

CHAPTER THREE

The quest for hegemony

The 1950s and 1960s were difficult years for the party as it worked on entrenching itself in Italian society in the context of: internationally, the Cold War, the exposure of Stalin, and within Italy, the economic miracle and dramatic social transformation. This chapter discusses Togliatti's leadership in this period, his elaboration of the party's strategy, his survival of threats to his leadership from within the party and from Moscow, and to the high point his leadership reached after Stalin's death, enabling him to adhere to his own interpretation of the party's strategy. Reference is made to the growing dissension among some members of the leadership, obviously reflecting dissension at the lower levels of the party, particularly about the perceived lack of democracy in decision-making. Despite the party's formal recognition of its strategy to obtain hegemony by participating in parliamentary democracy, there were some members who were impatient with this process and others who were openly critical of what they saw as the authoritarian and autonomous style of Togliatti's leadership. The chapter also examines how the PCI attempted to implement its strategy for the development of a mass party involving all classes of society in the 1950s and 1960s. It refers to the successes and setbacks which the party experienced in expanding its membership and pursuing electoral victory, how it attempted to seek the support of both industrial and rural workers, and how it sought rapprochement with the Catholic Church and at the same time competed with the DC to gain the membership and electoral support of Catholics. Despite its substantial electoral support, the party's failure to attain a hegemony, even of the left, and to recognise the changing nature of economic and social factors in society, is detected.

The PCI in opposition: adapting to post-war capitalism

The environment in which the PCI had to operate after the 1948 elections was very different from that which existed in the immediate post-war period. Much of the prestige which the party had enjoyed among the non-communist parties as a consequence of its leadership of the Resistance had been eroded; the party was now in opposition, there had been the conflicts and repression following the *attentato*, and the Cold War was well under way and dramatised by the blockade of Berlin by the Soviet and East German forces. The PCI's difficulties were compounded, and its image undermined by, Italy's entry into the Atlantic Alliance, the coming to power of

communism in China in 1949, the invasion of South Korea by the North Korean forces in June 1950 and the development by the United States of a policy of 'containment' of communism. (Shore 1990, 37). The Italian government embarked on a campaign of isolating the PCI.

Known Party members and sympathisers were blacklisted, persecuted at work, openly discriminated against by employers and fired from their jobs. The Catholic Church contributed to this attack by excommunicating all communists in Pope Pius XII's famous *Avviso sacro* (sic) declaration of 1949. (Shore 1990 37-38)

However, Shore (1990, 38) comments that membership in this period fell by surprisingly little — from 2,115,327 in 1948 to 2,027, 271 in 1949 — and that by 1950 it had increased again to 2,112,593.

Even in 1945-47, when relations between the Soviet Union and the United States were favourable to co-existence, Togliatti had been aware that the United States would have had unfavourable attitudes to the PCI. Camilla Ravera, in an interview with Bocca (1977, 395) stated that Togliatti had said to her:

Noi dobbiamo conquistare le masse, solo con il consenso delle masse riusciremo a trasformare il paese. Dobbiamo essere molti e bravi. Il nostro avversario, vedi, non è solo il capitalismo italiano, è il capitalismo americano, il più forte capitalismo del mondo. Badate, sarà un processo lungo e arduo.

However, it is doubtful whether Togliatti would have anticipated the intensity of the American opposition to the PCI. As for his expectations of being in opposition, Sassoon (1981, 62) states that:

The most likely hypothesis is that, quite simply, Togliatti hoped that the PCI would be able to remain in the government, but this did not inhibit him from thinking about the alternative of opposition. The PCI, therefore, tried to be prepared for both eventualities and to a certain extent it succeeded. The party was able to withstand its eviction from power. The passage to opposition did not entail, in principle, any basic changes in strategy...

Yet Sassoon states further that although the 'Italian road to socialism' was formulated by Togliatti in the years 1943-47, it was 'in principle' abandoned following decisions of the newly-formed Cominform in September 1947. It was re-adopted, officially, after the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU in 1956. However, according to Sassoon (1981, 62): 'In practice, the constructive attitude was not abandoned although it became more difficult to implement'.

The PCI's stance on economic issues in the post-war period demonstrated that it did not have any viable alternative to the policies followed by the DC government. In opposition, Togliatti did not strongly oppose the government's financial policies. As the DC lacked economic expertise, the liberal Economics Professor, Luigi Einaudi, was appointed Minister of the Budget. He introduced harsh financial policies, with the result that the economy remained severely depressed until the mid 1950s (Ginsborg 1990, 113). The policies were necessary as Italy had an inflation rate of more than 50 per cent. Einaudi's deflationary policies were successful if unpopular. The freezing of 25 per cent of all bank deposits and severe credit restrictions caused large scale retrenchments; in 1948, the average monthly unemployment figure was over 2,100,000 (Ginsborg 1990, 113). As Italy was in the American sphere of influence there was little choice but to enter the international economy with the objective of moving towards free trade. In simple terms the choice for Italy was between a *laissez-faire* economy and a planned economy. The Italian State had always been interventionist and certainly Italy had experienced protectionism and government intervention under fascism. However, in the post-war circumstances there was little support for a policy of government intervention, except from the left wing of the PSI (Sassoon 1986, 18). Togliatti and the PCI, 'who were developing a strategy which did not take Soviet communism as its principal reference point' (Sassoon 1986, 18), were not in favour of a planned economy. Sassoon refers to an extract from a speech made by Togliatti to the Economic Conference of the PCI in Rome as long ago as August 1945. Togliatti had declared that:

even if the PCI were in power on their own they would call on private enterprise for the task of reconstruction but also that central planning was Utopian, and that what was needed were 'elements of planning' i.e. limited state intervention in key sectors.

The government avoided a public works policy which would exacerbate inflation. It favoured a low wage policy, which suited industrialists, and promoted exports. It was deemed better to move people, particularly from the South to the northern factories, than things, that is, move factories to the South. (Sassoon, 1986 19-20; G. Andreotti in interview with A. Gambino, quoted in Colombo 1981, 28). It must be noted that in not pressing for a policy of government intervention, the PCI was distancing itself from the traditional socialist platform: the nationalisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange.

While Togliatti's view of the impracticability of central planning was realistic in 1945, he and the PCI were later to pay lip service to the 'Labour Plan' advocated by the CGIL — The General Confederation of Italian Workers — at its conferences in October 1949 and February 1950. The plan proposed programmes of major public works involving public housing, hospitals and schools, nationalisation of electricity and land reclamation. Sassoon's view (1981, 78-9) is that the plan was a propaganda vehicle for Giuseppe Di Vittorio, the CGIL leader, who knew that the government had already put its own economic strategies in place. Togliatti's comment on the CGIL plan was:

It is evident... that the very need for a planned economy demands, first of all, the existence of a [political] power which expresses the will and the interests of the whole people and the interests of the working class, not those of the privileged class... [But] it would be a mistake to consider the proposals put forward by the CGIL... as a project for the real planning of the Italian economy (Sassoon, 1981, 79-80).

This is an ambiguous statement. On one hand, Togliatti was not rejecting the CGIL plan; on the other, he was not saying anything that would detract from his support for the government's policies, in line with his abovementioned statement of August 1945. It seems that Togliatti was being realistic and also consistent in his concern to implement the party's strategy. His statement of 1945 must have been intended to show that the PCI could share government in a capitalist economy while his response to the CGIL's plan must have been intended to show solidarity with the trade union movement. Sassoon (1981, 80) suggests that the PCI did not recognise the

importance of trade union unity and autonomy for the Italian road to socialism. ‘In fact, in so far as “The Italian Road” implied an alliance between Communists and Catholics, it implied trade union unity.’ While the implementation of its strategy of compromise and alliances was paramount, it is questionable whether the PCI had an economic policy of its own for the short, or even the medium term. Vittorio Foa, commenting on the period when the PCI did share government, in an interview with Bocca (1977a, Vol. 2, 464), said:

La verità è che Togliatti e gli altri dirigenti arrivano al governo dell'Italia libera senza una dottrina economica alternativa.

The results of the DC-led government’s economic policies, stimulated by the economic consequences of the Korean War, must be regarded as a set back for the PCI’s strategy. The so-called ‘Economic Miracle’ reached its peak between 1950 and 1962. During this period, Italy was transformed from a predominantly agricultural nation to a leading industrial state. Its GNP doubled (Allum 1973, 25 quoted in Shore 1990, 39) and its growth rate between 1958 and 1962, rose to an unprecedented 6.6 per cent (Sassoon 1986, 31). According to Shore (39),

...despite the massive social transformation, and the creation of a vast new proletariat, the PCI was doing badly; it had lost one-quarter of a million members by 1959, and it was conspicuously failing to recruit from the new industrial working class. The socialist Party had broken the Pact of Unity and was seeking coalition with the government parties. Aldo Moro’s election as DC Party secretary-general accelerated this rapprochement and initiated the so-called “opening to the Left” (*apertura* (sic) *a sinistra*), paving the way for the first Centre-Left government in 1962.

The economic boom due to external conditions — a general expansion of international demand created by the Korean war — was beneficial to Italy. A large segment of the population enjoyed increasing incomes and burgeoning consumerism, a situation which militated against the need to join the communist party to seek a ‘better society’. Also, while the Cold War continued, a ‘hot war’ developed between South Korea, backed by the United States and Western allies, and the rigidly Stalinist North Korea, backed by the world’s largest communist nation. This conflict reinforced anti-communist attitudes which flowed through to Italy.

Internal divisions in the PCI

Sassoon (1981, 86) refers to a state of crisis within the PCI which began in 1947-8 and reached a peak in 1956. There were internal disagreements which continually placed strains on Togliatti's leadership. It must be affirmed that, despite much criticism of the PCI's policies and performance from within its ranks, and challenges by sections of the leadership to his leadership style, Togliatti had had the overwhelming support of the party as its leader. However, following the Seventh Congress of the party in Rome in April 1950, Togliatti was forced to mediate between opposing views on policy and organisation. Secchia, and to a lesser extent, Longo, had advocated a reinforcement of the 'cadres' characteristic of the party as distinct from the 'mass' party model (Sassoon 1981, 83) which had been a central item of policy since the *svolta di Salerno*. Opposed to the 'cadres' theme were Alicata and Amendola, known as *meridionalisti* (Southernists), who supported a 'peasant-worker' block and who 'believed that one of the party's primary tasks was to work among the Southern masses' (Sassoon 1981, 84). As will be seen later, Togliatti was on the side of the *meridionalisti*. A weakening of Togliatti's leadership was influenced by both Secchia and Stalin, although not jointly.

Bocca (1977a, Vol. 2, 487-9) records that in 1947, Stalin, who had never met Secchia, invited him to visit him in Moscow. The purpose of the visit was obviously to allow Stalin to establish a line of communication with Secchia, so that Moscow could be kept abreast of PCI affairs without having to go through Togliatti. This was a technique which Stalin had used with other national parties, particularly the French party, to extend his lines of communication and surveillance. Secchia had become responsible for the organisation of the party, and this gave him considerable power, including responsibility for the party records. At the Sixth Congress of the party in January 1948, Secchia asked for formal recognition of his organisational role. After some hesitation, the Central Committee endorsed a proposal by the leadership that Secchia be made Second Vice-Secretary (Longo was First Vice-Secretary) even though there was no such position provided for in the party's constitution. Secchia, who became chairman of the party's commission on organisation (which also included Pajetta, Columbi and Amendola), became virtually the party's leader. '*Secchia è*

anche di nome ciò che è già di fatto: il padrone del partito' (Bocca 1977a, Vol. 2, 489).

In late 1950 Togliatti was seriously injured in a car accident while on holidays at Ivrea (Spallone 1976, 53-64). While recuperating in Moscow, he was invited by Stalin to become leader of the Cominform. Sassoon (1981, 84) asserts that Stalin wanted to remove Togliatti from the leadership of the PCI in the hope that Secchia or Longo would take over. Stalin had never been pleased with the Italian road to socialism and the impasse in which the PCI had found itself must have convinced him that a change was necessary. Barth Urban (1986, 228) asserts that Secchia 'actively supported Stalin's abortive effort to transfer Togliatti to Cominform headquarters'. Togliatti was furious about Stalin's proposal and asked that it be considered by his executive committee. It was, and the committee voted in favour of it (Bocca 1977a, Vol. 2, 546, 550-1). Sassoon (1981, 84) speculates that:

It seems unlikely that they all wished to eliminate Togliatti. The most likely explanation was that they were all trained under a school of thought which made it difficult to take an open stand against Stalin.

In interview with Bocca (1977a, Vol. 2, 550-1), Amendola admitted:

Io votai sì alla proposta sovietica. Convinto che quello fosse l'interesse del movimento comunista e di Togliatti. Non ci sentivamo di opporci a un parere assunto dalle personalità più prestigiose del comunismo internazionale... Insomma, eravamo stalinisti.

Togliatti convinced Stalin to let him remain as leader of the PCI until after its Seventh Congress. It would have been a cunning move by Stalin to consolidate the Cominform by appointing as its leader someone who was so keen on the independence of his own party and its policies. Sassoon (1981, 84-85) comments:

This episode, whose importance should not be overestimated, was indicative of a certain frame of mind and of the limited degree of freedom the Italian communists enjoyed.

By 1953, Secchia was accusing Togliatti of inaction in parliamentary matters. An extraordinary series of events occurred — later known as the 'Seniga affair' — which

resulted in Secchia eventually being demoted and sent to Milan in charge of party organisation there, and the strengthening of Togliatti's leadership. Giulio Seniga, who had fought with Secchia in the *partigiani*, had been brought to Rome by the latter as a reliable and well recommended man. He had responsibility for the leaders' security and knew of the clandestine party operations and how funds were kept and distributed. He was also a revolutionary who criticised Togliatti for having changed the direction of the party. Bocca (1977a, Vol. 2, 568-9) assumes that it was Seniga who systematically took the party's records to Prague, from whence they were taken to Moscow, presumably at the request of his sponsor Secchia. Later, Secchia was to deny that Seniga worked closely with him. In July 1954, the party was about to transfer secret funds to Switzerland. According to Bocca, in Secchia's absence, Seniga took a large sum of money — reported in the press as being a minimum of US\$1,000,000 — from a safe under Secchia's control and flew out of Italy. At one stage, after being hunted and questioned by party members, he returned to Italy, appeared to repent, promised to go and get the money, but disappeared (Bocca 1977a, Vol.2, 568-573; Ginsborg, 1990, 200; Seniga 1978, 13, 29-33).

Agosti (1996, 421) emphasises that, during the PCI leadership's investigation into Secchia's role in the 'Seniga affair', Togliatti adopted an attitude of depersonalising the matter, putting the accent on defects in the functional apparatus of the party rather than openly criticising Secchia, which he left to others. Secchia was humiliated by having to prepare three drafts of a letter of self-criticism before it was approved (Collotti 1979, 108-120). Secchia later said to Bocca (574):

Il caso Seniga apparve così "provvidenziale" che non pochi nel partito hanno creduto e credono che sia stato Togliatti a preparare "la buccia di banana", almeno nel senso che egli era al corrente del progetto Seniga e non fece nulla per impedirlo. A mio avviso sono ipotesi e interpretazioni assurde. Sta però il fatto che Togliatti aveva ricevuto poco prima un rapporto sul Seniga in cui si diceva che non offriva più garanzie per il posto di fiducia nel servizio di vigilanza; Togliatti non me ne informò; può darsi che Seniga lo abbia saputo. Di qui il panico e la fuga non a mani vuote.

It is pertinent to note that Secchia's political defeat took place after Stalin's death and that there was a 'wholesale removal' of his appointees among the secretaries of the provincial federations. Secchia had told Scoccimarro's investigating commission that every one of the secretaries would vouch for his allegiance to the leadership and the party (Collotti 1979, 115). By early 1956, Togliatti's position as party head was considerably stronger than it had been five years earlier. He was thus able to put his personal stamp on the PCI's response to destalinisation (Barth Urban 1986, 229). This response was controversial within the party; not because of the fact of destalinisation itself but because of the way in which Togliatti interpreted the proceedings of the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU and the dilatory and prevaricating manner in which he reported key points to the PCI leadership. Togliatti had led a delegation to the Congress, held in February 1956. Khrushchev gave a two-stage address: the first stage indicating the way to more autonomy among the international communist parties and denouncing the 'cult of the personality', without referring to Stalin; the second stage denouncing Stalin and listing errors that went back to 1938. The second stage was restricted to Soviet delegates but copies of the speech had been distributed to Togliatti and others the evening before. Khrushchev's criticism of Stalin was strongly supported by Mikoyan, Suslov and Malenkov (Froio 1988, 2-5; Bocca 1977a, Vol. 2, 601-4; Sassoon 1981, 98; Shore 1990, 38-9; Agosti 1996, 434-6). On the last day, Togliatti was invited to speak and received a standing ovation even before he spoke. He made no reference to previous derogatory comments about Stalin but spoke of the problems of socialism, the success of the Soviet comrades, the success of the five-year plans, the increases in production, reduction in the working day, economic gains and so on. He did take the opportunity to put the following statement on the record:

Naturally we understand very well that the road the CPSU has followed in order to obtain power and establish a socialist society is not in all its aspects obligatory for all countries but that the road [to socialism] will have and must have its own peculiarities in the various countries.

Togliatti recorded this statement in 'La via italiana al socialismo' in *Rinascita* No. 2, February 1956, quoted in Sassoon (1981, 99). Sassoon draws attention to the fact

that it was the first time that Togliatti mentioned the ‘Italian road’ since his Florence speech of 1947 — ‘*La nostra lotta per la democrazia e il socialismo*’.

Togliatti was loudly applauded when he finished speaking (Froio 1988, 4-5). He was speaking of the positive things that had been achieved under Stalin. He was to be consistent in following this line. He told Vidali, a member of his delegation, in confidence, that Stalin was against the cult of his own personality. He recalled that, on New Year’s Eve 1952, Stalin had been very severe on some comrades who were showing adulation towards him (Froio 1988, 6). Togliatti feared that Vidali would go back to Trieste and talk about the end of the myth of Stalin and recommended that he say nothing. Togliatti’s response to Vidali’s ‘*E come posso far’lo?*’, was ‘*Parla di tutto il resto*’ (Froio 1988, 7). Togliatti’s report on the Congress to the PCI’s Central Committee on 13 March 1956 largely praised Stalin’s contribution to the communist movement, his support of Lenin, the revolution and his leadership of the Soviet Union. He spoke of Stalin’s errors and a ‘cult of the personality’ but made mitigating comments. He lauded the positive aspects of Stalin’s life and played down the negative. He avoided reporting in detail the contents of Khrushchev’s report, much to the irritation of Amendola and Ingrao. Amendola claimed that when he reminded Togliatti that he had not spoken of the criticism of Stalin made at the Congress and that the Committee wanted the details, Togliatti replied : ‘*Ah, me ne sono dimenticato*’. However, Ingrao confirmed that Togliatti had gone on to give a picture of Stalin’s actions and errors (Froio 1988, 23-4). Following many reports of the Twentieth Congress in the Western press and publication of Khrushchev’s full report in the New York Times on 4 June, Togliatti gave a long interview, highly critical of Stalin and aspects of his regime, to *Nuovi argomenti*, the full text of which was published in *l’Unità* (Froio 1988, 26-7). A somewhat clinical comment on Togliatti’s interview is in Ajello (1979, 380-3). At a subsequent meeting of the Central Committee, Pajetta thanked Togliatti for the way he had handled a very difficult matter, but Luciano Gruppi, Terracini — now rehabilitated, after self-criticism, and back on the Committee — and Fabrizio Onofri were highly critical of the party leader. Onofri’s address was cut short by the Chairman of the meeting, Emilio Sereni (Froio, 33-34; Bocca, 624). Onofri became more critical of the decisions made by the party

and the lack of democratic consultation. He was joined by others, including Antonio Giolitti and Eugenio Reale. They were in the minority and all resigned from the party (Bocca 1977a, Vol. 2, 623-5; Agosti 1996, 460). Seniga, Fortichiari and Raimondi, who had been aligned with Secchia, were expelled (Bocca 1977a, Vol. 619).

Shore (1990,105) records that Longo, at the PCI's Eighth Congress in December 1956, had attacked the weakening of party democracy and excessive centralisation from above. He blamed this on democratic centralism, which, he claimed, had 'the tendency to transform itself into bureaucratic centralism, that is, to become mechanical and rigidified in a bureaucracy'. After the party's Eighth Congress and the removal of many dissenters, Togliatti had regained his leadership position despite having been subjected to so much direct and implied criticism in the previous years. Nevertheless, in the aftermath of the revelations about Stalin, the PCI's support given for the Russian armed suppression of the Hungarian uprising and its ambivalent position regarding the workers' uprising at Poznam in Poland, 1956 was a bad year for the party in terms of loss of membership and reputation. Ginsborg (1990, 206) records that:

There were mass defections: Amendola has estimated that some 400,000 members were lost between 1955 and 1957. A significant number of intellectuals left the party, of whom the best known were probably Italo Calvino and the historian Delio Cantamori. But the bulk of the party held together remarkably well at a time when some commentators were predicting its imminent and unavoidable decline.

Developments in the strategy: relations with catholics and peasants

Initially, the party was more interested in the second, 'secret', part of Khrushchev's speech at the Twentieth Congress; but the first, 'open' section was of more strategic interest to Togliatti as 'the CPSU explicitly accepted, for the first time, the possibility of different roads to socialism' Sassoon (1981, 98). At the PCI Central Committee meeting of March 1956, Togliatti had 'insisted that the PCI had not had to wait for the Twentieth Congress to proclaim its own road to socialism' (Sassoon 1981, 99).

He referred to Gramsci's concern for the 'conversion' into Italian of the teachings of the Russian revolution. He said that:

if the Italian constitution had some principles which were of a socialist nature it was because the Italian Communists had rejected in 1946 the illegal road to power and had participated in the workings of the Constituent Assembly. This ... was not understood by all the Communist parties... (Sassoon 1981, 99).

For several years after the Eighth Congress there was confusion about the party's strategic objectives. *Doppiezza* — the party's advocacy of democracy at home while appearing to condone the lack of it in other countries — still had relevance. To some, the strategy entailed support for parliamentary government only as an instrument for achieving socialism. There were differing views about progressive democracy and interpretations of the *via italiana*. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, a group led by Pietro Ingrao, believing that monopoly capitalism was advancing rather than stagnating, advocated the decentralising of power within the party and direct democracy identified with the institutions of local government and with eventual forms of worker control (Amyot 1981, 57-8). This action could not wait the arrival of socialism but

had to be prefigured in present-day capitalist society. Hence the object of structural reforms [for Ingrao] was not only to attack the monopolies' power over investment, the organisation of work and the pattern of consumption, but also to create such a fabric of autonomous bodies (Amyot 1981, 59-60).

Ingrao, like Secchia and Onofri, had also previously argued that:

the party should adopt a more open organisational structure. The decision making process should become more accessible to participation and more visible, or transparent, in the sense of policy disagreements being spelled out at all levels of the party (Barth Urban 1986, 247; Sassoon 1981, 201).

Ingrao's concerns highlighted the fact that, instead of following the path of disintegration predicted by Marx, Lenin and Gramsci, capitalism, and particularly monopoly capitalism, was extending its hegemony over Western societies, including Italian society. It is uncertain whether Togliatti anticipated the entrenchment of consumerism in Italian society during and after the 'economic miracle', and its

strengthening of monopoly capitalism's hegemony. At the PCI's Ninth Congress in 1960, Togliatti did say that

Monopoly capital tends towards a particular objective: the end of the democratic regime or its reduction to a wilted and dead form. It had already tried to do that in our parliament (Sassoon 1981, 131).

However his speeches were charged with orthodox rhetoric. For example, in his Yalta 'memorial', Togliatti, after commenting on the contradictions in socialist society and the need to overcome the suppression of democratic and personal liberty imposed by Stalin, said that — regarding the Soviet Union — capitalist encirclement did not exist any more and economic construction had achieved great successes (Agosti 1996, 554). If he had lived longer he may have found that room service in the best hotel in Moscow could not contrive to deliver a simple cup of tea or coffee but the supply of a can of coca cola would be immediate.

As discussed above, following the events of 1956, Togliatti was innovative in pointing the way to a more autonomous approach to achieving the *via italiana*. However, he seemed to have difficulty in expressing his views in terms which would appeal to a lot of the party's current supporters, particularly those who had joined the mass party on the understanding that they would not be required to follow the tenets of Marxism. In his report to the Eighth Congress of the PCI quoted in Barth Urban (1986, 244) Togliatti

...spoke of the PCI as the "vanguard of the working class"; he upheld the historical necessity of a "dictatorship of the proletariat"; he endorsed, if only in passing, "proletarian internationalism," "Marxist-Leninism" and "democratic centralism." He insisted at some length on the urgency of combating not just "maximalist sectarianism" but also "reformist revisionism."

At the Tenth Congress of the PCI in December 1962, 'Togliatti could not seem to free his mindset from these orthodox formulations' (Barth Urban 1986, 244). Barth Urban (1986, 245) speculates that 'the sixty-nine-year old leader may have become too weary and set in his ways to devise new strategic terms'. Yet at the Tenth Congress, Togliatti did introduce two new strategic arguments. First, he challenged

the ‘Leninist dictum that the bourgeois state must be reformed, not destroyed’. Second, ‘he flatly declared that to focus on winning “51 per cent” of the vote was naïve and illusory “because a dominant bourgeois class can always manage to prevent such a conquest” ‘ (Barth Urban 1986, 245).

While this chapter has so far been concerned with problems facing the PCI in determining its strategy at the leadership level, it should be appreciated that the party had been working at the grass roots to build a mass party at least since the *svolta di Salerno* and, in particular in the factories, for a long time before. Key issues facing the party at operational level were: how to extend the party’s influence in the South; how to combat the influence of catholicism in society yet encourage catholics to support the PCI; and how to maintain and develop the party’s influence in the increasingly industrialised society. Two comments from the late 1970s, twenty years after the period under discussion, provide a fairly clear idea of the long term situation in which the PCI had to implement its strategy. In an interview with Eric Hobsbawm (1977, 76), Giorgio Napolitano, economic spokesman for the PCI, said:

In Italy there still exists a southern question; there still exists a catholic question. The line up of political forces is very different from that in other European countries. No other country has a problem similar to that posed by a party of Catholic inspiration, now in profound crisis — the Christian democracy, which, while having peasant and popular roots and an anti-fascist tradition, has acted for the past several decades as a faithful spokesman for the capitalist ruling classes, the big bourgeoisie. We have a socialist party with a strong unitary tradition and a vigorous commitment to the struggle for an effective transformation of the society.

In a more pessimistic tone, Luigi Barzini, a former liberal parliamentarian said, in an interview with George Urban (1978, 234) that:

The battle is between the Church and the Communist Party, two symmetrical, irrational constructions which have the key to the psychology of the Italian masses. They are both alien to me; I don’t understand either. I don’t believe the blood of St Januarius liquefies every April on the anniversary of his beheading. You are, as a matter of fact, not required by the Church to believe this for it is no more than a pious Neapolitan legend, but millions of Italians fervently go along with it, as they also believe in Communism, the coming of a classless society and the workers’ paradise. The duel

is between myth A and myth B. It is all very strange and depressing.

Ever since its founding the party had had quite an elaborate organisation constituted of 63 Provincial Federations composed of 1200 sections. The PCd'I spread its message through the trade unions and its newspapers. Its activities and a relatively few paid officials were funded from membership dues and by the International. Its operations were severely restricted during the fascist period, but it survived as an underground organisation with most of the leadership in exile (Spriano 1967, Vol. 1, 165, 165fn, 170; Davidson 1982, 114-15).

Until 1945, the party's strongest influence was among the northern factory workers. In 1920, Gramsci considered the working class as composed exclusively of the *operai* in the factories. He saw the peasants as being 'used instrumentally under the direction of the working class' (Tarrow 1967, 115-116). On the other hand, Togliatti saw 'the peasantry... as an equal partner in the venture of the *Via Italiana al Socialismo*' (Tarrow 1967, 117). From 1945 onwards the party concentrated more attention on the South. Giorgio Amendola (1954, 33; quoted in Tarrow 1967, 229) wrote:

The North furnished thousands upon thousands of cadres who could operate methodically in the organisations of the laboring masses of the South. They were revolutionaries who accepted their coming to the South not as functionaries being punished in exile, but with enthusiasm, as brothers helping their brothers, living in sacrifice, introducing into the political life of the South a new style of politics and a serious attention to concrete issues.

However, there was some incomprehension of the message that the northerners were trying to bring, due partly to difficulties in communication between peasants who spoke only local dialects and northerners who spoke their dialects or Italian, and to peasants' suspicion of newcomers. Later, trained organisers were sent from Rome but there were conflicts between them and the southern cadres. Eventually, local cadres began to direct the PCI in the South. Tarrow (1967, 230) comments that the southern cadres were middle class intellectuals. and there was an absence of peasant and worker cadres. Their leader, Amendola, was described by enemies as 'a liberal intellectual who discovered the working class'. His assistants were Mario Alicata,

Alfredo Reichlin and Giorgio Napolitano, three intellectuals of bourgeois background (Tarrow 1967, 230). Drawing from Istituto Cattaneo data, Tarrow (1967, 231) shows that, while southern communist leaders on the national level were mainly an upper middle and upper class group, the largest component from the North were lower middle class, with substantial minorities coming from both the lower and upper classes. One of the problems that the PCI had to try to overcome in the South was the social gap between the middle class intellectuals as leaders and the peasants as followers. Togliatti wrote:

Because of the social disorganisation of the South, we need an organisation of a conspicuously broad, popular nature, more than is necessary in the large industrial centres. The need to work for the construction of alliances is more important there than in the rest of the country (Tarrow 1967, 262).

From 1943 to 1945, peasants had forcibly occupied large areas of land in the South. Emilio Sereni, the communist Minister for Agriculture, seeking to regularise the situation, conceded uncultivated land to peasant cooperatives. In the absence of other viable organisation — party cells were rare — the PCI turned to the cooperatives for its basic organisation. But it had to contend with the fact that in the South, many of the cooperatives were controlled by non-communists (Tarrow 1967, 281-2). It had to contend with the clientelist system which was rife in the cooperatives and which was used so effectively to support the DC throughout its period in power, and with the political influence of the catholic church in the *Mezzogiorno*, entrenched since the fascist period. Tarrow (1967, 171-3) shows that in the 1946 elections,

while the dominant pattern in the North was a return to the political forces before Fascism, the dominant pattern in the Mezzo giorno was the continued popularity of the political forces that had gained power over the past two decades — mainly the Church and the far right.

The DC held the largest single party vote in 1946, 35%, rising to 38.3% in 1953, 44.4% in 1958 and falling slightly to 41.2% in 1963. The PCI vote was only 10.2% in 1946 but rose dramatically to 21.4% in 1953, 22.2% in 1958 and 23.7% in 1963 (Tarrow 1967, 175), still well below the DC's vote. Tarrow (1967, 180-1) draws attention to the polarisation of voting at the general elections in 1963 for the

communist and catholic parties in the North. In 78 per cent of the northern provinces where the communist vote was low, the catholic vote was high. Similarly, in 93 per cent of the provinces where the communist vote was high, the catholic vote was low. But in the South there was not this sort of polarisation. Forty per cent of the southern provinces with a high catholic vote also had a high vote for the communists and thirty five per cent of those with a low catholic vote also had a low communist vote. Tarrow (1967, 181, 183), attempting to explain this paradoxical situation, suggests:

that in many ways the two parties are symbiotic. Both are concerned with the problems of modernisation: both were involved positively in the land reforms of the early 1950s: and both are relatively new in the area. Probably if there is an overall explanation for the presence of high Catholic voting in provinces with high PCI voting, it is that both are the harbingers of a new style of organised mass politics in the South — the DC somewhat less so than the PCI.

Despite the huge effort that the PCI put into mobilising a peasant communist movement in the South, that effort failed, probably because the party was trying to apply a strategy developed from its experience in the North to the South where vastly different social and economic conditions existed. Tarrow (1967, 367) asserts that all attempts to apply the *Via italiana al socialismo* to the south were bound to fail. The PCI was faced with a dilemma. Some of the leadership felt that the problem of the South had become less important as Italian capitalism had matured and that the party should be concentrating upon the emerging urban proletariat. But to follow this line ‘would leave the peasantry once and for all the hunting ground of the Christian Democrats’ (Tarrow 1967, 367). Tarrow (1967, 367) concluded that:

In imposing a strategy developed by Togliatti for the advanced industrial North upon the backward, agricultural South, the party was simply falling prey to the objective conditions it had hoped to demolish.

On the national scene, the PCI had influence over a number of associations and groups, while the DC represented ‘just one activity among the many clusters of activity that centre around the hierarchy of the Italian Catholic Church’ (Galli & Prandi 1970, 166). It was the church rather than the DC that held the dominant

position in the catholic subculture in Italy. Nevertheless, the attitude of the church and the catholic organisations was that it was the task of the DC to combat communism with all the means at its disposal, to the extent that, if efforts to halt the spread of communism failed, the fault would lie with the DC (Galli & Prandi 1970, 178). In order to combat the influence of the church and to implement its strategy of attracting catholic members and militants, the PCI associated itself with many organisations. The Union of Italian Women was formed by the PCI and the PSI in 1944. It was to be a union of all Italian women, without regard to religious or political affiliations, but it soon became recognised as a supporter of the left wing parties, particularly the PCI. Its publication *Noi donne* was edited by a militant communist until 1962, but the organisation's failure to commit itself to the specific problems of Italian women compelled it to favour giving a voice to women of other political persuasions (Galli and Prandi 1970, 196-200). Nilde Iotti, one of the PCI's most outstanding women achievers, has been reported as commenting very critically on the lack of encouragement given to potential women leaders by the PCI leadership under Togliatti (*L'Espresso* 21 January 1996, 70-1).

As a counter to the success of the catholic *Coldiretti*, which the bulk of the Italian peasantry supported, the PCI founded the National Peasants' Alliance (PA) in 1955, appointing Grieco and Sereni as its directors. In seeking a mass following, the Alliance faced two main difficulties: the peasantry's traditional antagonism towards socialism and the narrowness of its organisational base. Also, the incomes of agricultural workers failed to keep pace with those of industrial workers, taxation was high compared to income and there was a low level of mechanisation in agriculture (Galli and Prandi, 200-1). Galli and Prandi's (1970, 188) analysis of votes for elections to local farmers' boards show overwhelming superiority of the *Coldiretti* against the PA. According to Galli and Prandi (1970, 202), in 1963, only in Emilia-Romagna and Tuscany did votes for the PA on local farmers' boards exceed more than 20 per cent, while in all other regions the votes were less than 10 per cent of the total. Nevertheless, according to Amyot (1981, 106), many new recruits were drawn to the party from the peasantry in central Italy in the 1960s, because of the success there of the PCI's campaign for land reform.

The PCI had a strong presence in the National Association of Italian Partisans, which reached a peak membership of 300,000 in 1952. Thereafter it no longer provided fresh support for the PCI, but the party still attached importance to having its slogans repeated under the by-line of the Association (Galli and Prandi 1976, 203-5). The PCI sponsored leisure and sporting activities in its own name and through other organisations which were only formally autonomous. The Italian Union of Sport and the Italian Recreational and Cultural Association were communist controlled and most branches were concentrated in Emilia-Romagna and Tuscany. A major function of the affiliated clubs was to counter the possibility that workers with more money and leisure time might devote less of their time to political activities (Galli and Prandi 1970, 205-8). The other important purpose was to combat the influence of the social and leisure organisations sponsored by the catholic church. Kertzer (1980, 2-5) referring to the catholic and communist worlds, asserts that:

Conflict between the Church and the PCI is structurally inevitable, for they both strive to provide a constellation of values and social groupings in a wide range of settings. That this conflict is inevitable at the institutional level does not mean that individuals cannot resolve the conflict in ways not envisioned by the norms of either Church or Party. Although some people fully subscribe to the ideals of one of the competitors and lead lives of activism and others give undivided social allegiance without full acceptance of the institutional norms, many people divide their allegiances between the Party and the Church.

Kertzer's (1980, 7) case-study of 'Albora', a fictitious name for one of the fourteen *quartieri* circling the city of Bologna, examines, among other things, the behaviour of the people who divide their allegiances. If these people, as observed in 'Albora', are representative of the situation at the 'grass roots' of Italian society, then one can partly explain the extraordinary situation in which Italy, a predominantly catholic country, where the Holy See is located, maintained such a relatively strong and resistant communist party. Kertzer (190, 133) sees one explanation as being 'that ritual constitutes one of the important arenas of combat between the Church and the PCI'. He examines the behaviour of the '*Alborese*' in terms of their adherence to the rites of passage and rites of community. Regarding rites of passage — as at 1976 —

As is the case throughout Italy, almost all Alborese communists have their children baptised. Similarly, they send their children to catechism so that they may have First Communion and be confirmed. They are married and buried by a priest (Kertzer 1986, 135)

While the church had a monopoly on the rites of passage it faced strong competition from the PCI regarding rites of community. The church had established the *festa* as an essential rite of community but in many areas the organisation of these failed because of the popularity of those organised by the communists, the *feste dell'Unità*. Since the Second World War the church *feste* had been on the decline. While the church and the party were very much in competition, the party's attitude to the church had always been conciliatory. The 'catholic-communist' view was that only a handful of the hard core party leadership had abandoned the church and for the great mass of party members and voters, allegiance to the PCI entailed no rejection of the church and no abandonment of a catholic identity (Kertzer 1980, 245). In 1963, Togliatti delivered a lecture — described as an important document of détente — at Bergamo, a traditionally catholic city, in which he rejected the standard Marxian interpretation that religious faith disappeared as structural conditions evolved. 'History has shown otherwise' he said bluntly. 'This evaluation has failed the test of history' (Mulazzi Giammanco 1989, 59-60). He spoke of communism as 'a complete religion of man.'

The problem is that it has been a religion, but few men exist today who are religious. Thus the crisis is in both the Catholic and the Communist world... This is a dramatic problem: how can one think of a hegemony, as it had been envisioned by Gramsci, without a high ethical project, without people's consciousness being transformed by this project? Is it possible to have non-religious communism? (Mulazzi Giammanco 1989, 149)

The PCI approached the problem of religion with an attitude of conciliation. This, and the reality that many communists practised the rites of passage and some rites of community — for example, attendance at mass by some members — may well have influenced, in the long term, the movement towards a political 'historic compromise'.

Togliatti's last years

Togliatti could not have foreseen the ways in which the Italian economy was to change in the period 1953 to 1963 or the effects this would have on workers' attitudes to participating in political life. Italy was transformed in this period from an agricultural to a leading industrial society (Shore 1990,106). There was massive internal and external migration, unplanned and uneven development and rapid urbanisation. The PCI suffered heavily because, although the proletariat was burgeoning, few were being drawn into the supposed 'vanguard'. The crisis of capitalism had not eventuated.

In fact, over the period of the life of the Italian Communist Party, practitioners in the United States had been developing their own strategy for the triumph of capitalism. While Gramsci and other communists had identified 'management' with the ownership of capital (Mancini 1980, 6) concepts were being developed in the West — in particular in the United States — of management as a separate function from the ownership of capital. In this context, industrial conflict was not generally about attempts by workers to replace management-capital, but about the share of profits between workers and management as a result of their co-operative productivity. Gramsci, of course, studied the writings of the American management practitioners, in particular those of F. W. Taylor; but he was not to know the later writings of the leading American management guru Peter F. Drucker, who described the proletariat as 'obsolete and an anachronism' in industrial society. Drucker (1951, 208-10) saw the proletariat as being socially and economically a commodity; and that '...industrial society...must find a way to get rid of the proletariat, that is of labour as a commodity, and yet maintain labour as a flexible and controllable cost'. One implication from Drucker's writing is that getting rid of the proletariat would avoid a dictatorship of the proletariat. In fact, Western industrial society, through increasing use of technology, has transferred the proletariat's labour cost to machines and systems, reducing the number of workers relative to output. For a while the reduction in blue collar workers was substantially compensated for by an increase in white-collar tertiary workers, but technology has been making strong inroads into this area. It is very unlikely that Togliatti and the PCI, beyond continuing to recognise the long-

perceived threat to them of monopoly capitalism, would have foreseen this situation to the extent that they could have varied their strategy to deal with it.

In the period 1953-1963, the PCI was pre-occupied with internal and external political problems as well as with enhancing its support from the membership, the unions and the community. There had been problems outside Italy, in Budapest, Warsaw and Poznan, where:

Communism was faced with a bewildering paradox: the working class were in revolt, not against the excesses of capitalism, but against socialism. The proletariat were being arrested, silenced, beaten up and killed, not by the reactionary forces of imperialism but by their own 'workers' police' for denouncing their own Workers' State. Nowhere in Marxist-Leninist theory was such an event possible (Shore 1990, 107).

From 17-31 October 1961, Togliatti attended the Twenty Second Congress of the CPSU where Khrushchev renewed a very severe attack on Stalin and Stalinism not greatly different from the 'secret report' given at the Twentieth Congress. Togliatti was irritated by Khrushchev's delving into the past; and the superficiality and excessive tendency to personalise things which he saw as Khrushchev's characteristic traits (Agosti 1996, 518). Togliatti's report of the Congress to the PCI leadership on 10 November was virtually a re-play of the report he gave to them after his return from the Twentieth Congress in 1956, and it provoked a similar reaction from his comrades. He again spoke at length on the progress made in the Soviet economy and praised the USSR's initiative in international matters. He mentioned the criticism of Stalin only at the end of his report. He did not think it necessary to discuss Stalin or Stalinism, although generally he did not use the latter term (Agosti 1996, 518).

His comrades were very dissatisfied with his report. Their reactions were highly critical of the authoritarianism and centralisation that prevailed in the USSR and they felt that, given the revival of the criticism of Stalin, re-consideration of the PCI's future line was warranted. Paolo Robotti recalled the Stalinist repressions against the Italian communist emigrants in the USSR, (Bocca 1977a, Vol. 1, 271-5)¹ a process

¹ Luigi Longo, said of Togliatti in a later interview with Bocca: 'It was one of his characteristics[...]not to break his head against the walls and not to take on the adversary

that would have seemed difficult to carry out without Togliatti's consent. The strongest critic of Togliatti's report was Amendola who said, among other things, that it was necessary for the PCI to engage in self-criticism about its timidity, cautiousness, prudence and reticence that had slowed its progress. Aldo Natoli, in a brief but explosive speech called for an extra-ordinary congress to discuss the party line (Agosti 1996, 520). Agosti (1996, 521) comments that after this discussion, for the first time in many years, and in a way more evident than in April 1956, Togliatti found himself practically in the minority in the Central Committee. An extra-ordinary meeting was held on 17 November at which Togliatti did not bow to his critics and did not seem disposed to self-criticism. He lamented 'the emotive exaggeration and also signs of an anti-Soviet, self damaging, iconoclastic spirit' in the tone of the debate at the Central Committee meeting and exhorted his comrades: 'not to let ourselves have an atmosphere that it is the end of the world' (Agosti 1996, 521). As for Amendola, Togliatti said that he 'did not understand the bitter and intolerant way he set the problem' Agosti (1996, 521). In general, the tone of his introduction to the meeting was one of irritation, embarrassment and defensiveness. The only people to support Togliatti in the debate were members of the 'old guard': Scoccimarro, Arturo Colombi and Antonio Roasio.

Amendola spoke again, obviously referring to Togliatti, about 'the danger of suffocating debate' and of the 'cold shower that induced one not to respond to the problems arising' which 'would provoke a silent haemorrhaging, of men and cadres and would weaken the achievement of new strengths.' Amendola was supported by Alicata, Pajetta, Macaluso, Cossuta and Sereni. Ingrao, who had criticised Togliatti several years before, together with Longo, Berlinguer and Bufalini, stood apart from the debate (Agosti 1996, 521-522). The result of the meeting was a somewhat innocuous press statement, under Togliatti's signature, that acknowledged errors in the progress towards socialism but clearly expressed a party position critical of the USSR. This of course drew critical reaction from Moscow (Agosti 1996, 521).

frontally. One can say that in some cases his intelligence and astuteness might have been undervalued, but in the period of terror you had to be deeply convinced that the only politics possible was in influencing Stalin without ever contradicting him.' Bocca (1977a, Vol. 1, 275)

At the PCI's Tenth Congress in December 1962, Togliatti's report was concerned with Italy's relations with the external world, with NATO and the Common Market — which Togliatti saw as a centre reinforcing the dominance of the great capitalistic monopolies (Agosti 1996, 533). Indeed, the PCI was very conscious of the power of the monopolies and the party must have appreciated that any resistance to monopolies would have to be on a world-wide basis. Togliatti's promotion of Polycentrism and the party's later venture with Eurocommunism were perhaps a recognition that monopoly capitalism might be fought in the long term on a wider front. On 26 March 1963, Togliatti turned 70. There was no great celebration by the party, probably because of the earlier 'cult of the personality' which had applied to him in Italy on a reduced scale (Agosti 1996, 537).² However, he was congratulated with admiration and respect by a group of the leadership and with affection by the rank and file. Also, his political adversaries did not begrudge demonstrations of esteem for him (Agosti 1996, 537).

Togliatti may have had some consolation in April 1963 from the national election results which gave the PCI an increase from 22.7 per cent to 25.3 per cent or more than one million votes. The DC's vote fell from 42.4 per cent to 38.3 per cent, while the PSI's fell marginally from 14.2 per cent to 13.8 per cent (*Il Messaggero*, 5 April 1992, 1). The PCI's electoral improvement was not matched by a corresponding increase in the party's membership. Sassoon (1981, 202) shows that, whereas votes for the PCI rose from 4,358,243 in 1946 to 7,768,288 in 1963, its membership, starting at 1,676,013 in 1946, rose to 2,134,285 in 1953, then declined to 1,615,112 in 1963, a membership level lower than that in 1946. The ratio of voters to party members had risen from 2.6 in 1946 to 4.8 in 1963. Sassoon (1981, 203) points out that, while the number of PCI members increased until 1953-54,

serious membership losses which had occurred in the North in the period 1950-51 had been compensated by a remarkable increase in membership in the South. Towards the end of the fifties losses began to occur in the South, too, without the balance being redressed by a corresponding increase in the North.

² A version of the nature of the 'cult of the personality' around Togliatti is in Seniga (1978, 13, 29). See also Bocca (1977a, Vol. 2, 637).

Despite a remarkable increase in the number of Italian factory workers between 1954 and 1962 the number of communist factory workers had decreased in that period from 856,000 to 543,000. Put another way, 23.5 per cent of factory workers were PCI members in 1954 but only 12.3 per cent were members in 1962 (Sassoon 1981, 203). These figures beg the question whether the electoral support resulted from the way Togliatti and the PCI presented the party's policies and performance to the public or whether their electoral improvement reflected public dissatisfaction with the performance of the DC government.

Such dissatisfaction eventually led to the formation of a centre-left government. A popular anti-government movement had surfaced in 1960 during the short-lived period of the Tambroni government, which had relied on the support of the neo-fascist MSI and the monarchists to get its first vote of confidence. The extremely right wing activities of this government had provoked massive public reaction (Ginsborg, 1990, 256-7) which was largely independent of any contribution from the PCI. Ginsborg (1990, 258) refers to a new situation in Italian politics which was to herald a further deterioration in the ability of the PCI to achieve a practical outcome for its strategy:

Tambroni's swift demise established another rule of Italian politics — that the Christian Democrats could not hope to govern with the support of the MSI and the Monarchists. The road to the right was thus definitely closed; that to the left was open but unexplored.

The DC's subsequent 'opening to the Left' or invitation to the PSI to join government, constituted a new threat to the PCI. The move by DC leader Aldo Moro was supported by the USA as a way to divide the left and isolate the communists (Ginsborg, 258-9). It was not opposed by the catholic church, nor by the industrial monopolies. The first centre-left government, comprising the DC, the social democrats and the republicans, but not the PSI, was formed under Amintore Fanfani on 10 March 1962. The second, led by Aldo Moro, and including the PSI, was formed in December 1963. One of its socialist ministers was Antonio Giolitti, who had previously been expelled from the PCI (Ginsborg, 267-8, 273-4)

Despite heavy losses in membership the PCI's share of the vote for the Chamber of Deputies rose from 22.7 to 25.3 per cent at the elections of April 1963, but this minor success was heavily offset by the PSI and the DC forming a centre-left government under Aldo Moro. This event highlighted the failure of Togliatti and the PCI, despite its stated strategy of forming alliances with a variety of groups in society, in not being able or willing to form a lasting alliance with the PSI. It could not claim a hegemony of the left without an alliance, or an understanding on common objectives, with the PSI.

Togliatti had been aware of the PSI's movement towards government with the DC. The leader of the PSI, Pietro Nenni, revealing Togliatti's personal relationship with him, recorded:

We had some talks in those months. At first his (Togliatti's) position was this: 'Do what you are in the process of doing but do not have any illusions. Sooner or later, you will come up against the reaction from the system and then you will have need of us'. And one evening, in a moment of confidence, he let slip: 'But yes. You are fortunate that you are making politics again. I, as you see, will have to continue to make propaganda' (Bocca 1977a, Vol.2, 660).

Togliatti's attitude was that it was natural for the Catholics to seek collaboration with the PSI in order to split the 'Marxist left'. However, in a rather ambiguous rationalisation, he felt that there was a need for the PCI to remain close to the PSI and support it in the battle for reforms, while seeking to split the DC (Bocca 1977a, Vol. 2, 660). Ingrao and his followers saw the centre-left as a political expression of neo-capitalism, incapable of resolving any of Italy's fundamental problems, and they wanted to refuse any collaboration with it. Amendola held the opposite view (Bocca 1977a, Vol. 2. 661).

Immediately after the PCI's conference on organisation in Naples from 12 to 15 March 1964, Togliatti requested leave from his duties in the Secretariat because of his age, health and 'other motives' (Agosti 1996, 546). He intimated that he wanted to

continue his interest in the management of the party's journal *Rinascita*. Despite a preference to rest in Italy and some political complications caused by the sudden illness of the Italian President, Togliatti left for Moscow on 9 August to seek to convince Khrushchev personally, of the inopportuneness of formalising the USSR's schism with China. He could not see Khrushchev immediately and spent the waiting time finalising a document that became known as the 'Yalta Memorandum' (Agosti 1996, 552-4; Shore 1990, 153; Bocca 1977a, Vol. 2, 677-680). The document dealt mainly with the problems of international communism. Shore (1990, 153) draws attention to Togliatti's apparently intransigent adherence to Leninism in the Memorandum:

Though not overtly critical of the Soviet model, it did reject as unsatisfactory the 'cult of personality' thesis, and it proposed that the return of democratic and personal liberties suppressed by Stalin could be hastier: 'The general impression', Togliatti wrote, 'is that there is a slowness and resistance to return to the Leninist norms that used to guarantee freedom of expression and debate both inside the Party and outside in the field of culture, art and politics.' This sentence is revealing, for it suggests that Togliatti, even until his death, still held 'Leninist norms' as inviolable. He clearly failed to carry the analysis a step further and examine the roots of a problem that perhaps lay in Leninism itself.

On 13 August, Togliatti was struck by a cerebral haemorrhage at Artek. He died at 1.20pm on 21 August. At Yalta, Khrushchev, Kosygin, and Podgorny helped carry his coffin to the aircraft to take it to Italy. The new Russian leader Brezhnev went to the funeral in Rome (Bocca 1977a, Vol. 2, 681) which was attended by one million people (Bocca 1977 Vol.1, 1).³ It was fitting that the Soviet leadership were present at Togliatti's end. He used the Soviet model as a point of reference, to follow when he thought it appropriate, and to depart from, particularly when supporting the maintenance of a democratic Italy. During the writing of the Constitution and the pursuit of an advanced, democratic parliamentary government, and structural reforms in Italian politics and institutions, Togliatti was at the frontier.

³ Some eulogies and comments on Togliatti at the time of his funeral are quoted in Spallone (1976, 142-6). Comments by Pietro Nenni, Carlo Levi, Eugenio Scalfari, Italo Calvino, Jean Paul Sartre and Pietro Ingrao are quoted in Agosti (1996, 555-7).

Conclusion

In the 1950s and 1960s the PCI established itself as one of the two major forces in Italian politics, despite severe pressures from the church, the USA and the Cold War. The leadership continued to implement the party's strategy to achieve government by democratic parliamentary means, even though for a long period, because of Moscow's influence, it did not formally acknowledge this goal. While the leadership generally supported Togliatti in this strategy, there were some who wanted to revert to the pre-war revolutionary model. There were those who thought that the strategy's objective was too far away and that the process of achieving it should be speeded up. The party's general support for the economic policies of the De Gasperi government bore the stamp of conciliation, adaptation and compromise but this did not stop monopoly capitalism and consumerism becoming entrenched in Italian society. While the party had strong electoral support at the local level and increased its national vote gradually during the 1950s and 1960s, strains in the party continued. Expulsions of those members who diverged from the current party line continued. There were attacks on Togliatti's style of leadership and calls for more consultation with the rank and file, and there was an underlying dissatisfaction with Togliatti's past role as a member of the Comintern. His apparent support for some of Stalin's more unsavoury practices was to surface in the Italian press in the 1980s (Froio 1988, VII - XV). There was a wider dissatisfaction with the role of the PCI as a non-revolutionary party elsewhere. This dissatisfaction and the reaction to it will be discussed in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER FOUR

From Togliatti to Berlinguer

This chapter discusses the background to the ‘historic compromise’ between the PCI and the DC in the 1970s, with reference to prior events which aimed at achieving the same sort of compromise without attracting the name. It refers to the emergence of the centre-left government, which highlighted the PCI’s failure to form an alliance with the PSI. This event made clear that the PCI’s task of gaining government would be much more difficult and that it would have to continue to exercise responsibility in opposition, without power. The chapter also considers the emergence of dissent from extra-parliamentary political groups, especially students and workers. This dissent reflected the desire for change in the entire political system, from some quarters by violent means; and the activities of the extra-parliamentary left demonstrated that the PCI had failed to maintain a hegemony over a substantial part of the people, including factory workers and youth whom it would have expected to influence. The activities of the Red Brigades, the kidnapping of Aldo Moro and the PCI’s reactions are discussed in the light of the PCI’s inability, in common with the other parties, to take a position of national leadership.

Student and worker unrest

In 1968-69, Italy experienced what Lumley (1990, 9) refers to as an ‘organic crisis’, in which there was a massive withdrawal of support for the structures of representation and an abrupt increase in political demands. The crisis arose particularly in the universities, schools and factories. In some ways, the crisis was a consequence of the ‘economic miracle’ of the 1950s and early 1960s, the main beneficiaries of which were big companies and sections of the middle classes. The ‘miracle’, based on a rigorous adherence to increases in productivity greater than increases in wages, and mass migration from the South to the North and to northern Europe, aggravated social tensions. Attempts by De Gasperi in 1953 to introduce the so-called ‘swindle law’ — *‘la legge truffa’* — aimed at keeping the DC in power (Lumley 1990, 14), and Tambroni’s attempt in 1960 to form a government with the neo-fascist MSI, resulted in national campaigns of opposition and waves of strikes which showed the defensive strength of the industrial working class (Lumley 1990, 14). The failure of the major political parties, particularly the DC and the PCI, to recognise, let alone correct, deficiencies in the Italian social and education systems,

triggered revolutionary movements which, in one sense, shocked the nation, but which, in another, attracted both active and passive support from a number of sources. The DC failed to recognise the impending wave of civil violence, since it was ‘luxuriating in a sea of encouraging statistics produced by the economic miracle’ (Meade 1990, 1). According to Amyot (1981, 173):

The immediate cause of the student unrest was the backwardness of the university system: the structure of the university was hierarchical, almost feudal; all power was in the hands of a few senior professors the ‘barons’; the content of the courses was in many cases outdated. The fragile fabric of the university was subjected to intolerable strains by the increase in student numbers which began in the early 1960s. Lecture halls, residences and other facilities became overcrowded. At the same time the lack of job opportunities for graduates generated increasing tension within the student body.

Sassoon (1987, 111) records that, in 1961, Italian industry had taken up 16.9 per cent of graduates. By 1964, this fell to 4.4 per cent, then it went up again to 12.5 per cent only to fall to 5.7 per cent in 1976.

In 1962 the DC had established Italy’s first institute of sociology at the University of Trent, a DC stronghold. The intention was to create a class of technocrats to manage the new prosperity (Meade 1990, 1). However, by the late to mid 1960s Trent had attracted students who were preoccupied with the uncertain health of Italian society, including Renato Curcio and Margherita Cagol, the two most influential of the founding members of the Red Brigades (Meade 1990, 1). It also attracted a second generation of sociologists — disillusioned with the centre-left government, and well-read in Weber and Durkheim — who brought a new interest in developing a Marxist sociology. This interest was later to develop into a revival of Marxist-Leninist theory, with a number of updated philosophies, including Maoism and Guevarism (Lumley 1990, 58).

In the winter and spring of 1967-68, student agitation in the universities grew to national proportions. In November 1967, the universities of Trent, Turin and Genoa, and the Catholic University of Milan, were occupied by students (Lumley 1990, 66).

Renato Curcio in his long interview with Mario Scialoja (1995, 34) said that initially there were only eleven students who occupied Trent, but from the second day this number grew to 1,000. This reaction followed the display of a bed sheet from a university window on which was written: '*Università occupata*' 'Stop the war in Vietnam'. This seemingly spontaneous digression from the protest against the university was typical of the behaviour of the student movement in the next few years. In January 1968, 36 universities were occupied.

Many of the students' actions appeared to be spontaneous; but there were unifying factors, although at first, this unification was not organised. A major source of unity was the antagonism towards the centre-left government's attempts to reform the universities. However, the spontaneous acts were many and varied. On 20 March 1968, students in Rome defied a police ban on demonstrations and confronted the police, with the result that the police were driven off the streets, cars and vans were set alight, 46 policemen were taken to hospital and an unknown number of students injured. Viale (1978, 43, quoted in Lumley 1990, 67) reported that at Pisa, a few weeks later, a student demonstration, which ended by occupying the Railway station, was organised and well equipped; everyone wore the same crash helmets as the Japanese and German students. On 25 March 1968, students at the Catholic University in Milan, who had been locked out by the authorities, occupied the university and were evicted by the police. Of the 6,000 students involved, 60 were imprisoned and 48 charged with serious offences. Others were severely beaten and terrorised (Lumley 1990, 66).

For the students across the entire spectrum of dissenting activity, the police became a hated enemy against whom it was legitimate to use force; while the police lost all respect for people they regarded as '*figli di papà*' — the spoilt children of the privileged — and willingly taught them a lesson (*Corriere della sera*, 26 and 27 March 1968, quoted in Lumley 1990, 68). The toll of deaths and injuries due to police charges, tear gas and firearms escalated, especially from the beginning of 1969 (Lumley 1990, 68). The students came to see the state as an instrument of class rule. One of the movement's most popular slogans was: 'Smash the State, don't change it.'

Other popular slogans listed in *L'Espresso* (15 December 1968, quoted in Lumley 1990, 68-9), were: 'Revolution, yes — revisionism, no; 'Workers' power — arms to the workers'; 'Power comes out of the barrel of the gun'; 'The Vietcong win because they shoot'; 'Violence in return for violence'; and 'War, no — guerrilla action yes'.

The sentiments of these slogans were the direct antithesis of the strategies that the PCI had been trying to promote: no violence, no armed action and the struggle for a people's victory through institutionalised democratic processes. In fact, the PCI, having participated in government and as part of the official parliamentary opposition, had become part of the state apparatus, a cause for criticism of the party by the extra-parliamentary left. One reaction of the PCI was to propose a 'mass union organisation' of students, to concern itself exclusively with university problems. By April 1968, at the height of student agitation all over Italy, the party realised that its proposal had no following among the students, who had moved far beyond such conceptions (Amyot 1981, 175). The PCI was in a dilemma because its entire strategy had been based on the assumption that the only sources of legitimate power in Italy were political parties. The growth of the youth question and of the student movement, like the growth of the feminist movement later, endangered this whole approach (Sassoon 1987, 117).

As general elections were approaching, Luigi Longo made a gesture of recognition toward the movement by saying that it had a positive effect in politicising many young people, and that the PCI had to recognise the movement's right to take positions 'on the more general problems of the Italian revolution' (Amyot 1981, 175). Giorgio Amendola took the opposite view: that the PCI should fight on two fronts — against the government and the students. He felt that the students' general political position was opposed to that of the party. Considering the above-mentioned slogans, it would not have been difficult to come to that conclusion. Amendola described the movement as 'a re-edited version of irrationalism and infantile and anarchist extremism' (Lumley 1990, 74; Amyot 1981, 175-6). Amendola must have been aware that his proposals were unrealistic and impracticable. Aldo Moro, who was then supported only by a minority in the DC, made a more realistic appraisal and tried

to go beyond an instrumental understanding of the movement. In a speech in November 1968, he:

suggested that the revolt of the young was no mere anarchy, but represented a set of political demands which had to be answered by all Italian political parties, that it was a revolt against old ideas and an old system of power. 'The fact', he declared, 'that young people do not accept the society in which they live and challenge it is a sign of the great changes and of the painful travails which generate a new humanity' (Sassoon 1987, 117).

A peculiar phenomenon of the student revolts was that most of the students came from the middle classes. Parents and other older members of the middle classes were shocked and disgusted by their behaviour. The students sought links with the factory workers, many of whom, for a long time, had been engaged in class struggles with the owners of capital and the government. The theme of worker-student unity recurred throughout the development of the student movement (Lumley 1990, 109-10). Meade (1990, 17) is of the view that this student radicalism was not an historical accident. The stimulants included the Vietnam War; the Frankfurt school of philosophers; activism in the Third World; the Cultural Revolution in China; South American revolutionary movements; what Meade calls 'the myth of Che' and 'the myth of the working class'; and the student movements in Germany, France and the United States. Curcio told Sciajola (1995, 34) that the faculty of sociology at Trent had linked up directly with the University of Berkeley and, in tune with the Californian students, had mobilised themselves to occupy their own university.

From the Autumn of 1968 onwards

the Italian new left was born, a left that was not really new at all, but as old as the Russian revolution itself. Leninism, in one form or another, became the dominant model for nearly all the new groupings; the disagreements which had characterised fifty years of international Communism were now repeated on a miniature scale (Ginsborg 1990, 312).

Ginsborg (1990, 312) mentions the 'bewildering number of revolutionary groups that sprang up in these months'. Curcio, Petrelli, Piunti and Prette (1994, 27-30) list 123 separate organisations which, between 1969 and 1989, were identified or investigated

as being subversive or armed groups. Of these, there were 24 organisations which 'had given life to the armed phenomenon'. Many of the groups listed had broken away from others. There does not seem to be any evidence that Togliatti anticipated this form of revolutionary activity outside the party system, even though it was getting under way only a couple of years after his death. Indeed, it is doubtful whether he would have anticipated the events of the 'Hot Autumn' of 1969 when

an explosion of revolt took place, far more intense than anything in Britain or the USA, and far longer lasting than in France. Spontaneous protest developed against low wages, lack of trade union rights, and 'established forms of authority' (which now included the PCI). A wave of industrial militancy swept the country...culminating in a general strike in November 1969, called by all three trade union confederations (Shore 1990, 42).

There were 302 million hours of strikes in 1969 and 146 million in the following year (Sassoon 1987, 62). Ginsborg (1990, 317) says that in the autumn of 1969 nearly one and a half million workers were called out on strike at one time or other. The trade unions achieved results intended to ensure that increases in wages and other improved conditions obtained could not be easily reversed 'by the kind of counter-offensive of the industrialists which had been a hallmark of the 1960s' (Sassoon 1987, 67). The trade unions showed remarkable adaptability in conducting their campaign. Both the left-wing CGIL and the catholic CISL managed to win partial autonomy from the political parties. Communist CGIL leaders insisted on having freedom of action from the party in determining trade union responses to events in the factories (Ginsborg 1990, 317). The hot autumn showed, as later events related to terrorism would show, that the PCI had lost a substantial part of any hegemony it had held over workers in the factories.

The historic compromise

Luigi Longo took over as leader of the party after Togliatti's death. Ginsborg (1990, 293) asserts that 'it was generally recognised that he did so in a caretaker capacity', but this is hardly tenable as he was to occupy the position for seven to eight years. In fact, Longo and Berlinguer were seen to be joint leaders of the party. The left, led by Ingrao, and the right, led by Amendola and Napolitano, clashed more than previously.

Ingrao continued to criticise ‘the authoritarian and hierarchical nature of the PCI’s “democratic centralism” and called for greater intra-party democracy’ (Ginsborg 1990, 294). One of Longo’s chief policy interests had been to see the PCI, freed from Moscow’s domination, become a leader in a movement for co-operation between all communist parties in Europe. His policy could eventually lead to a phasing out of the dominance of the Soviet and American blocs. It was also a precursor to the concept of Eurocommunism.

Longo was succeeded as leader of the party by Enrico Berlinguer who was elected as Secretary at the Thirteenth Congress of the Party in March 1972. Ginsborg (1990, 354-5) gives a pen-picture of him as follows:

He was only fifty at the time, a Sardinian and aristocrat by background, a small shy man of transparent honesty and determination. He certainly did not lack ambition, and as secretary of the party was to wield nearly as much absolute power as Togliatti had done; but his position in the party was tempered by his aversion to any personality cult. While he took from Togliatti his dislike of rhetoric and the sobriety of his oratory, he lacked Togliatti’s aloofness and disdain, and this was to make him more loved by the Communist rank and file.

The central theme of Berlinguer’s leadership was his promotion of a strategy which he labelled the ‘historic compromise’. His explanation of the objective of and reasons for this concept were set out in a series of articles in *Rinascita* in September - October 1973 (Gruppi 1977, 7). Hellman (1988, 21) describes the ‘historic compromise’ as follows:

In simplest terms, it was a *long-term* strategy put forward by the Communists which argued that profound changes in Italian society would only be possible if serious political polarisation were avoided. And the only way to guarantee against such polarisation was a pact between the major political forces in the country, starting with the PCI and the DC although understood to include the PSI as well.

Hellman (1989, 22) also records that Berlinguer’s proposal, although described as a long-term strategy, was prompted by some of his more immediate concerns: the fact that Italy was in a state of crisis due to the unprecedented labour and social militancy

of the late 1960s and the early 1970s; the DC's shift to the right and the loss of parliamentary seats by the left in the 1972 elections; the gains of the MSI which had performed well in earlier local elections — particularly in the South; and political events in Chile where a democratically elected government had been overthrown by a military *coup* (Gruppi 1977, 266). Regarding the MSI's gains, Hellman (1989, 22) comments that:

For the first time in the post-war period, there was good reason to fear a reactionary movement with true mass support. And if anything is guaranteed to give a true Italian Communist nightmares, it is the specter (sic) of fascism resurgent.

Berlinguer had been arguing for a year that only the PCI's inclusion in the government coalition could set the country on the right track. In the 1970s, the party had put forward a series of proposals for a government of national unity, in which all constitutional forces would participate (Hellman 1988, 21). These proposals, of course, were 'more than an echo' of the successful proposals advanced under the leadership of the communists which had led to governments of unity under the successive leaderships of Badoglio, Bonomi, Parri and De Gasperi and eventually to the Constituent Assembly at the end of and after the war. In fact, those events, and the PCI's efforts in achieving them, could be likened to the objectives of the 'historic compromise'. While the name had not then been coined, elements of the concept had been advanced in different circumstances for a long time. Certainly Togliatti had spoken of the need for rapprochement between the PCI and the church and for the maintenance of democracy in Italy, many times. In an address to the Constituent Assembly on 25 March 1947, 'On relations between church and state', Togliatti had defended the church's central position in the country and asserted that any conflict with it would disturb the consciences of many citizens (Gruppi 1977, 131). In his report to the Ninth Congress of the PCI, in January-February 1960, Togliatti had drawn attention to the crisis that had beset the coalition of the DC, the liberals, the social democrats and the republicans. He claimed that they were not applying the constitution, and said that the PCI's objective should be to break the monopoly that

the DC had on Italian political life and to advance towards a ‘new majority’ among the masses and in parliament (Gruppi 1977, 207-8).¹

The events in Chile which troubled Berlinguer followed a situation in which a ‘popular front’, which had existed between the communists and the socialists for many years, formed a government with 47% of the votes in parliament. Salvador Allende the leader of the left — *Unidad Popular*— was elected President with the support of the Chilean Christian Democratic Party which, some time before the elections, had experienced a shift to the left. The votes held in parliament by Unidad Popular were sufficient to nationalise the copper mining industry, a move not supported by conservative elements. *Unidad Popular* had to commence government with a socialist platform, which included nationalisation of copper mines, in an environment in which there was an economic crisis inherited from the previous regime and the trend of inflation was frightening. There was a shift to the right in the leadership of the Christian Democratic party which then rejected any possibility of supporting Unidad Popular. The result was a military *coup d'état* (Gruppi 8-9).

Berlinguer recognised that there was no point in the PCI continuing in conflict with the DC. The DC could not govern in its own right; nor could the communists and socialists combined. In his *Rinascita* article (Gruppi, 266-86) he said that even if the PCI gained 51% of the vote it would not be able to govern — Togliatti had already said this. Berlinguer quoted Togliatti on the need for both social and political alliances. He was concerned that reactionary forces were seeking to create a climate of ‘exasperated tension’ and would react, as in Chile, to any electoral success of the Italian left. This would open the way to authoritarian government or to a permanent shift to the right. Amyot (1981, 203) comments that Berlinguer’s analysis of the Chilean coup and the lessons he drew from it bore a striking resemblance to Togliatti’s analysis of the fascist seizure of power in 1922’. From Berlinguer’s point of view, the solution for the PCI was to achieve the compromise by joining a coalition

¹ It is ironic that despite Togliatti’s continual push for a true democracy and alliances with all political parties, in the notorious *caso Vittorini* he was not receptive to the latter’s use of *Il Politecnico* to express the cultural views of a wide section of Italian society instead of using the publication to promote the works of communist intellectuals. (Lupetti, 1974, 16-51; N. Ajello, 1979, 113-137).

which included the DC. Although the PCI's 'historic compromise' strategy emerged in 1973 it was put on hold until later in the decade. This delay was the result of the favourable shift to in the country's electoral and political balance in the mid-1970s — the PCI jumped from 27 per cent in 1972 to 34 per cent of the vote in 1976 (Hellman 1988, 21).

When Berlinguer wrote his articles for *Rinascita* in September and October 1973, reflecting on events in Chile and how they should condition the PCI to achieve the historic compromise (Gruppi 1977, 266-86), he must have also been aware of the threats to the PCI from some of the extra-parliamentary activities discussed below but neither he nor the PCI could have foreseen some of the direct threats which were to be revealed throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

Political violence of the right and left

The 'Hot Autumn' triggered off very strong reaction from neo-fascist groups particularly NO — New Order — which was led by former members of the MSI including Giuseppe 'Pino' Rauti and Giorgio Freda. During the years leading up to 1969, the membership had built up to thousands (Weinberg and Eubank 1987, 35-36). As early as 1952, Rauti had told an MSI meeting in Rome that he did not believe in elections or parties or that parliament represented the nation. He then went on to outline a series of measures, 'including physical attacks on leftist organisations and the formation of closer ties with the armed forces, that would result in a rightist revival in Italy' (Weinberg and Eubank 1987, 35). In January 1990 he was elected Secretary of the MSI. Philip Willan (1991, 123), a freelance journalist, refers to Freda's book *The Disintegration of the System* in which he wrote:

The sickness represented by bourgeois society is incurable: no therapy is possible, not even a surgical operation would be effective; we must speed up the haemorrhage and bury the corpse.

Nothing new could be built, Freda wrote, as long as 'even the ruins were still standing'. He called for an alliance with the far left for an all out assault on the bourgeois state (Willan 1991, 123).

On 12 December 1969, a major bombing occurred which was to trigger off a reappraisal of terrorism in Italy. It occurred in the crowded lobby of the *Banca Nazionale dell'Agricoltura* in Milan's Piazza Fontana. Willan (1991, 122-3) reports seventeen people killed and 86 wounded. The police quickly arrested two anarchists, Giuseppe Pinelli and Pietro Valpreda. Pinelli was alleged to have committed suicide while under interrogation, by jumping from a window at Police Headquarters. Six years later, the courts ruled that he was innocent of any involvement in the crime (Ginsborg 1990, 333). Freda and another neo-fascist Giovanni Ventura were then arrested. Rauti was also a suspect but was acquitted from any involvement after an investigation lasting 51 months (Willan 1991, 123). Investigations led to the indictment of the neo-fascists, after which there was an extraordinarily complex legal process. A decade later, after Freda and Ventura had fled to South America and been extradited, Italy's highest appeals court annulled their convictions (Weinberg and Eubank 1987, 42). Bombings and other acts of neo-fascist violence were to continue through the 1970s, including one bombing outrage on 28 May 1974 during a demonstration in Piazza della Loggia in Brescia, and a bomb explosion on the 'Italicus' Rome-Munich express. Twenty people were killed and 194 injured in just these two incidents (Willan 1991, 134-5). There have been many enquiries into the background and behaviour of the neo-fascist terrorist groups, their suspected links with the MSI, the secret services, foreign agents and the notorious P2 Lodge, but this thesis is more concerned with the reactions of the PCI to them. Berlinguer saw the need for a 'compromise' with the DC as the only way of avoiding a resurgence of right-wing militancy, including fascism, which he recognised as being an immediate threat in Italy. Whether Togliatti had the same prescience or not, Giorgio Bocca (1981, 49-52) reflects that when Togliatti was Minister for Justice in 1946, he approved an amnesty which allowed the release of thousands of fascists from prison for reasons that have already been discussed. This release allowed Prime Minister De Gasperi to place experienced fascists in key positions in the bureaucracy. According to Bocca, while the number of fascists released could be measured in thousands, for each one of them, there were others who could be united to support the newly-formed neo-fascist MSI. This movement became a legal party which De Gasperi and others apparently thought would be controllable — and might at times support the DC.

As a consequence of Togliatti's and De Gasperi's actions, the neo-fascists were able not only to form a legitimate political party but to be active in the military, secret services and the *carabinieri*. Bocca further refers to a number of violent and terrorist fascist groups which gravitated towards the MSI and asserts that it was not difficult for them to recruit members from the ranks of young fascists, and from mercenaries and adventurers. Weinberg and Eubank (1987, 36) show that election results for student representatives at universities throughout the country, from the early 1950s to the mid-1960s, suggest a substantial proportion — ranging from 13.83 per cent to 17.24 per cent — were willing to vote for candidates of a youth organisation affiliated with the MSI. Right-wing violence continued in the 1970s and later and, taken together with the violence of the extra-parliamentary left, developed into a decade of terrorism which the established parties had not expected nor were able to control.

While people suspected and accused of right-wing violence could be linked to neo-fascism, it is important to recognise that the terrorist activities of extra-parliamentary armed revolutionary groups of the left in the 1970s had no formal connection with the PCI. While Togliatti had been aware of the potential threat of external conservative forces, he could not have foreseen that revolutionaries of the left would resort to action which many of them thought the PCI had failed to take years before. Berlinguer was very conscious of threats from the right but neither he nor the PCI leadership group had a strategy for countering violence of the left and dissociating the party from it in the public mind.

The total membership of the left-wing groups will probably never be known, as it is unlikely that those individuals who were not arrested for investigation will ever declare themselves. However, Curcio, *et al.*, (1994, 485, 487) list 4,087 people investigated between 1969 and 1989. Of these, 2463 were between the ages of twenty-one and thirty. Factory workers (654) and students (653) formed by far the largest occupational groupings. Between 1969 and 1989, 128 persons were killed by the armed groups of the left while 68 members of these groups were killed between 1969 and 1995. The larger numbers of the armed groups killed were: twelve from the

BR, Red Brigades; nine from NAP, *Nuclei Armati Proletari*; and seven from PL, *Prima Linea*.

The BR was the most active organisation and attracted the most attention. The term *Brigata rossa* was agreed on in September 1970 when the group was contemplating the burning of a vehicle in one of the factories. Renato Curcio associated the word *brigata* with the *partigiani* who took the hard decision to execute Mussolini and Clara Petacci. 'Rossa' was suggested by Margherita Cagol, who associated it with what she claimed was the first urban guerrilla action in Europe: the liberation of Andreas Baader by the *Frazione armata rossa*. At that stage they thought it inappropriate to include the word *armata* (Scialoja 1995, 3-5). The BR initially consisted of a small group, about a dozen, which had moved away from the Milan collective *Sinistra proletaria* (Scialoja 1995, 9). Curcio and Cagol had been part of Marxist-Leninist groups whereas Prospero Gallinari, Roberto Ognibene and Alberto Franceschini were militants from the PCI (Caselli and Della Porta, in Catanzaro 1991, 74; Bocca 1981, 7). Some authors put some significance on the fact that many of the BR and others of the revolutionary left were catholics. Bocca (1981, 7) identifies Curcio, Cagol, Maurizio Ferrari and Giorgio Semaria as practising catholics and figuratively refers to *cattocomunismo* as the father of red terrorism. La Palombara (1987, 177) also refers to Curcio as having been a militant catholic. Curcio himself told Scialoja (1995, 41) that his marriage with Cagol was conducted under mixed rites because he was not a catholic and could not identify himself with any religion. His cultural background was protestant.

Franceschini probably reflected the attitudes of many PCI dissidents. By 1968, he had concluded that Italian democracy and what he called its pseudo-democratic institutions were worthless and that the PCI was weak and dishonest.

The peaceful road to socialism truly existed, they [the PCI leaders] said. It was only necessary to accept the rules of the game and one day we would have won because we were the stronger and more determined. But if I had accepted this logic, I would have betrayed my grandfather and his ideals, together with my wish to live in a different world... Many of my comrades at the Youth Federation thought as I did: we did not listen to those in the Party who

advised us to remain calm because the moment for weapons had not arrived. It was necessary, they said, first to weaken the bourgeoisie with the parliamentary struggle and then to arm ourselves to conquer the victory. We considered these the speeches of well camouflaged opportunists or of ingenuous dreamers who had understood nothing of the path that the Party was pursuing (Franceschini 1988, 19).

Furthermore, Franceschini asserted that the PCI was aware that ex-members and current members were *brigatisti*.

The Communist Party knew well who we were. It knew that the majority of us came from its ranks and that some of us, with our party cards in our wallets, still frequented the party's local offices. It was informed but did not collaborate with police and *carabinieri*. It restricted itself to presenting a mysterious and turbid image of us in order to keep the people and the workers away from us. Probably it believed that the armed struggle, in an advanced capitalist country like ours, was madness, that it would never have any possibility of finding a mass following. It was enough to create a void around us and thus provoke our extinction from natural causes (Franceschini 1988, 80).

Curcio also confirmed with Scialoja (1995, 11) that at the early stage, the BR's operations were not clandestine.

...everybody knew us. And in the factory many, including PCI unionists and workers who belonged to other extra-parliamentary groups, knew who we were and also what we were doing.

Curcio expressed empathy with the PCI when he told Scialoja (80-81) of a meeting with Tony Negri of *Potere operaio*, one of several university professors involved with the revolutionary extreme left. The meeting was at the luxury villa of Negri's friend Carlo Saronio, a PA sympathiser who was later kidnapped by his own comrades and died of an excessive dose of narcotics, given to him. Negri was very critical of the BR with respect to the way it practised its clandestinity, but the major divergence between the BR and PA was over how they judged the PCI. Negri was severely critical of the PCI which, in his opinion, 'remained totally inserted in the dominant system of power'. Curcio said to Scialoja (1995, 81):

I and the BR comrades showed ourselves to be decidedly more elastic, not so much because of different ideologies or analyses, as

much as for practical motives: beside us in the factory were many workers still organised in unions and PCI sections. We were not able to allow ourselves to ill-treat Berlinguer's party (Scialoja 1995, 81).

Despite these practical motives, even since his days at Trent, to Curcio had seen revisionism as the principal enemy of Marxism-Leninism. It was not merely a tactical error of some revolutionary leaders, but a counter-revolutionary strategy of the bourgeoisie (Meade 1990, 7). One can conclude that the PCI's revisionist strategies — initiated and developed principally by Togliatti — would inevitably lead to a substantial, hostile reaction from people on the left of the party.

On 3 March 1972, the BR conducted its first kidnapping and public humiliation of an industrialist. The victim was Idalgo Macchiarini a director of Sit-Siemens (Bocca 1981, 41; Scialoja 1995, 69-75). Curcio told Scialoja that the proposal to kidnap Macchiarini was made by Mario Moretti, a Sit-Siemens technician, immediately on his joining the BR (Scialoja 1995, 69). Moretti was later to play a major part in the kidnapping of Aldo Moro.

Towards the end of 1973 the BR had about twenty members placed in Fiat and other factories, in groups of four or five. Curcio claimed that they had hundreds of sympathisers in the factories (Scialoja 1995, 81). There was a major occupation of the Mirafiore factory and an explosive situation was developing because the labor contracts for metal workers were due for renewal. The BR kidnapped Ettore Amerio, Personnel Director of Fiat, because he symbolised the 'bosses' recruitment spies and provocateurs in the factories. This event was a precursor to the future kidnapping of Aldo Moro. When Amerio was released unharmed, the BR issued a statement condemning the proposed 'historic compromise' which, to the BR, constituted the nadir of PCI revisionism (Scialoja 1995, 81-3; Meade 1990, 45-6; Bocca 1981, 45-6).

On 18 April 1974, the BR kidnapped Mario Sossi, a Genoese judge. Again, the procedure followed seemed to be a trial run for the Moro kidnapping. This time the BR demanded the release of eight political prisoners. Franceschini had told Sossi that he would execute him as a test of his ability to overcome personal humanitarian feelings out of devotion to the revolution (Meade 1990, 53). Sossi, on his release,

said that he had not been tortured or mistreated (Bocca 1981, 63). There was an aftermath to this event some two years later, when Chief Magistrate Francesco Coco, who had formally refused the release of the eight prisoners demanded by the BR, was killed with two of his police escorts (Bocca 1981, 66; Lumley 1990, 283; Scialoja 1995, 86-97)

Not long after the Sossi affair, Curcio, Franceschini, and other key members were arrested. They had naively told an undercover agent of their plans, one of which, according to Franceschini (1988, 103-112), was to kidnap Giulio Andreotti, influential DC leader and a former long-serving Prime Minister. Such an act would accomplish their objective of attacking the 'heart of the state' which, the BR asserted, was the DC. Curcio escaped from prison in February 1975 as a result of a daring raid organised by Cagol, but was recaptured and has remained in prison, although since 1993, he has been allowed leave daily to work at the publishers *Sensibili alle foglie*. Cagol was shot dead on 5 June 1975 in an encounter with *carabinieri* (Bocca 1987, 82-6). Curcio claimed that the autopsy showed that she was seated with her arms raised when she was shot (Scialoja 1995, 121).

The Moro affair and its aftermath

Aldo Moro, President of the National Council of Christian Democrats and five times Prime Minister, was a major proponent within the DC of the 'historic compromise'. In the election of 20 May 1976, the DC obtained 38.7 per cent of the vote but the PCI increased its vote to 34.4 per cent largely at the expense of the PSI (Ginsborg 1990, 375). The PCI's success did not please the US. There was reciprocal animosity between Moro and US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger (Sofri 1991, 208), particularly as the latter was opposed to the 'historic compromise' (Drake 1995, 75). Also he did not like the rapport that Moro was building with the Arabs (Willan 1991, 219-20). On 9 March 1978, Italian President Giovanni Leone said to Moro, 'I am ready now to leave the Quirinale as I am sure you will be my replacement' (Martinelli and Padellaro, 1979, 7). Everybody knew that Moro was expected to be the next President, including the BR.

The facts about the kidnapping and murder of Moro are well known. The BR kidnapped him in Rome on 17 March 1978, killing five of his escorts. In the course of his 55 days of imprisonment, Moro wrote various letters, some asking the government to negotiate with the BR for his release. The BR called for the liberation of thirteen political prisoners. They issued nine communiqués and a resolution from their strategic centre. On 9 May 1978, Moro's body was found in *via Caetani* in Rome, mid way between PCI and DC headquarters (Curcio *et al* 1994, 52).² There were many conspiracy theories, which the courts and an investigating commission found unproved although the commission's majority report pointed out

how hard it was to believe that the police genuinely made so many mistakes in their fifty-five day manhunt. Still in question... are the real motives of the government's *fermezza* policy and the integrity of its efforts to find him alive (Drake, 1995, 250).

The leading protagonist in the kidnapping was Mario Moretti who confirmed Drake's (1995, 249) conclusion that:

The destruction of the Christian-Democratic run state was their goal from the beginning, and they [the BR] never varied from it.

Moretti's attitude to the PCI was ambivalent. He told Mosca and Rossanda (1994, 171):

We knew the PCI comrades, the line they were following, their delusions. And they knew us. They knew us and they did not denounce us. They talked to us, we talked. Maybe they were not in agreement, they were up to all sorts of mischief, but they were comrades, they were not the state and they never would have been...

Moretti (Mosca and Rossanda 1994, 172) said, regarding the rank and file of the PCI, that 'Their historic enemy was the DC, not the BR. Not us'. He said that the regime was able to consolidate itself because the PCI had changed camps. There was nobody from the left in the regime. It was a fact that in those years 'we found ourselves [the BR] to be the only opposition. There was none other' (Mosca and Rossanda 1994, 177). Moretti said that when the PCI supported the Government's policy of *fermezza* — not giving in to the BR's demands — 'it hit us like a sledgehammer. At least it had

² An account of the kidnapping and imprisonment of Moro is in Bocca (1981, 129-150).

that effect on me' (Mosca and Rossanda, 145-6). He believed that the PCI rank and file had different views to those of the leadership. Moretti said that Moro was also

surprised at first, then incredulous, disconcerted and irritated. But he was always very lucid. He was convinced that this setback would be overcome only if the DC moved first. He began his political battle with his own party' (Mosca and Rossanda 1994, 146).

Moro had said that

He thought that the DC was paralysed by someone or something. That something had intervened; as if it had drugged it. He hinted continually of a foreign intervention, nothing precise; he spoke of a sphere of NATO from which there could have been an interference. He said that the Germans were leading the way in repressing phenomena similar to ours. And then he was convinced that the DC was being blackmailed by the PCI which was holding it in its fist because at that time it was weak: there was a need for a widening of social consensus, he said that we [the DC] were able to guarantee it only after going through an accord with the PCI. It had to be held until the election of the President of the Republic, then one would see. (Mosca and Rossanda 1994, 147-148).

Although many of the BR were arrested not long after Moro's death, acts of terrorism continued well into the 1980s. The Moro affair demonstrated the absence of any central body that could or would co-ordinate action to rescue him. Conversely, one could say, there was no heart of the Italian state for the BR to attack. According to BR testimony, terrorism of the left had the sympathy and might well have had the active support of many rank and file PCI members. This was a situation which Togliatti's strategy could not have envisaged. The major political parties were completely unprepared for the extra-parliamentary activity after 1968 and were more than dilatory in finding a defence against it. They were content to indulge in rationalisations which were locked into the ideological sets that they had developed from their antagonisms in the distant past. The DC's ideological set could well have identified the PCI with the BR and encompassed the view that the activities of the BR were the product of '...the well known propensity for coercion and terror in communist systems' (Moss 1989, 133). According to Moss

In the Italian context left-wing violence as the inevitable secretion of Marxism represented the exact counterpart of right-wing violence as the ineluctable accompaniment of Fascism. That conceptualisation of political violence in terms of ‘opposed extremisms’ suited the DC well. It underlined the party’s claim to centrality in a polity portrayed as equally threatened by the degenerate products of both Left and Right, thus extending accountability to their legal political opponents in the PCI and the MSI. Doubts about the democratic reliability of the PCI in particular could be reinforced (Moss 1989, 133).

Regarding the PCI’s ideological set and the perspective on political violence that the PCI might have had at the beginning of the 1970s, Moss (1989, 133) suggests that this perspective might have included the proposition that

Because clandestine attacks on individuals were foreign to the open, mass and impersonal emphases in the theory and practice of the Left’s tradition of violence, the BR could only be right-wing provocateurs, assisted by the security services and tolerated by the Christian Democrat governments... Clandestine violence was thus part of a ‘single strategy of tension’, inaugurated in 1969, designed to halt the working class advances in the Hot Autumn and to add Italy to the then growing number of South European dictatorships.

Conspiracy theories abounded and still do. Some members of the PCI leadership might have seen the BR as ‘right-wing provocateurs’. But many of the rank and file would have seen the BR as having contributed to some of the working class advances that followed the ‘hot autumn’. Unless Curcio, Moretti and Franceschini were cunning right-wing provocateurs, knowing parties to a right-wing conspiracy, who were prepared to spend large parts of their lives in gaol rather than reveal the conspiracy, their testimonies and the results of four trials and two parliamentary investigations confirm their Marxist-Leninist ideals and left-wing revolutionary intentions. The only concern expressed by Curcio about any attempt to control the BR related to strained relations, in prison, between the BR and *Autonomia*, particularly so between Franceschini and Negri, when ‘the *brigatisti* suspected some leader of *Autonomia* of having underhandedly attempted to assume political control of the BR at the time of the Moro affair’ (Scialoja 1995, 190).

The Moro affair and reactions to it brought into focus a miasma of rumours, suspicions accusations and charges relating to sinister and subversive events of at least the previous decade. LaPalombara (1987, 177, referring in part to Silj, 1979) asserted that:

The deeper truth is that Italian terrorism shook the democratic state at its foundations precisely because membership in terrorist organisations and open or tacit support for the terrorist groups, at least up to the Moro affair, was widespread.

Ruscoe (1982, 162) claims that while the major political parties were promoting national solidarity, the popular response to the kidnapping of Moro was less unanimous than the PCI might have wanted to believe.

While sympathy was rare for the Red Brigades, it cannot truly be said that the drama of the moment was entirely without a sense of 'just deserts' for many Italians who now witnessed panic and fear on the faces of those who had misruled their country for decades, had presumed virtually to own it, and had suddenly found that their personal safety was no more guaranteed than that of the ordinary citizen, so long left unprotected and the prey of racketeers, corrupt officials, thugs and the Mafia.

Ruscoe's view emphasises the poor regard that Italians had for government. The BR's intention was to strike at the heart of the state. They saw Moro, a former prime minister and the current president of the DC — and very much in the public eye because of his advocacy within his party of the 'historic compromise' — as being symbolic of that heart. But the fact that there was no response to the BR's demands demonstrated that there was no heart of the state to attack. Ruscoe (1987, 162-3) deplored the impotence of the police and the *carabinieri*, the lack of central direction offered by the government, the failure to call Parliament to debate the matter and the lack of response to Moro's appeal to the DC National Council.

Even the Head of State was unable to rise to the occasion, and a 'foreign potentate', Paul VI, had to step in to fill the vacuum of authority, issuing an impassioned plea for the release of his old friend directly addressed to 'the men of the Red Brigades'.

According to Willan (1991, 224), the search for Moro involved a massive mobilisation of the security services, with 72,000 road blocks, 37,000 dwellings searched and

almost 6.5 million people questioned. The author and Radical Party Deputy Leonardo Sciascia, who wrote a minority report (1983) for the parliamentary commission established to enquire into the kidnapping of Moro; and a book on the subject (1987), was highly critical of the way in which the police and the *carabinieri* conducted the search for Moro and his captors. In his minority report Sciascia (1983, 403) wrote: ‘One had the impression then...that they wanted to impress public opinion with the quantity and visibility of the operations, totally regardless of the quality’. Sciascia later said to Willan (1991, 224-5): ‘How did they manage not to find Moro?’

Widespread incredulity about the background to the Moro affair was not unjustified. It had been preceded by a number of suspicious events which seemed to have been linked to extreme right-wing attempts to counter gains made by the PCI in Italian politics. There was a continuing suspicion that these attempts involved the Italian secret services and even the CIA. Willan’s theme (1991, 12) is that Italian terrorism had been manipulated. He asserts that the Italian secret services played a crucial role in both the rise and fall of terrorism, and notes that although the Italian intelligence service has frequently undergone changes in identity, it has also frequently been accused of collusion with terrorism. Bocca (1981, 111-14) claimed that right-wing terrorism was state terrorism assisted by the military, the secret services and the police. Tarrow (1989, 322) supports this, referring to widespread suspicions that the Piazza Fontana massacre was the result of a plot involving the extreme right and the secret services. These suspicions prompted a series of demonstrations organised by the PCI, the moderate parties and the unions. The demonstrations revived memories of the anti-fascist Resistance. Veterans of the Resistance, christian democrats, liberal democrats and members of small lay parties marched alongside communists and socialists, extra-parliamentary leftists, workers and students, in a common cause.

Lumley (1990, 2) writes of regressive developments after 1968, and refers to ‘the formation of a clandestine Italy bent on the destruction of the country’s democratic institutions — what Giorgio Galli (1983) had called *L’Italia sotterranea*. Extreme right-wing activities to counter the influence of the PCI had been surfacing since the

beginning of the 1960s. There was ‘operation Solo’, a so-called ‘counter-insurgency’ plan of 1962, which included precautionary measures against a possible future uprising from the left. The operation was led by General Giovanni De Lorenzo, a former head of SIFAR — military intelligence — and later head of the *carabinieri*, who involved officials from both organisations. While De Lorenzo was head of SIFAR, that body collected detailed dossiers on the political inclinations, business activities and private affairs of over 150,000 members of parliament, political party officials, union leaders and members of the clergy including prelates, bishops and priests of the various dioceses. It is claimed that copies of the dossiers were routinely deposited at CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia (Meade 1990, 35; Ginsborg 1990, 276-9; Bocca 1982, 158-60; Willan 1991, 35-6).

Although Operation Solo never produced any coup, there was an attempted *coup d'état* later, on 7-8 December 1970, by Prince Junio Valerio Borghese, a World War II naval commander who, in 1968, had founded the right-wing National Front — a mass anti-communist organisation. According to Willan (1991, 91), secret service reports indicated that the Front had advocated a *coup d'état* to overthrow the government. In the ‘*coup d'état*’, Borghese, with a very few ex-military people, succeeded in occupying the Ministry for the Interior for a few hours, and then withdrew. Four generals including Vito Miceli, head of SID — the Defence Information service — were later charged with involvement. All were acquitted some eight years later (Ginsborg 334-5; Zavoli 1992, 129-30; Moss 1989, 201). According to Ginsborg (1990, 349), Miceli was involved in another clandestine organisation known as the ‘Weathervane’ which was co-ordinating acts of terrorism as a prelude to a right-wing *coup*. A magistrate, Giovanni Tamburino, discovered that Weathervane had members in both the Italian secret services and the armed forces, and appeared to be linked to a supra-national secret service organisation established by NATO.

From the 1950s onward, there existed a network which NATO called ‘Stay Behind’ and Italians called ‘Gladio’, the stated purpose of which was to provide resistance to any Soviet invasion of Europe which it was expected would come through Italy. There were strong suspicions and reports that it was a network to stop the Italian

communist party from coming to power (Willan 1991, 148). Gladio's existence was not admitted to by the Italian government until 1990 (Guzzanti 1991, 153; Willan 1991, 146). Prime Minister Andreotti said that Gladio ceased to exist in 1972. Ferraresi (quoted in Hellman and Pasquino 1992, 39-48) underscores the fact that for 40 years the Italian Parliament was kept 'in the dark' about Gladio and that it was difficult to defend its legality. On 18 November 1990, over 200,000 people participated in a demonstration organised by the PCI in Rome, to protest against Gladio and the secrets still surrounding the organisation (Leonardi and Anderlini 1992, xxix). In a parliamentary hearing on 21 November 1990, General Serravalle revealed that the goals of Gladio were to prevent the PCI from gaining power.

Extra-parliamentary threats to the PCI, as has been shown, were not only from the right. A potent threat came from left-wing intellectuals, including university academics, some of whom were associated with organisations practising violence. They included Antonio Negri, Adriano Sofri, Sergio Bologna and Raniero Panzieri whose perspective was based on the premise that socialist revolution was necessary in Italy as elsewhere. They wanted to complete the unfulfilled revolutionary objectives of the Resistance and liberate the working class from capitalist exploitation. They rejected the bureaucratic nature of Stalinism and the state terrorism it connoted, reformism, which represented capitulation to the capitalist system, and peaceful co-existence with imperialism (Weinberg and Eubank 1987, 54).

Antonio Negri who was:

considered by many to be the intellectual nerve centre of the most extreme leftist terrorist groups, was himself a university professor who in the classroom openly condoned political violence (LaPalombara 1987, 73).

Negri (1989, 151) wrote of the revolutionary process as an 'expression of hegemony...the identification of an antagonistic relationship...destiny'. He also wrote:

...until this moment, the revolutionary process was aimed at the restoration of the given, i.e. at the restoration of what had already been constructed — which repression and restructuration had tried

to hide; now the revolutionary process reassumes the characteristics of transformative violence.

When Negri was arrested in April 1979, other academics from Padua University were arrested with him. Professor Enrico Fenzi of the University of Genoa was identified as head of the BR column in that city, while Professor Giovanni Senzani of the University of Florence was identified as the head of the BR's Naples column (Weinberg and Eubank 1987, 71). Negri's election as a member of parliament while awaiting trial on charges that he was the 'brains' behind the BR demonstrated an extraordinary quirk of Italian politics and democracy. When it appeared that his parliamentary immunity would be lifted, he fled to Paris. 'Negri is, in writing, a sworn enemy of the Italian state' (LaPalombara 1987, 20-1).

Conclusion

The late 1960s and early 1970s produced situations which Togliatti would not have envisaged and which severely tested the PCI's ability to implement the strategy he had done so much to foster. Student and worker unrest and right-wing and left-wing violence showed that the party's hegemony over the working classes, particularly factory workers, was not as strong as it had expected. Indeed, some PCI members' sympathy for left-wing extra-parliamentary activity showed some antipathy for the party's accepted strategy. Nevertheless, after many years out of government, the Berlinguer-led party seemed to be taking a 'let's do it now' approach by proposing the 'historic compromise'. The proposal was, of course, due to self interest prompted by the party's gains in membership following the 'hot autumn', the DC's difficulties in governing effectively, the threat of an MSI-led mass movement and the events in Chile. Despite threats from the extreme right seeking *coup d'état*, Operation Solo and the anti-communist designed Gladio, the PCI membership was still strong and the party was still seeking government by a process of compromise, adaptation and the seeking of alliances.