Social Democracy the conclusive answer has long since been given, with minor variations from country to country. But will the European Communist parties follow the same path? The historical analogy is tempting, and developments over the past fifteen years or so have persuaded many analysts that the Communist parties of Europe are far along the road toward a definitive abandonment of the Leninist and Stalinist heritage that has kept them for so long outside the mainstream of politics in their respective countries.

We found ourselves troubled by prevailing treatments of this issue. First, there seemed to be emerging too easy and simplistic a consensus on what struck us as a complex and many-sided problem. To counter conservatives who, whether out of conviction or political expediency, continued to argue that the Communist parties still represented a serious revolutionary or radical threat, many analysts quickly leaped to the opposite conclusion—that complete assimilation and deradicalization were just around the corner. But assimilation to what and deradicalization along which dimensions? In political systems as fragmented and conflictual as the French and Italian ones, few scholars would be so bold as to declare a certain knowledge of what rules of the game constitute “the system” to which the Communist parties are supposedly assimilating. The “deradicalization” issue is even more



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complex; a party may revise its ideology on an issue that is becoming less important at the same time it is adopting more radical stands on newer and more relevant problems.

A number of considerations led us to feel that there was no obvious or easy way to respond to such broad questions—and that the “answer” was not so likely to lie at one or the other pole as in some ambiguous, intermediate realm located somewhere between the alternatives of radical change and complete assimilation. For one thing, the French and Italian parties themselves seemed to differ considerably in important and relevant respects, casting some doubt as to whether any single set of generalizations about the past or speculations about the future could effectively be applied to both parties. The Parti Communiste Français (PCF) had always appeared to most observers more dogmatic, more sectarian, more closely tied to the industrial working class, more dependent on the Soviet Union—in sum, less open than the Partito Comunista Italiano (PCI) to the pressures and influences of the bourgeois society surrounding it. Was this really true and if so, what were the implications of these differences?

Second, it did not seem enough to look at these parties as homogeneous national entities: the degree and nature of their assimilation, or lack of it, might be expected to vary greatly according to level of organization, geographical region, and functional or other differentiation within the party. To speak of the way “the” Communist party responds to “its” environment is almost meaningless unless one can take into account not only the great diversity that exists within each party, but also the varying quality of relationships between party headquarters in Rome and Paris and the local organizations.

Third, we believed that a large area of ambiguity about the behavior and ideology of these parties persists even at the national level. In some respects they appear to have adapted almost entirely to the norms of their societies, while in others they appear to retain and to value attributes deriving from their Communist heritage that distinguish them clearly from other parties operating in these societies. We felt that this *confrontation* and coexistence of Communist values and practices with the attitudes and behaviors resulting from long participation in industrially developed, parliamentary societies might well be leading to the emergence of distinctly new value patterns and modes of integra-

tion, quite different from those associated with the classical patterns of Socialist and Social Democratic parties.

For many years after the Second World War such questions as these were not raised. In the strong consensus of the Cold War years, there was never any doubt that the Communist revolutionary threat in Europe should be taken seriously. The radical Communist rhetoric and intransigent style were made convincing by the insistence of the parties on Leninist qualities of superior organization and disciplined obedience that not only appeared antidemocratic but suggested an almost infinite capacity for mobilization of the masses behind party goals. An image was generated of the European Communist parties as being so apart from—and so hostile to—the values and institutions of the societies in which they functioned that the notion of an eventual assimilation could hardly arise. The Communist parties might be defeated—they were not likely to be absorbed.

For that matter, it hardly seemed revelant to test the revolutionary intent of the Communist parties by examining their domestic records. There had never been much doubt—either for Party members or for anyone else—that the Communist parties of Western Europe were in the last analysis responsive not so much to their domestic needs as to the interests of the Soviet party. Sophisticated research was not required to demonstrate that the sudden shift of the French and Italian parties to militant tactics in the fall of 1947 was undertaken at Moscow's direct command. This vivid demonstration of loyalty, recalling others in years past, tended to make any careful empirical examination of actual party behavior seem quite beside the point. What did it matter exactly what the parties said or did, since they said and did whatever the Russians asked? One should look to Stalin for enlightenment, not to Togliatti or Thorez. And by and large, that is just what students of communism and other political analysts did. During the 1950s and well into the next decade, a quantity of literature appeared on the Soviet Union, while virtually nothing was published on the nonruling parties aside from personal accounts of former party members and historical studies of the prewar period. Most of what did appear bore the imprint of the "totalitarian model" then almost universally current among Western students of communism. The nonruling Communist parties were seen as flexible and devious in their tactics but undeviating

## INTRODUCTION

in their pursuit of long-range revolutionary goals and monolithic in their organization.<sup>2</sup> Given this appreciation of their qualities, the notion that they might be significantly influenced by their participation in the parliamentary systems of capitalist societies did not readily come to mind. Consideration of the French and Italian parties during those years was by and large dominated by the view that they were a menace to “free societies” and an appendage of Soviet foreign policy.<sup>3</sup>

Toward the end of the 1950s this consensus about the European Communist parties began to be undermined, not in consequence of empirical study of the parties themselves but as a by-product of attempts to understand the nature and meaning of certain broader historical developments which appeared to be affecting Europe as a whole. One set of events had to do with the radical transformation occurring in the international Communist movement, and in the Soviet Union itself, following Stalin’s death. A second set, more gradual and more difficult to perceive and understand, had to do with the rapid pace of economic change in Western Europe and the social and political consequences associated with that change. Each of these major sources of change for the European political scene were before long seen to have potentially decisive implications for the nonruling Communist parties. These implications came to be expressed through two theories, neither very clearly or fully developed, to which we can give shorthand labels: the “revisionist” and “integration” theories. Although they approached the problem from quite different perspectives and employed wholly different data, the two ap-

<sup>2</sup> A partial exception to these generalizations is Gabriel Almond’s *The Appeals of Communism* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1954), which sensitively explored attitudinal data gathered from interviews with former Communist party members in England, the United States, France, and Italy. Almond’s insistence that “we are not dealing with a homogeneous phenomenon”—that “we must talk of types of appeals, to various types of persons, in different kinds of situations”—is particularly refreshing in its contrast with most other writing of the time. (Quotation on p. 185.)

<sup>3</sup> One of the few book-length studies of the European Communist parties during this period, and the standard work for many years, was *Communism in Western Europe* by Mario Einaudi, Jean-Marie Domenach, and Aldo Garosci. (Originally published by Cornell University Press in 1951 and long out of print, it was reprinted in 1971 by Archon Books, Hamden, Conn.) Its analyses of French and Italian party organization and strategy in the late 1940s have value even today, but the interpretation lies firmly within the interpretive context just described. For example, “Since 1947 Western European communism has been deprived of all participation in national governments and has been exposed as the agent of the aggressive aims of the Soviet Union” (p. 6).

proaches arrived at similar and complementary conclusions which departed substantially from the Cold War consensus described above. Let us first look briefly at the revisionist theory.

As should be plain to anyone moderately well versed in the history of the Communist movement, the term “revisionist” represents anything but a coherent set of ideas and political strategies. The original revisionist controversy around the turn of the century did in fact center on intellectual and political issues still relevant to Western European Communists today. The great debate between the self-styled orthodox Marxists and the revisionist followers of Eduard Bernstein, occurring as it did at a time when socialism had not yet come to power anywhere, had to do with the nature and likely evolution of the capitalist system and the appropriate strategy for the working class seeking power. The Communist parties of Western Europe are still confronting these issues, and doing so, moreover, in the same basic parliamentary setting that had proved to be a prime source of classical revisionist theory and practice. It is understandable, then, that revisionism should come to mind as a suggestive historical analogy. If the critical fact about revisionist Social Democracy in Germany and other European countries is that it came to terms with the capitalist, democratic system—that it became reformist rather than revolutionary—then the analogy suggests watching for a similar process to occur in European Communist parties today. Thus Kevin Devlin, in “Prospects for Communism in Western Europe,” can start his essay with the ironic phrase, “There is a specter haunting West European Communism; it is the specter of Eduard Bernstein,” and can summarize his argument as follows:

. . . it seems altogether likely that the trends of revisionist adaptation outlined earlier will continue to characterize West European Communism as a whole. This would mean further emphasis on electoralism, on seeking popular support through calls for gradualist reforms, on winning the collaboration of other left-wing forces even at the cost of doctrinal and political concessions, and on building up the party’s image as a progressive, responsible force operating *within* the existing system, which it wishes to transform but not to overthrow.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> In R. V. Burks (ed.), *The Future of Communism in Europe* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1968), p. 60. Italics in the original. For a stimulating critique of Devlin’s article, from a perspective close to that of

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The point we wish to make is not that such predictions or characterizations are necessarily wrong, for they do indeed catch important aspects of the behavior of West European Communist parties today. The point is that they are at best partial, that they grasp only one dimension of a complex reality, and not necessarily the most important part at that. To focus our attention centrally on "revisionist adaptation," understood as an historical analogy with the classical revisionism of German Social Democracy, is beside the mark and does not help greatly to understand the nature of the dilemma facing the Communist parties today.

If revisionism means anything today, it is not primarily with reference to the issues that were being debated within the Second International between 1890 and 1914. These issues, having to do with the correct interpretation of the Marxian ideological and political heritage, are no longer particularly salient. From this perspective, the Italian and French Communist parties became revisionist some time ago, and for that matter so did the Soviet Union itself. Flexible, neo-Marxist interpretations of capitalism, adherence to reformist strategies, participation in elections and in bourgeois parliaments—all these "heresies" have long since become orthodoxies. To refer to the European parties as "revisionist" in this sense is not wrong, it is simply banal and unhelpful as a distinguishing characteristic of their current reality.<sup>5</sup>

"Revisionism" was revived as a polemical term following Stalin's death. It arose with reference to tendencies in the Communist movement in Eastern rather than Western Europe and it

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the present authors, see Kenneth T. Jowitt, "The Changing Character of European Communism," *Studies in Comparative Communism* 2, nos. 3-4 (July/October 1969): 386-403; a reply by R. V. Burks to Jowitt's review is in the same issue, pp. 383-385.

<sup>5</sup> Tucker has made a stimulating effort to introduce the term "deradicalization" as a way of conceptualizing the secular change in Marxist movements. Analysis of the German Social Democratic movement caused him to suggest that "the process of deradicalization has a certain inner 'dialectic.' For deep-seated reasons, theory and practice diverge. The movement intensifies its theoretical adherence to revolutionary goals at the very time when in practice it moves down the path of reformism." This generalization applies at best weakly to the French Communist party and not at all to the Italian. The lack of fit—which relates directly to the much lower salience of traditional doctrinal issues—illustrates the difficulty of drawing lessons for today from the German experience. See Robert C. Tucker, "The Deradicalization of Marxist Movements," in his *The Marxian Revolutionary Idea* (New York: Norton, 1969), pp. 172-214. (Quotation on p. 192.)

had little substantively to do with classical revisionism. Whereas Bernstein was “revising” Marx, the Eastern European Marxists were “revising”—or more accurately, repudiating—centrally important dimensions of Leninist and Stalinist ideas and political practices.<sup>6</sup> After Stalin’s death the issue that counted most in the Communist world was the legitimacy of the domestic and international systems created by Lenin and Stalin and of their supporting ideology. This was obviously the central issue with respect to Eastern Europe, as the long series of rebellions and interventions since 1953 demonstrates; it was only somewhat less obviously salient with respect to the Western European parties.

It is instructive to think back for a moment to 1956, that year of crisis when revisionism became once again the devil theory of the Communist movement. When the Italian party attacked a prominent internal critic such as Antonio Giolitti, it did so by branding him a revisionist and making his reformist approach to the party’s economic and political strategy the main explicit target of attack. In reality, Giolitti’s ideas on these subjects were hardly more than a vigorous restatement of the party’s own position, and the charge of revisionism with respect to strategic questions was largely an ideological smokescreen. Far more serious was Giolitti’s insistence on democracy within the party, on the importance of democratic liberties in a socialist society, and on the errors of the Soviet approach to building socialism. His unpardonable deviation lay in these realms, in his challenge to Leninist and Stalinist views about the party, not in his ostensibly revisionist views about capitalist society. Similarly, when the French party at about the same time attacked the Italian party as revisionist, its critical comments were addressed primarily to the PCI’s propensity for economic and social reform programs to be implemented by parliamentary action. The more urgent issue, however, had to do with the PCI’s alleged underestimation of the role of the Communist party in building socialism and the permissiveness with which it treated dissenting views on the Soviet handling of the Hungarian revolution. Palmiro Togliatti proved his legitimacy to Soviet and other Communist leaders not

<sup>6</sup> For a useful collection of essays, see Leopold Labedz (ed.), *Revisionism: Essays on the History of Marxist Ideas* (New York: Praeger, 1962). Especially relevant are Karl Reyman and Herman Singer, “The Origins and Significance of East European Revisionism,” pp. 215-222, and William E. Griffith, “The Decline and Fall of Revisionism in Eastern Europe,” pp. 223-238.

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by repudiating his party's domestic strategy but by reaffirming his loyalty to the Soviet Union, by supporting its actions in Hungary, and by acting with proper Leninist toughness against the dissenters in his own party. By these, the crucial tests of the post-Stalin era, Togliatti was no revisionist.<sup>7</sup>

To demonstrate in this fashion the several connotations the term has taken on in conjunction with the political and ideological conflicts of the Communist movement should adequately suggest the weakness of revisionism as an explanatory or analytical concept. Current realities cannot adequately be expressed or explained by a term which arose toward the end of the last century in a particular historical context and which has more recently, during the ideological battles of the feuding Communist powers, acquired quite different connotations.

This is not to deny the attractiveness and plausibility of a rough analogy between the pressures that led to the "classical" revisionism of Lenin's day and the forces making for change in Communist parties today. Indeed, beginning in the late 1950s much the same point was independently being made, in quite different language, by a number of leading political scientists and sociologists interested in Europe who were then exploring one or another aspect of what has come to be known as the "end of ideology" argument. Giuseppe Di Palma has constructed a useful composite summary of the central trends perceived by the analysts associated with this view; the following excerpts from his summary are especially relevant here:

There has been a blurring of traditional economic and social class lines as a result of the increasing pervasiveness, complexity, and efficiency of production and organization in industrial societies. Living standards have improved for all. Mass education, mass production, and mass consumption have helped close the gaps among classes by stimulating social mobility or by equalizing life styles. . . .

Hence there has been a decline in the strength of political parties that base their appeal on class, language, ethnicity, or religion, and a growth of heterogeneous parties appealing to various constituencies and interests. Also, most parties, irre-

<sup>7</sup> A detailed analysis of this period may be found in Donald L. M. Blackmer, *Unity in Diversity: Italian Communism and the Communist World* (Cambridge, Mass.: The M.I.T. Press, 1968), Chapters 3-5.

spective of their original ideologies, have become more convergent in their appeals and more diversified in their clientele in order to gain support and to vie more effectively for uncommitted voters and marginal gains.

As a concomitant of such developments, total ideologies have been weakened or have become marginal, and the politics of intransigent, ideological confrontation among social groups has increasingly given way to a politics of bargaining, with basic agreements on many issues that once sharply separated the political Left from the political Right. . . .<sup>8</sup>

The central implications of such an analysis for the Communist parties of France and Italy were not that far distant from those addressed in Bernstein's original argument to the Social Democratic party of Germany: the economic, social, and political changes occurring in Europe are such as to reduce the intensity of class conflict and lead working-class parties toward electoral and reformist activities; integration rather than revolution has become the unacknowledged real objective of these parties. Sophisticated contemporary analysts, armed with theories of social change based essentially on assumptions about the impact of economic and technological development, thus seemed to have arrived at prognoses not all that dissimilar from those put forward by Bernstein a half century earlier. "Integration" went hand in hand with "revisionism" as the convenient shorthand labels adopted by many scholars—and, naturally, by left-wing adversaries of communism—to identify and explain the major trend of Communist party evolution in Western Europe.

This is not the place for a critical review of the "end of ideology" and "integration" theses; only a few general points need to be made. First, the general validity of these ideas has been called into question on both empirical and theoretical grounds: class and other cleavages have in fact shown surprising persistence in Europe despite rising levels of affluence, leading to a suspicion that the implications of social change for political life have as yet been inadequately understood. Second, the evidence that "most parties have become more convergent in their appeals" is mixed, at best, and the correlation claimed by the "end of ideology" the-

<sup>8</sup> *The Study of Conflict in Western Society: A Critique of the End of Ideology*, pamphlet (Morristown, N.J.: General Learning Press, 1973), p. 2. This excellent essay includes an extensive bibliography of books and articles on the subject.



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orists between economic development and ideological convergence has found little solid empirical support.<sup>9</sup> Third, the “end of ideology” argument, with its implications as to the weakening of the class parties and/or their “integration” into the existing system, was never really linked by its proponents to empirical research on the Communist parties. The thesis was essentially deterministic in spirit: it was assumed or asserted, with little evidence offered, that the Communist parties would sooner or later be subject to the same basic pressures from the economic realm as were perceived to be affecting other parties and groups.<sup>10</sup>

It was granted that the Communists, in contrast to their Socialist predecessors, did not yet fit the model, and efforts were made to explain the lag. Otto Kirchheimer noted their superior organizational capacity to withstand environmental pressures but nevertheless argued that the Communist parties were having difficulty recruiting members and keeping them actively involved and that they were tending, like other mass parties, to evolve into electorally oriented “catch-all” parties.<sup>11</sup> Seymour M. Lipset, in a passage headed “Communism Resists the Trend,” pointed to two explanatory factors. He observed first that “the nations with large Communist movements are on the whole among the less developed” of the European nations, leaving the implication that further progress toward modernization would, all else being equal, tend to erode Communist strength.<sup>12</sup> He then went on to state, in effect, that all else was *not* equal, that the Communist parties were different because they had been subject to the intervening influence of the Soviet Union. “There is little doubt,” he concluded, “that if the various European Communist parties had

<sup>9</sup> See Sidney Tarrow, “Economic Development and the Transformation of the Italian Party System,” *Comparative Politics* 1, no. 2 (January 1969): 161-183.

<sup>10</sup> I am indebted to Peter M. Lange’s analysis of the integration thesis in an unpublished manuscript, “The Italian and French Communist Parties: A Comparative Analysis of Postwar Evolution.”

<sup>11</sup> “The Transformation of Western European Party Systems,” in Joseph LaPalombara and Myron Weiner (eds.), *Political Parties and Political Development* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1966), pp. 177-200 (on p. 191).

<sup>12</sup> “The Modernization of Contemporary European Politics,” in his *Revolution and Counter-revolution: Change and Persistence in Social Structures*, rev. ed. (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1970), p. 292. This essay was first published in the Winter 1964 issue of *Daedalus* under the title of “The Changing Class Structure and Contemporary European Politics” and was used without substantive changes in the later book.

been genuine national parties—that is, if their behavior had been largely determined by experiences within their own countries—they would have evolved in much the same way as the European socialist parties.”<sup>13</sup> (One is reminded of Lenin’s effort to explain the failure of Marx’s predictions about the evolution of capitalism by reference to the countervailing impact of imperialism.)

The theorists of “integration” have undeniably drawn attention to important social and political phenomena that deserve further detailed exploration. We have not found, however, that our understanding of the French and Italian Communist parties can be much advanced by asking whether these parties are, or are not, “integrated” into their respective political systems. (By the same token, we find the question of whether they are “inside” or “outside” the system beside the point.)<sup>14</sup> We assume that of course they are integrated: to argue otherwise would be to overlook the fact of their continued organizational survival and electoral success—almost unbroken, in the case of the French party, for over fifty years. Similarly, there seems little point in attempting to measure relative degrees of integration of the two parties, given the variety of measures of integration one might choose to look at and the variety of meanings that could be attached to them.

For example, either larger or smaller party membership and organizational size could be cited as representing a successful adaptation to the environment, according to the circumstances in each country and one’s assumptions about their meaning. Greater or lesser policy activity in parliament or local government might, similarly, be used either to show that the nonruling party is carrying out its historical function or abandoning it, depending on its overall strategic choices. Electoral success would on the face of it seem to be at least a neutral indicator of integration. Even here, however, there are difficulties of interpretation. A high and steady quotient of electoral success might signify that a party has reached the upper limits of its popularity and lacks a margin for action, while a lower or more volatile vote might be a clue that it has a potential for future success. More interesting for us than the *degree* of integration of nonruling parties are their *patterns* of adaptation to different national settings, pat-

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 295.

<sup>14</sup> Giovanni Sartori, “European Political Parties: The Case of Polarized Pluralism,” in LaPalombara and Weiner (eds.), *Political Parties and Political Development*.

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terns that can best be understood by looking at the contours of the party's internal life, its relation to the international movement, and its place among the different forces in the political system of which it is a part.

We do not attempt in this book to advance a new general theory about the processes of change affecting the Communist parties of Western Europe. Indeed, in the present state of knowledge, we feel little confidence in the possibility of isolating the determinants of party behavior. In our view, attempts to explain the behavior of the nonruling parties have tended to fall into one or more of the following errors: (1) they have too readily assumed that one could generalize about these parties, lumping them together and thus underestimating what we regard as the critical differential impact of national environmental conditions on party behavior; (2) they have been insufficiently historical in perspective, thereby overlooking the considerable degree of continuity in the behavior over time of each party; (3) they have tended to treat "the party" as a monolithic structure, ignoring the significance of local and regional differences in composition and in implementation of party policies; (4) they have failed to examine in a serious way the interactions among such critical sectors of party activity as political strategy, international relationships, organizational styles and constraints, ideologies and belief systems. We have been impressed, in short, with the great complexity of the problem and with the need for a conceptually more sophisticated and empirically richer understanding of it.

In this volume we have tried to present some evidence of this complexity and partially correct some of the deficiencies just mentioned. We have, for example, put unusual emphasis on party activities at the local and provincial level in the hope of illustrating the great and probably growing diversity that exists. We have attempted to provide a reasonable balance between broad interpretive essays and detailed empirical studies of particular problems and situations. We have, in addition, put particular stress on the question of social and political alliances—believing them to be crucially important to the future of both parties—and have attempted to suggest some of the ways in which alliance strategies have influenced, and been influenced by, the parties' organizational strengths and weaknesses.

The concluding chapter attempts to identify the characteristic patterns of action that have emerged in different sectors of party

activity in response to international, domestic, and organizational factors and to show how they have tended to complement and reinforce one another so as to become the dominant strategic models for each party's behavior. These strategic models are then used to suggest differences in the patterns of change that are evident in the two parties' behavior, even now, when they are closer together than they have been for many years.

We have not tried to provide an "answer" to the ultimate question of where these parties may be heading, because in the last analysis their futures appear to us inextricably linked to far larger and even less soluble questions about the evolution of the domestic and international environments in which they are functioning. Their activism, their official optimism, and their self-conscious attention to matters of strategy and organization create a sense that the French and Italian Communist parties are somehow more nearly masters of their fate than other parties. In some ways this may be true. At the very least they have shown a remarkable capacity for survival, for retaining political and organizational vitality under circumstances that might well have seen them wither away, and yet we must recognize that their autonomy is and will remain sharply limited by factors, domestic and international, over which they have little or no control. We hope that in this volume we have conveyed a richer sense of the dynamic internal reality of each of these parties and of their interaction with the wider environment around them.



# **PART ONE**

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## Change and Continuity



# I.

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## **Continuity and Change in Postwar Italian Communism**

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DONALD L. M. BLACKMER

This volume approaches in different ways the evolution and adaptation of the French and Italian Communist parties. Many of the essays report the results of recent empirical research on party organizations and cadres operating in a variety of geographical and institutional settings. Others, including this one, approach the problem from the broader perspective of how the parties as a whole have acted—that is to say, how their leaders have responded to the infinite variety of signals that reach them from the party organization, from the domestic political arena, from the economic and labor fronts, from the international scene. The behavior of top party elites represents, in effect, their net judgment about which of the manifold aspects of a complex environment should, at a given moment, be given the greatest weight. What do they tend to listen to? To what extent do the two parties today listen to the same signals they did over twenty-five years ago when they were “reborn” after the Second World War as mass parties centrally involved in the politics of their respective countries?

My own inclination with regard to the Italian party is to put rather greater weight on elements of continuity than of change. An endless number of relevant changes have of course occurred, in the party itself, in the Italian economy and society, in international affairs. These seem to me of secondary importance, however, compared to certain structural factors that have remained constant throughout the postwar years. The most obvious and decisive of these factors has certainly been the Christian Democratic and Catholic predominance that has kept the Partito Comunista Italiano (PCI) in a permanent minority position, both politically and socially. Hardly less important has been an international context that, despite significant recent changes in in-



ternational alignments, has found the Italian government a consistent supporter of the United States and the PCI an equally consistent ally of the USSR. These structural continuities have been powerful enough to set fairly rigid boundaries on the degree of choice or of change open to the PCI, given the basic interests it has sought to protect and promote.

The heart of the issue lies in this last phrase. Can we, without too gross a simplification, identify certain patterns of behavior clear and persistent enough to be designated as basic or permanent interests of the party? I will propose such an interpretive framework and illustrate it from the party's behavior during the postwar era. The illustrative material can be nowhere adequately detailed, but will be more fully developed for the early than for the later years, for two reasons. First, the 1943-1948 period seems to me more crucial for understanding the party's development than is often realized, in that a pattern was established which has in many respects continued down to the present. Second, since the contributions to this book concentrate largely on recent events, it seems especially necessary to draw attention to this critical earlier period.

By the concept of "permanent interests" I intend to convey something a good deal broader than is normally implied by words such as "goals" or "strategies." To discuss a Communist party's evolution in terms of changing goals seems to me a fruitless endeavor, largely because the problem of distinguishing ends from means is virtually insoluble. The distinction turns out to be an essentially subjective one, not open to empirical tests. Debates about whether a party has or has not become "revisionist," that is, whether it has consistently pursued its original goals or has "betrayed" them, can never be resolved since they rest on an appraisal of the intentions of party leaders: in Leninist terms one may make compromises without becoming an opportunist as long as one does not lose sight of the longer-term objectives behind present actions. Strategies are more readily identified than goals, but have too narrow a connotation: they generally refer to the choice of means and ends designed to influence over a period of time the environment in which the party operates. Strategy has an active, positive connotation about it, within which it is difficult to encompass many of the passive or reactive dimensions of party behavior. When the PCI in 1956 supports the Soviet invasion of Hungary, is this best regarded as an aspect of its "strategy"? I

find it more useful to think of such behavior as a response designed to protect certain basic party interests, of which domestic strategy, in the conventional sense, is only one.

I will suggest, then, that the PCI's behavior during the postwar period can be understood in terms of its pursuit of three basic interests: (1) development and maintenance of the Communist party itself and its influence over other organizations and groups; (2) search for the political and social alliances that constitute the core of the *via italiana al socialismo*; and (3) maintenance of a close link with the Soviet Union and the international Communist movement as a whole.

This set of interests comprises three aspects of party behavior—organization, domestic strategy, and international relations—that are generally dealt with under separate headings and only loosely linked to each other. It seems to me analytically advantageous to consider all three aspects within the same framework. Such an approach encourages attention to interactions among the three and to changes over time in their content and relative salience for the party. I am unwilling to argue that any one of these interests has a clear general priority over the others. I do not believe, for example, as some hold to be the case for both the PCI and the Parti Communiste Français (PCF), that allegiance to Soviet interests is in the last analysis the party's top priority. (For a contrasting view, see Annie Kriegel, Chapter 2 in this volume.) Nor can I accept the opposite contention that the PCI's evident conflicts of interest with the USSR imply that the requirements of its domestic strategy have come to predominate over its international allegiances.

My conception, in general, is that the art of leadership in the PCI has consisted in maintaining a working balance among these three permanent interests and in modifying their content in response to changing external conditions. The most comfortable and productive periods for the party have been those during which there has existed a basic compatibility among these interests—when, that is, they have tended to reinforce rather than conflict with each other. The most difficult and sterile periods have been the ones in which the party was obliged to choose among them, to sacrifice substantially in one realm in order to protect its interests in others. The necessity of maintaining a balance—of never sacrificing *completely* any one of its basic interests—has also meant that no one of them could be developed to

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the fullest possible extent. Loyalty to the Soviet Union has been genuine but limited, just as the party's real and serious pursuit of domestic alliances has been constrained by its international ties. As has often been noted, the interplay of such internal tensions or "contradictions" as these has resulted in a political style in which apparent decisiveness has masked an underlying ambiguity of purpose.

I will try to elaborate on this design by looking at the ways in which these interests of the party were expressed and how they interacted in each of the three basic periods of the party's postwar evolution. These periods will for convenience be labeled the phases of *participation* (1943-1948), of *confrontation* (1948-1956), and of *opposition within the system* (1956-present).

#### THE PHASE OF PARTICIPATION (1943-1948)

It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of the Resistance and early postwar years for the PCI. Despite the striking changes that have taken place in Italy and on the international scene, the behavior pattern established by the party at that time has shown remarkable vitality. The choices made between 1943 and 1948 have proved in most important respects to be fundamental strategic choices, not merely tactical responses to a specific set of environmental conditions.<sup>1</sup> The specific content of party behavior has of course changed in important ways; but a pattern of basic values was revealed during this period that seems to me largely valid even today.

During this period both the international and the internal political situations were dominated by a dual alliance: on one level that of the Allied powers with the Soviet Union, and on the other that of domestic anti-Fascist (or national democratic) forces, in the "people's democracies" as well as in Western Europe. Within this context, PCI strategy—until shattered by the

<sup>1</sup> It is more conventional to consider 1944 (Togliatti's return to Italy) and 1947 (the PCI's exclusion from the government) as the boundary dates for this period. While these are certainly the decisive events, it seems to me more accurate to see the period as beginning with a series of triumphs for the PCI in 1943-1944 (strikes in the factory centers of the north, the fall of Mussolini, the insurrection against the Germans, the entry of the PCI into the government) and ending with a series of disasters during 1947-1948 (ouster from the government, creation of the Cominform, deepening of the Cold War, the electoral defeat of 1948, etc.).

elections of 1948—was entirely consistent. Since an objectively revolutionary situation did not exist, the party's immediate objective was not socialism but a "progressive democracy" which, by destroying the political and economic vestiges of fascism and introducing structural reforms which would ensure the participation of the masses in the direction of the country, could open the way for a gradual and democratic transition to socialism. The keystone of party strategy was national unity—collaboration between political parties and social classes—for the purpose first of military victory over the Germans and then of economic reconstruction and creation of a democratic political order. The strategy gave first priority to democratization of political life and was premised on Communist participation in government as the legitimate representative of working-class interests.

Within the above strategic context, the PCI sought to maximize three potential sources of strength, all of which had been created or greatly strengthened as a result of its participation in the Resistance movement. These resources were: (1) *a capacity for political alliances*—the experience of the Resistance and the imperative of close collaboration among anti-Fascist forces of all political shades which it engendered gave PCI leaders and militants a capacity for alliances with forces outside the working class which they had largely lacked before; (2) *the party itself*, no longer conceived as a semiclandestine cadre organization but rather as the core of a mass following initially attracted by the PCI's organizational capacity and prestige during the Resistance; (3) *a strong link to the USSR*, one which had always existed but which emerged strengthened from the war as a result of the decisive Soviet contribution to the war effort and the impact of the Stalin myth, then at its apex.

These assets, which came into being in a very specific historical context, would gradually be transformed into what I have termed the permanent interests of the party. For a brief time, as we shall see, all three resources pulled in the same direction and reinforced each other. Then as a result of circumstances that the PCI could do nothing to influence, they began to pull in conflicting directions, creating a state of inner tension that has been a source both of difficulty and of vitality for the party ever since. If the PCI is to attain even its intermediate goal of regaining a share of governmental power, it must discover and exploit a way to allow its three basic assets once again to work in harmony.

It will be necessary first to examine the nature of these three basic party interests as they emerged in the war and early post-war context. I hope at the same time to give some sense of how these interests were rooted in the party's earlier experiences in the difficult years under the Fascist regime.

### *The Strategy of Alliances*

The strategy of collaboration and national unity announced by Togliatti in 1944 implied as a condition for its success the need to construct a system of alliances with other political parties and social groups. Acutely aware of its weaknesses as a minority party in a Catholic, agrarian country with a strong socialist, but democratic, tradition among the relatively small working class, the PCI leadership was constantly preoccupied with the danger of isolation and the need to avoid it by extending political and social alliances beyond the working class. That the urgency of this problem was understood by the leadership even before Togliatti's return from Moscow is clear from Luigi Longo's admonition in September 1943 concerning party policy toward the Committees of National Liberation (CLN), in which a wide range of political groups collaborated: "It is clear . . . that all our actions must follow from the necessity of maintaining the unity of the CLN, especially if a break would mean our isolation."<sup>2</sup>

Such an outlook was by no means new to the PCI. The strong subordination of the party's domestic interests to those of the Soviet Union and the consequent acceptance of periodic shifts in the party line had not prevented the gradual development of a preference for a strategy of alliance-building. Since the ouster of Bordiga in 1924, the PCI leadership had tended to favor the goal of working with other socialist and democratic forces toward a transitional democratic system to replace fascism. The alternative objective of working directly for a socialist revolution without passing, at least briefly, through the stage of a bourgeois democratic republic was advanced only reluctantly, under Soviet pressure, and was dropped whenever circumstances allowed. Because his political career came to an end with his arrest in 1926, before the Comintern turned to the left, Gramsci was never obliged to accommodate his own subtle and somewhat ambigu-

<sup>2</sup> Ernesto Ragionieri, "Il partito comunista," in Leo Valiani, Gianfranco Bianchi, and Ernesto Ragionieri, *Azionisti, cattolici e comunisti nella Resistenza* (Milan: Franco Angeli Editore, 1971), p. 326.

ous views on this issue to the radical formulas emanating from Moscow. Togliatti was not so fortunate in that respect, but the pattern of his relations with the Comintern and the USSR left no doubt as to his position; he was under severe attack in 1929 and again in 1937, when the major shifts to the left were accomplished, and he reached the pinnacle of his Comintern career between 1934 and 1936, the years of the Popular Front and the Spanish Civil War, in which interclass alliances and united front governments were being sought as transition stages to the proletarian revolution.<sup>3</sup>

Its experience with fascism strongly influenced the postwar strategy of the PCI. In its analyses, the party emphasized the role that division among working-class and democratic forces had played in the advent of fascism and insisted on the importance of fascism as a *mass* phenomenon and on the significance of middle-class support as one of the bases for the survival of the Fascist regime.<sup>4</sup> These perceptions underlined the need for cooperation not only with Socialists, but above all with Christian Democrats and Catholics in the anti-Fascist struggle and the construction of a postwar democracy. Having matured politically in the heroic but futile battle against fascism, the PCI leadership learned much about the dangers of isolation in Italian politics and the need for compromise and cooperation among all "democratic" forces.

Given this prewar heritage, it should not have been so surprising as it then seemed that Togliatti's first political act upon his return to Italy was to reverse existing party policy and to reject the so-called *pregiudiziale repubblicana* (in the name of which the Communists, Socialists, and Actionists had insisted upon the abdication of the monarchy, deeply compromised by its involvement with the Fascist regime, as the condition for participation in any government coalition). From the day in April 1944 when Togliatti proclaimed the *svolta di Salerno*, by which the PCI agreed to enter a coalition of national unity under the king and Marshal Badoglio, to the day three years later when the party was removed by De Gasperi from the governing coalition, party strategy was dominated by one overriding motive: to avoid isola-

<sup>3</sup> See Joan Barth Urban, "Moscow and the Italian Communist Party: 1926-1945" (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1967), Chapters 4 and 6.

<sup>4</sup> See Palmiro Togliatti, *Lezioni sul fascismo* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1970).

tion and to participate in the government, in collaboration with other anti-Fascist forces. The *svolta* itself, and every other major tactical decision the party made, was consistent with that strategic objective.

The decision to assume the role and the attitudes of a government party was initially explained in terms of the overwhelming need for national unity to win the war of liberation and to lay the foundations for democratic political structures. The priority assigned to these *immediate* objectives was absolute, and the party leadership took great pains to avoid actions which might jeopardize collaboration with other groups, both by excluding from party statements all references to class struggle or socialist revolution and by refusing even to consider any discussion of postwar institutional arrangements which might provoke dissent within anti-Fascist ranks and thereby impede the war effort:

To linger today over discussions about future programs, about what the government of Italy will be and will do after the war, to condition today's struggle by what will be done tomorrow when the war is over, this would mean to remain on the Aventine, to play a passive waiting game, it would mean slowing down and weakening the struggle.<sup>5</sup>

The only essential condition that Togliatti laid down was that a Constituent Assembly based on universal suffrage be elected once the war was over to decide the future institutional structure of the country. This was the minimum condition necessary to guarantee the possibility of future influence for the PCI and the working class as a whole. The significance of Togliatti's *svolta*, however, is not merely that the PCI and other parties were persuaded to lay aside their differences temporarily in the broader national interest of pursuing the war effort. Although it could not be clear at the time—there was, indeed, considerable difference of opinion on the point among party leaders and widespread skepticism among ordinary members—the *svolta* in fact represented a long-term strategic decision. The effort to collaborate—politically, socially, and economically as well as militarily—would be the dominant motif in the party's postwar strategy.

The strategy applied above all to the Christian Democratic party and the Catholic Church. The PCI hoped to extend the uni-

<sup>5</sup> *La nostra lotta*, May 1944, quoted by Pietro Secchia, "I CLN al potere in un dibattito della sinistra," *Critica marxista* 3, no. 2 (March-April 1965).

tary experience of the CLN well beyond the close of the war and to this end proposed to the Democrazia Cristiana (DC) a "pact of common action, which looks forward to the struggle of the broad Catholic masses for a common program of economic, political, and social regeneration."<sup>6</sup> While recognizing the dual nature of the DC, the Communists accentuated the populist side of that party's character and the essentially peasant nature of its mass support, in contrast to its emerging role as the representative of the Italian bourgeoisie. The PCI was deeply concerned with the problem of constructing close ties with the Catholic masses, especially the peasants, but hoped to achieve this critically important *social* alliance through the *political* strategy of collaboration with the DC. The sympathy of many Christian Democrats for proposals for land and other structural reforms nourished PCI illusions about the prospects for a "progressive" development of the party, in which its "mass" base would prevail over its more reactionary elements. Optimism about the possibility of substantial agreement between the two parties led the PCI leadership to regard the tripartite governmental collaboration of 1944-1947 as a long-range prospect of constructive cooperation—a "bloc of forces historically and politically determined":<sup>7</sup>

If we want the government and its action to be in conformity with the democratic will of the majority, the mass parties of the left and the Christian Democratic party must collaborate, and collaborate not in a temporary way, reserving the right to attack and destroy each other at the first opportunity, but in a permanent way, with a long prospect of common reconstructive activity.<sup>8</sup>

These hopes had been reinforced by the results of the 1946 elections for the Constituent Assembly in which the relative strengths of the three mass parties (Communists and Socialists, 39.6 percent; DC, 35.2 percent) gave the PCI reason to believe that the "democratic" forces in the country would indeed prevail.

Policy toward the Church was a central issue for the PCI from the outset, inseparable as it was from the problem of the peas-

<sup>6</sup> Palmiro Togliatti, *Politica comunista: l'Unità* (Rome, 1945), p. 84; cited in Livio Maitan, *PCI 1945-1969: Stalinismo e opportunismo* (Rome: Samonà e Savelli, 1969), p. 21n.

<sup>7</sup> Palmiro Togliatti, *Discorsi alla costituente* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1958), p. 155.

<sup>8</sup> "Crisi democristiana," *Rinascita* 4 (January-February 1947): 2.



antry and of class alliances more generally in a country where large sectors of the working classes and *ceti medi* remained strongly under the influence of the Vatican. Recognizing the crucial function which the Catholic masses would necessarily play in the construction of a democratic and later a socialist society, the leaders of the PCI had long accepted the necessity of coming to some workable compromise with the Church. As Gramsci had written in 1920: "In Italy, in Rome, there is the Vatican and the Pope; as the liberal state had to find a system of equilibrium with the spiritual power of the Church, so also will the workers' state have to find a system of equilibrium."<sup>9</sup> Thus when, at the time of the debates over the Constitution, the party was faced with the potentially explosive issue of the Church's position in the new Republic, Togliatti subordinated all other considerations to the urgent need for national unity. Reaffirming the party's respect for the religious convictions of the people and presenting a new image of the PCI as a defender of religious liberty, he not only gave full support to Constitutional guarantees of freedom of conscience and of religious propaganda and organization, but also cast the decisive votes of the party in favor of including in the Constitution the 1929 Lateran Pacts which perpetuated the Church's special status in the state. This preoccupation with avoiding religious controversy that might isolate the Communists by dividing the country along religious lines remains as much a part of PCI strategy today as it was in 1947.

PCI strategy toward the middle classes is most clearly illustrated by the party's postwar economic policy, which was shaped in accordance with the search for party and class collaboration. Accepting the necessity of working within the framework of a capitalist economic system, the party limited its declared objectives to general reforms such as economic planning, nationalization of large monopolies, and land redistribution which would strike at the sources of power of those groups and institutions which had supported the Fascist regime. At the same time care was taken not to alienate the broader middle-class groups that had provided the mass base for fascism. Togliatti's "progressive democracy" thus attempted to appeal to the broadest possible spectrum of Italian society—everyone, including small and

<sup>9</sup> Antonio Gramsci, quoted in Palmiro Togliatti, *Comunisti e cattolici* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1965), cited in introduction by Luciano Gruppi, p. 14.

medium-sized entrepreneurs, who might in any way identify their interests with the working class against the common enemy, monopoly capitalism. So deeply rooted was this strategic orientation that even in the electoral campaign of 1948, when the lines of opposition were clearly drawn, the PCI attempted to revive the unitary tradition of the CLN in the form of the *Fronte Democratico*, appealing for support among all categories of workers, the petty bourgeoisie, and small industry.<sup>10</sup>

The party's economic policy within the government was based on a *politica produttivistica* which undertook to curtail labor agitation (acceptance of a wage truce, a moratorium on political strikes) and to maintain discipline in the factory as the necessary price for the resumption of productive activity and the reconstruction of the economy—national goals in the name of which the party subordinated the immediate interests of the working class, thereby providing a demonstration of its “national and constructive spirit.” No independent or potentially threatening economic program was put forward, the party having temporarily renounced any action which might be construed as an attempt to alter economic or property relationships. The PCI line was so eminently moderate and its apparent willingness to compromise with the capitalist system so complete, that even De Gasperi, during the 1948 election campaign, was compelled to acknowledge its reasonableness: “We are not fighting the Communist party because of its economic program, with regard to which an agreement might be possible, up to a certain point.”<sup>11</sup>

Constructive PCI participation in the government for the realization of “progressive democracy” and economic reconstruction had its natural complement in class collaboration at the factory level as well, the most striking example being the *Consigli di Gestione*. These Management Councils were an outgrowth of the factory CLN established during the Resistance as de facto organs of workers' self-government and of working-class leadership in the restoration of production, not for the purpose of imposing a class regime, however, but because the majority of the capitalists had deserted the factories. Instead of exploiting this temporary

<sup>10</sup> For a full analysis of PCI policies and attitudes toward the middle classes, see Stephen Hellman, Chapter 10 in this volume.

<sup>11</sup> Alcide De Gasperi, quoted in Mario Einaudi and François Goguel, *Christian Democracy in Italy and France* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1969), p. 52.

hegemony, the CLN appealed to the capitalists to resume their responsibilities, posing as a condition for their return not nationalization but only democratic control from below through the Councils and the introduction of national economic planning. The original conception of the Councils was dual in nature: on the one hand, they were created as organs of technical collaboration, of constructive coresponsibility by labor and management for the direction of the factory, symbolizing the renunciation of class conflict and the "policy of alliance between the working class and the productive bourgeoisie for the reconstruction of the country";<sup>12</sup> on the other, representing as they did the assumption by the working class of direct and responsible participation in the running of the factory, they could equally be conceived as potential instruments for an eventual replacement of the *padroni* by the workers.

The party's priorities in this period required the effective subordination of this potential for mass mobilization to the need for unity. The failure to fight for a dual power structure in the factory had left the Councils at the mercy of the prevailing balance of forces within the enterprise. Once the owners' willingness to cooperate disappeared, the Councils were relegated either to sterile ineffectiveness or to a duplication of the tasks of the union. Only a victory by the Left in the 1948 elections could have restored to them an autonomous and meaningful function on the terrain for which they were created. Defeat condemned them to futility and made their elimination only a matter of time.

The PCI's early postwar strategy of party and class collaboration, both in the government and in the country at large, can best be understood as a combination of two complementary instincts: an "offensive" desire to exploit the resources generated by the leading role of the PCI in the Resistance and by its new "national" image, and an equally strong "defensive" desire to avoid isolation. This combination of the party's effort to maximize its unique strengths and minimize its weaknesses gave rise to one overriding objective: to stay in the government and to exert influence from within. It is in terms of this goal and of the absolute priority assigned to it that all party choices during this period must be viewed. The PCI acted from the beginning as a *partito di governo*, relying in practice almost entirely on top-level inter-

<sup>12</sup> Aris Accornero, "La classe operaia protagonista della ripresa," *Rinascita* 22 (April 24, 1965): 5.

party collaboration and on the instruments of government for the enactment of its program of progressive democracy and structural reforms. Its dependence on the power of institutional arrangements led the PCI to see its own presence in the government as a sufficient guarantee of democratic control over the political and economic development of the country. Thus, so long as power was kept out of the hands of the monopolies and mass participation guaranteed by democratic institutions, compromise on immediate objectives could be justified for the sake of unity: "The vigilant presence in the government [of the PCI] made acceptable to the workers the return of the capitalists, the demobilization of the workers, and the sacrifice of certain wage increases."<sup>13</sup>

Little serious consideration seems to have been given to an alternative strategy, that is, to using the party's organizational resources as instruments of internal opposition. Little effort was made to mobilize mass pressure to force concessions from coalition partners in favor of PCI positions. While emphasizing in its own propaganda the need to supplement political activity at the summit with mass initiatives and social alliances from below, the PCI seems in practice to have largely ignored its own doctrine as to the intimate link between the political and social aspects of strategy. It depended almost completely on an elite-level approach, utilizing its mass resources for electoral purposes only. The experiences of the CLN, the *Consigli di Gestione*, and the *Fronte Democratico* are instructive examples in this regard: in each case the party leadership explicitly recognized their potential as organs of base-level mobilization and of pressure on the DC through the participation of Catholic workers, and in each case sacrificed this potential either to formal unity or to an exclusively electoral perspective. Party spokesmen writing about this period today often implicitly acknowledge that the policy of those years may have been excessively one-sided. Alessandro Natta, for instance, raises this question:

Was our interpretation of the unity policy perhaps too concerned about possible ruptures, about a split between north and south, a split with Christian Democracy? And more basically, was it a limit of our policy or a fact imposed on us by reality, that is, the idea already in effect in November-December

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

ber 1945 that the game would from then on be played out essentially on the terrain of the basic institutional choice of the Constituent Assembly, of relations among the large mass parties, rather than on that of the development of democratic organization from below (the question of the CLN) and the struggle for social reforms?<sup>14</sup>

There is room for legitimate debate about the party's wisdom in putting so many of its eggs in one basket, but it can hardly be argued that the outcome would have been significantly different. The game was in fact being played out essentially on an international plane, and so far as Italy was concerned, it was the DC, not the PCI, which was responsible for the failure of the collaboration effort. It is clear, however, that PCI expectations were so centered about the prospect of long-term governmental collaboration that the leadership failed to prepare the base of the party for the break of 1947 and, given the widespread faith in electoral victory in 1948, for the future of permanent opposition which awaited it.

### *Building the "partito nuovo"*

Perhaps the most powerful "lessons" learned by the PCI in the prewar period had to do with the party itself. On the positive side there was pride and satisfaction in the power of ideology and of organization to create and maintain a clandestine party in the face of Fascist repression. Leninism had proved itself viable in at least that minimal sense. Coupled with that, however, was the powerful and frustrating realization of the party's ineffectualness as long as it remained a tiny group of embattled leaders and activists. If it were to matter, politically, it would have to develop a well-organized mass base. Putting together these positive and negative lessons led to the model of the *partito nuovo* that emerged toward the end of the war, a model that sought to combine the virtues of a cadre party and a mass party.

While there is no doubt that the struggle against fascism and the Germans helped enormously to strengthen the organizational

<sup>14</sup> "La resistenza e la formazione del 'partito nuovo,'" in Paolo Spriano et al., *Problemi di storia del Partito Comunista Italiano* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1971), pp. 77-78. See also the similar comments by Giorgio Amendola, "Lotta di classe e sviluppo economico dopo la liberazione," in Istituto Gramsci, *Tendenze del capitalismo italiano*, 2 vols. (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1962), 1: 164-172.

and leadership capacities of the party and thus to lay the bases for its rebirth as a “mass” party, its incredibly rapid growth during the Resistance was in part a spontaneous phenomenon, an instinctive response of many workers and intellectuals to the PCI’s leading role in the Resistance and to its association with the symbols of national and international socialism. From a membership of a few thousand at the start of the war, the party grew to about half a million in 1944, a million seven hundred thousand a year later, and about two and a quarter million in 1947.<sup>15</sup> Although the initial process may well have been an unexpected windfall, the party quickly moved to transform it into a permanent asset. It should be kept in mind that this was not a self-evident response on the part of party cadres brought up in the tight conspiratorial world of the underground and exile party under the Fascist dictatorship. It took strong prodding by Togliatti to persuade many of the PCI organizers that the strategy of national unity he proclaimed in 1944 had its organizational counterpart in the *partito nuovo*:

. . . our party must today become a great mass party; and this is why we say to the old comrades, who might have a tendency to remain a small group, the group of those who have remained pure, faithful to the ideals and to the thought, we say to them: “You are wrong, you will be a leading group to the degree that you will be able to make of our party a great mass party, a great organization which has in its own ranks all the elements necessary to establish contacts with all categories of the Italian people and to direct them all toward the goals that we are proposing to achieve.”<sup>16</sup>

The PCI must be accounted to have succeeded remarkably well in achieving this first goal of building and maintaining a strong mass party. Whatever might be said about the decline in membership from the peak of nearly two and a half million in 1954 to the plateau of about 1.6 million in recent years, or about the declining levels of active participation in the party’s affairs, it must still be acknowledged that the original calculation was a

<sup>15</sup> Giordano Sivini, “Le Parti communiste: Structure et fonctionnement,” in *Le Communisme en Italie*, Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques (Paris: A. Colin, 1974), p. 4.

<sup>16</sup> Palmiro Togliatti, “I compiti del partito nella situazione attuale,” speech at Florence, October 3, 1944; reprinted in *Critica marxista* 1, nos. 5-6 (September-December 1963): 336.

sound one: the party's mass base has been the key to its electoral success over the years and the basis for its less consistent but still impressive capacity to organize demonstrations and other activities of mass protest. The PCI failed, however, in its effort to stretch the mass party to the maximum possible dimensions by merging with the Socialist party. Between 1944 and 1946 the PCI did its best to translate the Unity of Action pact made with the Socialists in 1934 and renewed in September 1943 into an arrangement for "organic unity." The "new party," it was proclaimed, must now become the "single party of the Italian working class."<sup>17</sup> Although this ambition at times seemed realizable, it could not survive the differences of tradition and outlook between the two parties, the cross-pressure of left and right wings within the PSI, nor the intimidating effect of the PCI's own organizational achievements. Italian postwar political history would be one of splits, not fusions.

The *partito nuovo* was to be not merely a mass party in the sense of membership or electoral support, but the center of a network of semiautonomous working-class organizations, springing from and in everyday contact with the masses (the most important being the trade unions, but including also the *Lega Cooperativa*, the *Comitati della Terra*, youth and women's organizations, etc.). This goes back to Gramsci's concept of hegemony and his emphasis on the necessity for PCI *presence* in every aspect of Italian society as an essential precondition of the party's capacity for mass mobilization. Such a conception of the party's role in society directly reflected its new "national" character and implied extending its reach beyond a strictly Leninist alliance of workers and peasants. Togliatti spoke of the "Party's task to gather round itself all the productive forces in the country" and defined the "nation" which the PCI must strive to represent as not only the working class *per se*, but "the peasantry, the masses of intellectuals, the masses of all those who work with their brain as well as those who work with their arms—professional men, technicians, clerks," excluding only "those egotistic groups, those property-owning reactionary classes whose policy is incapable of rising above considerations of their own narrow interests or of

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, Ruggiero Grieco, "Socialisti e comunisti," *Rinascita* 2 (January 1945): 3-4; and Celeste Negarville, "L'Unità organica della classe operaia," *Rinascita* 3 (January-February 1946): 7-10.

putting these below the general interests of the people of their country."<sup>18</sup>

In the immediate postwar period, a primary focus of PCI efforts to construct mass-based organizations was the trade-union movement. The widespread feeling that divisions within the working class had contributed to the advent of fascism, coupled with the party's constant reiteration of the themes of national unity and constructive collaboration, gave the prospect of union unity great power and appeal. By the time of the signing of the Pact of Rome on June 3, 1944, by means of which the representatives of the three "mass" parties—DC, PCI, and the Partito Socialista Italiano di Unità Proletaria (PSIUP)—formally created a single union, the Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro (CGIL), to represent all Italian workers, unity had in fact already been the practice among the clandestine labor organizations of the north. Although Communist influence was dominant in the CGIL from the beginning (owing to the prevalence of Marxist attitudes among the rank-and-file workers, the organizational capacity and prestige of the PCI in the Resistance, and the quality of Communist union leadership), the founding agreement and the subsequent organizational congress revolved about the theme of unity. The new union was to be based on the principles of absolute equality of representation for the three *correnti* in all executive organs, the avoidance of ideological conflict, and the independence of the union from all political parties, although it reserved the right to take a stand on political issues affecting the interests of the working class.

Given their relative positions of strength vis-à-vis the membership (at the CGIL National Congress in Florence in 1947, the Communists received 57.8 percent of the votes, the Socialists 22.6 percent, and the Catholics 13.4 percent), it may seem surprising that the Socialists and Catholics ever agreed to enter a unified union within which the real, as opposed to the formal, power balance placed them at such an obvious disadvantage. The experience of the unitary CGIL (1944-1948) makes sense only in the context of the broad political collaboration, first in the CLN and then in the national government, of which it was a logical expression. Furthermore, the policy pursued by the Communist leadership in the union was fully consistent with the constructive pos-

<sup>18</sup> "I compiti del partito," pp. 333, 335.



ture adopted by the PCI within the government. Priority was unequivocally given to one goal—the restoration of production and its corollary, the curbing of inflation—objectives to which little opposition could be found in any but extreme left-wing segments of Italian political opinion. The PCI thus relied upon the moderate line of the union and its overall conciliatory posture toward the government and toward management, combined with the symbolic appeal of unity among the workers, to maintain the unitary structure of the union movement and to make de facto Communist domination tolerable to the DC and other minority groups (the Socialists remained tightly bound to the Communists through the Unity of Action pact).

For the purpose of mass mobilization, the unitary CGIL was an ideal instrument in the implementation of PCI strategy. Within a framework of party and class cooperation and a formally nonpartisan structure, it gave the PCI, by virtue of its superior organizational and leadership capabilities, an opportunity to politicize the workers, to extend its influence, and to establish a positive reputation as a defender of working-class interests among Catholic-oriented sectors of the working class. This *mano tesa* to the Catholic workers was potentially two-sided, skillfully combining collaboration and competition. Through the CGIL, the PCI tried both to mobilize the workers under its own banner and, at the same time, to extend its political reach by an alliance with the Catholic sector of the labor movement.

Union unity thus cannot be considered merely a facade, promoted by the Communists to camouflage their own domination of the labor movement. It was an integral part of the policy of collaboration and national unity common to all parties in the immediate postwar years, and its symbolic significance was such that, despite the onset of the Cold War and increasingly bitter conflict among the opposed *correnti*, the formal veneer of unity survived for over a year after the expulsion of the Communists and Socialists from the government in 1947. When the split finally occurred in 1948, it meant the loss to the PCI of any influence over the Catholic workers; but since collaboration with the Socialists continued, a critical part of the purpose of the unity strategy was salvaged.

The mass party which the PCI was striving to construct in these years might have been used in a very different way, as party strategy after 1948 illustrates. The crucial point to be made

about the earlier period is that the party was not conceived by the leadership as a potential insurrectionary force, nor even as an instrument of internal mass opposition to the system or of pressure on the government majority for enactment of specific policies and reforms. On the contrary, Togliatti warned against the sectarianism of those who viewed the party's role solely in terms of propaganda and opposition. The new circumstances created by the war and the Resistance meant that the party must now participate in the government and in national life in a positive and constructive way, not limiting itself to criticism but taking an active and responsible role in the solution of the grave political and economic problems facing the country.

The leaders of the PCI were thus seeking to use the party organization as an effective instrument for the realization of party strategy. In this basic sense the two interests of the party complemented each other well: the search for alliances was being materially aided by the building of a great mass party with a broad social and regional base. There were, however, at least two important sources of tension between the two objectives. First, Communist success in building a large and cohesive organization to gain influence among groups whose allegiance was being sought by other political parties was bound to generate a reaction. The Christian Democrats, using the channels of the Church, were not long in constructing an organizational network at least as powerful as that of the PCI. This was merely one of the difficulties inherent in a strategy of competitive coexistence, of collaboration with one's principal long-run opponent.

The second source of tension was within the party itself. Even during the Resistance, and more strongly thereafter, many of the most dedicated party cadres and members—the ones on whom the party had to rely to carry out its policies at the grass-roots level—simply could not accept at face value the strategy of collaboration. They regarded it as only a tactical necessity, to be abandoned once the war was over, and were relieved when domestic and international circumstances combined to overturn it.<sup>19</sup> This underlying tension at the base suggests the difficulty of trying to use an ostensibly revolutionary organization, constructed in the Bolshevik tradition, for nonrevolutionary purposes. The

<sup>19</sup> For some vivid illustrations of such attitudes, taken from Party Archives of the Resistance period, see Ragionieri, "Il partito comunista," in Valiani et al., *Azionisti*, pp. 410-414.

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way out of that dilemma—the creation of a mass rather than a cadre party—only raised the opposite question of whether the party should continue to merit the label of a “revolutionary” or a “Leninist” organization.

### *The Role of the Soviet Union*

The fact that our attention has thus far focused on the domestic bases of the PCI's policy is not intended to imply that the policy was an entirely autonomous one, developed without regard for—or only coincidentally in harmony with—the interests of the Soviet Union. On the contrary, the policy was certainly meant to promote the Soviet cause as well as that of the PCI. The salient point is that during this brief period a situation existed that would not occur in so full a degree again: both the PCI and the USSR felt that their interests were in essential harmony.

There can be no ambiguity whatever about the legacy of the past in regard to relations between the two. The PCI, like the other Communist parties created at this time, was formally a section of the Communist International and fully accepted—although it often chafed under—the Comintern's authority to determine its domestic strategy and designate its leadership. Those who could not accept the basic premise that their party's fortunes were irrevocably tied to the power and the ideology of the Soviet Union were weeded out along the way, during the crises of the twenties and thirties. The rest, Palmiro Togliatti first among them, made their peace with the situation. Whatever misgivings they may have had about the consequences of Stalinism for the Soviet Union and the Communist International would very likely have been dissolved by the triumphs of the Second World War: the successes of Soviet industry and Soviet arms in beating back the German invaders must have overcome any latent doubts and reinforced their sense of the legitimacy of Stalin's rule and of Soviet command of the Communist movement. Under the circumstances, it would have been almost inconceivable for the leaders of the PCI to have followed a strategic line in 1944 that was not fully and explicitly endorsed by Stalin.

The historical record leaves no doubt, moreover, that Togliatti's famous *svolta di Salerno* was intended directly to further Soviet diplomatic interests. Early in March of 1944, after conversations begun some weeks before, the Italian Foreign Ministry announced its acceptance of a Soviet offer to restore diplomatic

relations, a move intended to strengthen the king's position and weaken the opposition of the reviving political parties (including the Communists) to military collaboration with the monarchy against the Germans.<sup>20</sup> When Togliatti shortly thereafter proclaimed his party's readiness to enter a government coalition under the king and Marshal Badoglio, he certainly meant to reinforce the Soviet move. His initiative, in fact, could hardly have succeeded, given the resistance to it within the PCI and the other parties, without Soviet prestige to back it up.

This policy of collaboration was the first concrete illustration of a basic Communist strategy in Italy which reflected the Soviet Union's broader stance toward Europe. Beyond the essential goal of securing the widest possible support for the war effort, Stalin's primary concern was to guarantee the future security of the Soviet Union's western border. On the basis of bitter experience, he believed that such security could be achieved only by creating a zone of satellite states in central Europe, backed up by substantial Soviet forces. As a corollary, he perceived the continued presence of American troops in Europe as a potential threat to these interests; the encouragement of rapid American disengagement was thus another important goal of Soviet foreign policy.

Although many of Stalin's actions tended in fact to defeat such an end (in Poland, for example), an overall appraisal of Soviet foreign policy in the early postwar years reveals a prudent assessment of the USSR's vital interests and a consequent effort not to arouse unnecessarily the suspicions of the Western powers either by indiscriminate expansionary efforts or by encouragement of revolutionary activity, especially in Europe. Stalin appears to have accepted quite explicitly the Yalta division of spheres of influence among the Great Powers and to have given clear priority to strengthening the Soviet position in Eastern Europe. Not wishing to jeopardize Soviet gains in that area, he withdrew Soviet troops from northern Iran after Western protests and denied support to the guerrilla movement in Greece. This concern to avoid where possible direct provocation of the Western powers, coupled with the disposition of Allied forces at the war's end, made it inevitable that revolution in Western Europe would be subordinated to the consolidation of Soviet interests in the East. It was on the basis of a highly realistic assess-

<sup>20</sup> C.R.S. Harris, *Allied Military Administration of Italy, 1943-45* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1957), pp. 141-143.

ment of Soviet interests and of the prevailing balance of forces, then, that Stalin formulated his strategic guidelines for the French and Italian parties: the wartime alliance of the Soviet Union with the Allied powers must continue to find expression in postwar political collaboration at the domestic level.

PCI leaders fully shared Stalin's perspective. They had no illusions that Italy, occupied by Allied armies, would emerge from the war outside the Anglo-American sphere of influence. This consideration was reinforced by others, of a domestic nature, which convinced the party leadership of the impossibility of utilizing the Resistance movement as a springboard for socialist revolution. In the first place, the Resistance was entirely a northern phenomenon; in the south, the old bureaucratic state apparatus had already been fully restored, under the protection of American troops. Not only would any attempt to establish a socialist state in the north have in all likelihood provoked Allied intervention, but, given this division between north and south, even a successful revolution would have meant the sacrifice of national unity and the permanent occupation of the rest of the country by the Western powers. Moreover, despite the prominence of the Communists and the socialist inclinations of many of the partisans, the Resistance had very real limits—it was a *national*, not a class, movement and its revolutionary component was only a minority. In this period, then, Togliatti's and Stalin's assessments of the balance of domestic and international forces in postwar Europe and of the basic strategic line to be followed were in complete agreement: as the objective situation was not a revolutionary one, the order of the day was participation in coalitions of national unity for winning the war and for the construction of postwar democratic regimes.

Although PCI leaders were entirely realistic on this plane, it does seem possible that they were suffering from other serious illusions. There seem to have been two significant miscalculations, or false hopes. The first of these was the apparent expectation that the international coalition against the Germans would last much longer than it did. Far from considering this alliance as a short-term hypothesis (a sort of "popular front" in the sphere of international relations), the party leadership appears to have seen it as the essential external framework for the development of their postwar domestic strategy. While still in Moscow (1942), Togliatti had warned against "the error of considering the cur-

rent alliance with the democratic and sincerely anti-Fascist forces of the West, such as England, France, and the United States, as something transitory and of brief duration. . . . This alliance is not a trick; it corresponds to the deepest needs of the working class."<sup>21</sup> This long-term international perspective helps explain the extent of PCI collaboration at the national level and its willingness to accept far-reaching compromise with the DC in order to preserve unity. Despite his Leninist training, with its instrumental attitude toward alliances, Togliatti may well have entertained some of the same sorts of illusions about the postwar world as other Western politicians.<sup>22</sup>

The second miscalculation concerned Soviet policy toward the Communist movement. It seems reasonable to suppose that the dissolution of the Comintern in 1943 was regarded by the party leadership as an implicit declaration of intent to loosen Soviet control and to allow greater autonomy to individual Communist parties. In fact, the directives of the Seventh Congress of the Comintern for the formation of popular fronts and the transfer of the anti-Fascist struggle to the national plane, along with the new responsibilities such a line placed on member parties, had contained the seeds of its future dissolution. A strategic line based on popular frontism and national unity resurrected the issue of the role of "national peculiarities" in the struggle for socialism. Any policy posed in these terms demanded at least limited autonomy for each party to adapt general policy to the particular conditions it faced in its own country. Given the continuity of Togliatti's thought on this subject from as early as the 1920s (see his analysis of the national characteristics of fascism) and his leading role in the elaboration of the theses for the Seventh Congress, it is entirely consistent that he should have regarded the dissolution of the Comintern as a significant opportunity for further accentuation of the *national* character of the party and for development of the "polycentrism" which he would later articulate.<sup>23</sup>

Such an expectation would have been reinforced by the evolution of the "people's democracies" in Eastern Europe during this

<sup>21</sup> Quoted in Ragionieri, "Il partito comunista," pp. 308-309.

<sup>22</sup> This is the judgment of Ragionieri, one of the PCI's most eminent historians; see *ibid.*, pp. 385-386.

<sup>23</sup> See "Un discorso inedito di Togliatti ai comunisti napoletani (June 1944)," *Rinascita* 28 (January 29, 1971): 21.

same period. Until 1947 the political and institutional situation in these countries remained fluid and Soviet policy cautious. As in France and Italy, the Communists participated in broad democratic coalitions dedicated to the goals of democratization of the political life of the country, economic reconstruction, and the enactment of structural reforms. Declaring that the presence of the working class in the government assured a "progressive democracy," the Communist parties advocated reform from within and eschewed explicit class measures in favor of progressive reforms supported by a broad spectrum of democratic forces.

The theoretical justification for this new state form, neither classical bourgeois democracy nor yet a dictatorship of the proletariat, emphasized, much as did the PCI in Italy, the absence of an objectively revolutionary situation and the consequent need for a transitional period of "progressive democracy." For the moment, then, the task of the Communist parties was to carry out national democratic rather than socialist revolutions. Especially for parties participating in government, this required a substantial degree of flexibility in dealing with the "national peculiarities" which shaped every specific situation. The wide range of diversity within the people's democracies, the scope reserved for the autonomous judgment of individual parties, and finally the apparent acceptance of democratic government and gradual change may well have led Togliatti, here as well, to overestimate the durability of this transitional phase and the extent to which Stalin was prepared to grant meaningful autonomy to other Communist parties.

Despite these false hopes, PCI and Soviet policies were until 1947 in essential harmony. This conformity of fundamental interests was a tremendous advantage for the PCI in dealing with its own members. The persistent tension at the base of the party with regard to the strategy of collaboration could be dealt with not only by pointing out the realism of the position, given the existing balance of forces, but also by stressing the fact that this was Soviet policy as well. In this period perhaps more than any other, the link of the PCI to the USSR—to the immensely strengthened myth of Stalin and the prestige of the Soviet Union as a world power in the wake of Stalingrad and the victorious Russian armies—was a powerful asset and one of the reasons for the party's extraordinarily rapid expansion.

This point demonstrates once more how complete, during this

period, was the harmony among *all three* basic interests of the PCI: loyalty to the demands of Soviet policy, domestic strategy, and party-building. For perhaps the first and last time, party leaders were not constrained to make difficult choices nor to assign priority to one or another of these interests: in the implementation of the party's strategic line, the demands of each were mutually reinforcing. Soviet and domestic policy, identical in their basic lines, required the construction of a new national, mass-based party, whose growth was in turn stimulated by the policy it was designed to serve. Never again would the coincidence of these diverse and potentially contradictory claims on the party be so complete.

THE PHASE OF CONFRONTATION:  
THE COLD WAR YEARS (1948–1956)

During the course of 1947 and 1948 the PCI was forced into an abrupt reversal of its previous policies. The first blow was struck by the party's would-be collaborator Alcide De Gasperi who, by the spring of 1947, had discovered the combination of domestic and international support necessary to govern without the participation of the Communist and their Socialist allies. Dismissal from the government did not result in an immediate change in the party's line: the work of the Constituent Assembly, on which the party placed the highest importance, was still only half-finished and in any case the defeat was not regarded as definitive—the leaders of the PCI were not in a mood to believe that power could be removed from their grasp for the next quarter-century and more.<sup>24</sup> Not until the elections of 1948, when the Christian Democrats won the impressive total of 48 percent of the vote as against the 31 percent of the Communist-Socialist Popular Front, did the magnitude and likely permanence of the disaster become plain.

But another crucial fact had intervened well before the election defeat. In September 1947, at the founding meeting of the Cominform, the Soviet leaders and their colleagues in the East European parties had lowered the boom on the French and Italian parties. A new era of harsh confrontation between the “peace-loving democratic states” and their erstwhile capitalist allies was

<sup>24</sup> See Gian Carlo Pajetta's rueful comment to this effect in Spriano et al., *Problemi di storia*, p. 102.



proclaimed, and the West European parties were summoned to play their part in the drama. With the Yugoslav leaders Kardelj and Djilas serving as Zhdanov's principal spokesmen, the PCF and the PCI were mocked for their foolish and opportunistic policies of collaboration. As recorded in the notes of Eugenio Reale, Kardelj opened the attack:

The Italian Communists praised De Gasperi as an honest man and his party as a mass party and did not unmask this party as a servant of the Vatican. When they did this, the plot to chase them from the government was already under way. . . . Popular democracy does not begin with the participation of Communists in a bourgeois government. Can it be said that the PCI or the PCF had taken clear positions? No. With their theory of popular democracy they disarmed the masses. [Take] the slogan of a national policy and the national role of the Communist party. Certainly, there is no other party that can call itself national as the Communist party can. But a national party is one thing and nationalism another. The PCI saw too late the real meaning of American policy. That explains the slogan: Neither London, nor Washington, nor Moscow. But it is clear that without Moscow there is neither liberty nor independence.<sup>25</sup>

Zhdanov himself put the seal on the matter: interrupting Duclos, who was attempting to explain why his party had continued even after its removal from the government to call itself a "party of government," he sarcastically commented that the people might have understood the PCF better if only it had begun to call itself an opposition party; but neither Duclos nor Thorez had used the phrase. And to Longo, Zhdanov made it clear that the PCI could not get off lightly with only minor self-criticism: what was called for was a radical change of its political line.<sup>26</sup>

It was hardly conceivable, especially given the depressing direction in which domestic events were moving, that this assault could be resisted. The Russians, in their usual brutal style, were only drawing conclusions that were by then almost self-evident. Once the disaster of the 1948 election had occurred, and the PCI's hopes for returning to the government had been definitive-

<sup>25</sup> *Nascita del Cominform* (Verona: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1958), p. 119.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 139, 149.

ly shattered, the illusions of the recent past were officially held up to scorn, just as though it had not been the party's foremost leaders who had so assiduously fostered them:

In the democratic political and social euphoria of the last months of the war and of the early postwar it might have seemed to some that a period was opening up in which traditional political and class conflicts deriving from the very structure of capitalist society were being attenuated to the point of permitting a permanent collaboration between political forces profoundly different in nature, *operai* and *lavoratori socialisti* on the one hand, conservative bourgeois members of capitalist society on the other. To others it might have seemed possible, generalizing from a transitory experience of a parliamentary type, that these conflicts, although continuing to exist, might be overcome through a *system* of compromises.<sup>27</sup>

The party's language reverted to classical themes of class struggle and confrontation with capitalists, Christian Democrats, and the Church, and to a degree the party's behavior followed suit: those were the years of peasant mobilizations for land reform, strikes by agricultural and industrial workers in response to the layoffs and economic reorganization which followed the DC's political victory, and mass demonstrations against NATO and the Marshall Plan. The response of the government to such attempts at mass mobilization was in most cases immediate and brutal. It has been estimated that the years 1948-1954 saw 75 dead and 5,104 wounded as a result of police intervention against such protest; there could no longer be any question that a climate of confrontation and repression had definitively replaced the constructive collaboration of a few short years before.<sup>28</sup>

It seems less important, however, to evoke the well-remembered confrontations of the Cold War years than to recall that beneath this aggressive facade the PCI was in fact struggling to keep alive the essence of its earlier strategy. The party was obliged to attack parliamentary illusions and foolish hopes of political alliances with nonsocialist parties, but this hardly represented a viable strategic outlook. When it came to defining its

<sup>27</sup> "Sulla nostra politica," *Rinascita* 5 (September-October 1948): 331.

<sup>28</sup> Renzo Del Carria, *Proletari senza rivoluzione: Storia delle classi subalterne italiane dal 1860 al 1950*, 2 vols. (Milan: Edizioni oriente, 1966), 2: 399.

basic political line, the party could do no better than to assert the continued validity of the struggle for peace and independence, for the application of the Constitution, and for defense of the national economy and of the workers' standard of living.<sup>29</sup>

Despite the climate of intense hostility and confrontation, and the PCI's isolation from all political groups except the PSI, the party continued in important respects to act *as though* the strategy of participation were still in effect. In Parliament, for example, even in 1948-1953 at the height of the Cold War, PCI deputies voted against government proposals only one-third of the time.<sup>30</sup> The extent to which the PCI had renounced a purely "obstructionist" strategy in Parliament in favor of continued cooperation emerges even more vividly from an analysis of Communist behavior in legislative committees. Noting that about three-quarters of all laws approved by Parliament are passed directly in committee without ever reaching the floor, Giorgio Galli has shown that the rigid ideological hostility manifested by the Communists in floor debates was complemented by a surprising willingness to compromise in legislative committees: throughout the first legislature the proportion of laws passed in committee either by unanimous vote or with only sporadic individual dissent was consistently greater than 50 percent.<sup>31</sup> Although passage of the majority of these laws was dictated either by local interests or by the technical nature of the bill, the Communist attitude was clearly one of constructive contribution to the effective functioning of Parliament.

On the labor front, the major proposal made by the CGIL under the leadership of Di Vittorio called for a national plan to increase productivity and employment, with the workers accepting certain sacrifices—in the form of a wage truce—for the sake of this national goal. It is particularly striking that this *Piano del lavoro* was presented in 1949-1950, years in which the *controffensiva padronale* in the factory was well under way and workers

<sup>29</sup> Risoluzione del Comitato Centrale, "Per il migliore orientamento politico e per il rafforzamento ideologico del Partito," in *VII Congresso nazionale del Partito Comunista Italiano. Documenti politici del Comitato Centrale, della Direzione e della Segreteria* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1951), p. 69.

<sup>30</sup> Franco Cazzola, "Consenso e opposizione nel parlamento italiano: Il ruolo del PCI dalla I alla IV legislatura," *Rivista italiana di scienza politica* 2, no. 1 (April 1972): 84.

<sup>31</sup> *Il bipartitismo imperfetto: Comunisti e democristiani in Italia* (Bologna: Società Editrice Il Mulino, 1966), pp. 310-314.

were increasingly threatened with demotions and loss of jobs as the price for affiliation with left-wing parties and political activity in the factory. Even in the one case where the party moved decisively to lead the most radical movement in postwar Italy—the occupation of the land—it soon muted its radical appeal to *braccianti* and landless peasants in favor of a more general line (the rebirth of the *Mezzogiorno*) intended to attract a broader spectrum of southern society—small landholders, artisans and shopkeepers, the middle classes and professionals, in addition to the poor peasantry. This search for more inclusive alliances around general programs of economic and social reform obliged the party to restrain the more extreme and violent aspects of the peasant land occupations.<sup>32</sup>

The moderation—and realism—of the party's strategy is illustrated further by its position on the agrarian reform bill enacted by the DC in 1950; in the debate on the bill the PCI consistently supported the formation of small peasant properties rather than distribution of the land in the form of cooperatives (the position of the Left DC), realizing that its alliance strategy in the south depended on support of the landowning interest of the vast majority of the population.<sup>33</sup> Thus even, or perhaps especially, in this period of most harsh confrontation on both the domestic and international levels, the PCI tacitly recognized its status as a minority party in both a political and a social sense and accepted the constraints which this imposed on its strategic options. Despite the apparent futility of its actions in these years, the party's only chance for power within the system continued to lie in the construction of broad political and social alliances—a narrow class line would mean permanent isolation.

What vision of the future did this sequence of events leave open? The party's alliance strategy survived, but only as an aspiration, a potential for some future day. Its ties to the Soviet Union had been reconfirmed, but at the price of encouraging the assumption—deeply ingrained in many of the party's own militants as well as its most ardent foes—that the PCI's only real expectation of coming to power was through an insurrection backed by Soviet bayonets. There remained to the party one vital interest to protect, one asset to cultivate: the organization of the

<sup>32</sup> Sidney Tarrow, *Peasant Communism in Southern Italy* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1967), pp. 284-290.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 365.