

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **The PDS's inheritance**

Previous chapters show how the PCI developed and survived and how the party failed to implement the strategy carefully prepared, nurtured, and protected under Togliatti's leadership. This chapter sets out how, under Berlinguer's leadership, positive efforts to implement an expression of the strategy, the historic compromise, also failed. The failure was acknowledged by the 'transformation' of the PCI to the PDS, a new party whose organisation and objectives reflected the transformation which had occurred in Italian society by the 1980s, a transformation which Togliatti could not have envisaged.

The chapter notes the increasing decline in the PCI's ability to maintain continuity in implementing its long-term strategy after 1978. It recognises the overall changes in international and Italian society which resulted in the inevitable need for a restructuring of the Italian political system; and it notes that the apparent metamorphosis of the PCI into a non-communist party could well have been more of a symbiosis — the living together of a party having a new name and constitution, with some of the remains of a party which had been unable to implement its former strategy.

The years 1976 and 1978 were critical years for the PCI: 1976 because in that year the party reached the apex of its electoral success and became a participant with the DC and the PSI in what was to be called 'the government of national solidarity'; and 1978 because, together with all the other Italian political institutions the party was unable to deal with the 'Moro affair' or its consequences; or show any leadership in meeting the challenge to the state of urban terrorism, in particular that of the BR. In retrospect, both years accentuated the decline in the party's fortunes and effectiveness which could have been observed since 1968, when the extra-parliamentary movements of students, workers and revolutionaries gathered momentum.

### **The decline of the strategy and the demise of the historic compromise**

The PCI's peak performance in the 1976 elections gave the impression that there had been a change in the party's fortunes in the previous few years. The party had won 34.4 per cent of the vote, whereas the DC vote had very marginally declined. At the local level, there were communist administrations all over the country. While the

DC's support tended to come from older members of the electorate, the PCI seemed to attract younger people (Weinberg 1995, 46). The PCI's prospects appeared to be very good, so much so that the anti-communist American John Connally organised a private committee to defend freedom in the Mediterranean. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger issued warnings against

the dangers inherent in Berlinguer's "historic compromise" proposal and the PCI's participation in the governing coalition (Weinberg 1995, 46-7).

Weinberg (1995, 47) records that party membership, after years of stagnation, had risen to 1,814,262 by 1976 and that

The party's commitment to reform within the context of democratic pluralism and its reputation for honesty won it a new generation of younger, better educated members beyond its normal sources of recruitment. Italian intellectuals — academics, artists, writers, musicians, film producers — seemed drawn to the party in increasing numbers and increasingly visible ways. The achievement of "hegemony" in Italy's social and cultural life did not seem to be all that unlikely.

The younger cadres in 1976 had a different outlook on the party's strategy and the historic compromise. While radical students had joined the extra-parliamentary groups, others had remained in the party and were convinced adherents of the *via italiana*. Following the creation of the regional governments of 1970 and the conquest of so many municipal governments in 1975, the PCI was able to retain younger members by offering more employment possibilities (Amyot 1981, 209).

The large drop in electoral support for the PCI in the following elections in 1979 — from 34.4 per cent to 30.4 percent; and then further drops to 29.9 per cent in 1983 and to 26.6 percent in 1987 (*Il Messaggero* 5 April 1992) — suggest that the 1976 result, which represented the apex of the party's electoral performance, was a 'one off' gain due to the conjunction of unforeseen circumstances favourable to the PCI; or that its appeal to the national electorate had been approaching a plateau for several years. The sudden dip after 1976 was most probably due to the disillusionment of party members and the public following the party's application of the historic compromise; that is, its decision to support or not oppose the DC's programs whereas

in opposition it would be expected to do so. Regarding the increase in younger members of the party, there were probably several factors contributing to an increased level of participation in politics in the 1970s, but an important factor was the high level of unemployment among young members of the community immediately prior to 1976. In the spring of 1975 around 62 per cent, or 775,000, of the unemployed workers in Italy were less than 25 years old. Of these, 620,000 had never had a job (Mandel 1979, 131).

Looking at the party's post-1976 decline in broad terms: by 1988, only 2.1 per cent of PCI members were under 25 and in the same year 23 per cent of the membership were pensioners (Weinberg 1995, 47-8). Weinberg (1995, 47) draws attention to the fact that, at the 1987 elections, the PCI's share of the vote — 26.6 per cent — was approximately the same as in 1968 — 26.9 per cent — almost twenty years earlier; and, in 1968, the party counted 1,502,862 members but in 1989 only 1,421,239.

The historic compromise — in the sense of a coalition government between the DC, PSI and other parties — never eventuated. There was a compromise in the form of a government, after the 1976 elections, in which the DC filled all the ministerial posts. The government had the support in parliament of the PCI, the PSI, the PRI and the PSDI. Its creation was instigated by an appeal by Giulio Andreotti to the PCI for its support, to ensure the survival of his government. This arrangement, which lasted from 1976 until 1979, became known as the government of national unity (Sassoon 1981, 228; Chiaromonte 1986, 201-2, 289-94). In many instances, support for the *monocolore* DC government meant abstaining from voting by the other parties. 'The government of national unity was seen as a stepping stone towards a fully-fledged participation of the communists in government' (Sassoon 1981, 228). But this was not to be.

Berlinguer had pursued the historic compromise for years with sincerity and rational argument and had gained the support of much of his party and the acceptance of some members of the DC for the proposal. If it had materialised as intended it would have been the second historic compromise; the first being Togliatti's in the immediate post-war governments. In each case, Togliatti and Berlinguer did what the situation demanded. They took advantage of the situation to advance the position of their

party. In Togliatti's case, the PCI was able to continue a leading role — for a time — among parties with which it had had alliances during the Resistance. Then, despite having to go into opposition under the pressure of massive opposing forces, the party had a clear strategy to follow. In Berlinguer's case, the party had had some 30 years in which, though in opposition, it had the long term expectation of achieving its socialist goals. Participating in a government of national unity was not really enough. There was also the difficulty of appreciating what policies and programmes it would introduce should it gain government. Was participation in government with parties whose policies and practices had been opposed for 30 years — so that the opposition comprised only neo-fascists and other extremist parties — the best that the PCI could hope for? One of the effects of the PCI's participation was that within three years it had lost some of the support and goodwill that it had accumulated in the preceding five years. Its policy of compromise was seen as a policy of subordination. Another effect was that the explosion of left-wing violence forced it to defend the state. As a result it was seen as also defending the degenerations, bigotry and corruption that had developed in the Italian state since the war (Sassoon 1981, 228).

In a sense the masterpiece of the DC was that it was able to let the PCI emerge as the stoutest defender of law and order and the principal responsible for and guarantor of the government of national unity. The DC stood apart as if it were not the actual government party, as if it had not 'occupied' the State, as if it had not been the constructor of the clientele system. The DC was able, thanks to its leading light, Aldo Moro, to prepare for itself a strategy which would allow for the incorporation of the PCI in the DC system (Sassoon 1981, 228).

For some members of the DC, in particular Aldo Moro, the alliance between the DC and the PCI was inevitable. The PCI wanted an alliance with the DC so that it could transform that party into a progressive force. However, the DC also sought its own historic compromise by which it wanted to bring the PCI's supporters under a political hegemony which the DC would control (Sassoon 1981).

In joining the government of national unity, while in reality accepting a non-governmental role, Berlinguer and the PCI must have expected to have the opportunity of promoting social reforms in exchange for their support and in some cases may well have achieved this, although Amyot (1981, 219) says that Andreotti

had included, independently, numerous reform proposals in his programme without negotiating them with the abstaining parties. In return for the PCI's support, apart from it being recognised as a legitimate democratic party, Pietro Ingrao was given the speakership of the Chamber of Deputies and the party received the chairmanships of several parliamentary committees (Amyot 1981, 219).

But the PCI seemed to have placed unwarranted faith in the DC, the public service and the nature of Italian politics at the time. In the economic crisis of, the party perceived that it was in the national interest to increase investment, in turn increasing exports, and to lower production costs, meaning wages. There was a need for sacrifices to be negotiated. 'Their object would be to reinvigorate the economy, bring about a recovery, and increase employment. This was the socio-economic counterpart of the historic compromise' (Sassoon 1996, 589). In January 1977, Berlinguer made two separate speeches on the theme of 'austerity'. 'The PCI...could not simply stand by while the system collapsed around it. Austerity should not mean an economic policy which was supposed to shore up the existing regime. Austerity meant rigour, efficiency and social justice' (Sassoon 1996, 589). He elevated his argument in favour of attending to Italy's economic crisis by saying that:

economic development based on a constant and artificial expansion of consumption...was in direct conflict with the needs and exigencies of the Third World. Sacrifices were necessary and acceptable, as long as they were directed against the waste, injustice, privilege and the excesses of private consumption (Sassoon 1996, 589-90).

At this point, Berlinguer was branching out into a completely new line in relation to the long-term strategy. His suggestion that there should be some sort of solidarity pact between the better off — including the better off workers — and those who had been particularly affected by the crisis, provoked an outcry (Sassoon 1981, 590). The administration of such a proposal, particularly in the short term, would have been a disaster, considering the inefficiency of the public service at the time. It is doubtful, given that so many new members had recently joined the party, that the line he was taking had been discussed and approved by the rank and file. Despite the extended representations of Pietro Ingrao and others for more democratic dissemination of

information and contribution to the party's decision-making processes, the long-term top-down decision-making system, a product of 'democratic centralism', still prevailed. Nevertheless, Gerardo Chiaromonte, one of the communist leaders closely involved in the decision to implement the historic compromise, records that at a meeting on 3 September 1976 of the PCI Central Committee's Commission for Economic and Social Affairs, the basis of the austerity proposal, particularly in terms of 'restrictions' and 'sacrifices' to get out of the crisis, was discussed. Giorgio Napolitano confirmed that the

objective in depth was to initiate new politics of development that guaranteed the structural reinforcement and renewal of the Italian economy, aimed at resolving the great national and social questions of the *Mezzogiorno* and of employment, creating the conditions of a new, more elevated way of life and the living together of society... (Chiaromonte, 1986, 202)

There were, of course, widespread negative reactions within and outside the party to the historic compromise. Some argued that Berlinguer should have capitalised on the protests in civil society and used the years after 1976 to build an effective opposition and an alternative to the DC (Ginsborg 1990, 376-7).

Probably, the course taken by the PCI was the better of two bad options. If the party had taken the course referred to by Ginsborg it would have done so in a climate not favourable to communist leadership in Italy. The events in Chile had to be kept in mind, suggesting the possibility that a dominance of the left in government might cause some of the bourgeoisie to be attracted to a fascist style of leadership. There was also the opposition from the Carter administration to communist participation in the Italian government. There is the possibility that, to some observers the course proposed by the PCI could show a certain naiveté, in that the party in opposition could be seen to be indicating that, because it did not like that role after three decades, it should be permitted to join a government having a greatly different political complexion, leaving, virtually, no opposition.

In January 1979, Berlinguer announced that the PCI would be leaving the majority arrangement (Chiaromonte 1986, 289) and committed the PCI to a democratic alternative, that is, to providing an effective opposition. Hellman (quoted in Gundle

and Parker 1996, 79) emphasises that the crucial turning point in the post-1968 evolution of the PCI was in the period 1976-79. He concludes that the historic compromise:

was the last gasp of the Togliattian vision of a system organised in and by mass parties, which exhaust the 'space' of civil society. When it was abandoned, little more than *partito nuovo* reflexes remained.

Sassoon (1996, 590) makes an observation which is worthy of comment:

Rereading Berlinguer's speeches, nearly twenty years later, I wonder whether this diffident Sardinian *haut bourgeois*, whose integrity was doubted only by those who had none, was hopelessly out of touch with the vulgar and coarse society around him, or whether he was simply too much in advance of his age.

It is doubtful whether Berlinguer was out of touch with the society around him. He had been a member of the party for some 20 years before becoming leader and had frequented the corridors of power, sometimes close to Togliatti and certainly close to Longo. As for being too much in advance of his age, he tried to implement the strategy of the historic compromise because of the circumstances referred to above. It did result in the 'last gasp of the Togliattian vision' but the vision was moving towards that gasp anyway. Whatever economic sense Berlinguer's austerity proposals might have made, they were bad politics.

It is interesting to consider the assessment of the historic compromise made by Terracini, who had been at Togliatti's and Gramsci's side at the beginning and therefore had a long perspective. During the period of the government of national unity, Terracini, in interview with Arturo Gismondi (1978, 176-9), expressed doubts about the course that the PCI had taken. First, he insisted that the compromise did not resolve the question of class in Italian society. There was the bourgeoisie that always held power against which the PCI had struggled. In a democracy the classes were clearly defined and the party that represented the bourgeoisie was the DC. The historic compromise, if it was to be what had been intended, must dilute the characteristics of the classes and social forces, as well as political forces in conflict, to make the travelling of a common road possible. Terracini pointed out that the DC which participated in the CLNs was not then the party of large-scale bourgeois

capitalism that it had become. In fact, it had become the expression of large-scale capitalism and also of thousands of parasitic encrustations which it had created around the government system. Terracini felt that in that period of acute economic crisis, there were social interests and political forces so opposed that inevitably solutions would require one of the parties to pay a price. The higher price until then, had been paid by the working class, the working masses, and the parties that represented them, for example, the communist party.

Terracini's second reason for dissent was that it was very dangerous in a state organised democratically, for conflicts and contradictions of a social character to be transferred into the heart of the state and its institutions. The suffocation of opposition for a long time, would open the way for protest, crossing institutional limits and creating uneasiness, disorder and illegality of the sort which had occurred in recent times. If this happened, it might, paradoxically, recreate for the democratic regime those dangers that the strategy of the historic compromise had wanted to avoid.

Terracini shared Ingrao's concern for the young who had educational qualifications but were unable to take part in the productive process: there would be social uneasiness, young people would be marginalised and would then tend to crystallise their attitudes against society, in their behaviour, or by expressing negative politics and ideology. Many young people felt, rightly or wrongly, that they were not able to express themselves within the traditional parties. This situation could create a great disturbance and dangers for Italian democracy.

Terracini told Gismondi (1978, 180-2) that he did not know what the political evolution of his party would be. He knew that perplexity about the historic compromise would increase rather than decrease. For his part, he thought that the country, at that time of crisis, needed all its strengths and resources and therefore unity among the parties was necessary. He regarded the period of crisis as necessarily brief like the dramatic period of war and reconstruction. The historic compromise therefore should cover a limited period in the life of the country. It should not be a long term strategy. He said that one should not delude oneself that immobilising

social reality was worth the explosion of uncontrollable phenomena that were flourishing in Italian society.

### **More adaptation and looser ties with Moscow**

The PCI's involvement in the government of national unity resulted not only in dissension in its membership but also in a substantial loss in the 1979 elections, when its share of the vote dropped from 34.4 per cent to 30.4 per cent. More significantly, the gap between its share of the vote and the DC's increased from 4.3 per cent to 7.9 per cent. The PSI made a slight gain.

In the 1980s the prospects for the PCI of achieving a democratic alternative to the DC- led political system worsened. Indicators of the party's decline were: falling membership, a decreasing share of the national vote, lack of success with its alliance strategy and an uncertain ideological basis. Since the 1960s the PCI had defended its own *via italiana* while being careful to combine its criticisms of Soviet centralism with professions of solidarity with the CPSU. In the mid-1970s the PCI showed interest in developing Eurocommunism among the European parties but party spokesmen never admitted to this aim (Barth Urban 1986, 267). Eurocommunism was a concept rather than a reality. Its main proponents were the Italian, French and Spanish communist parties. Its theory was that socialism in Western Europe could only overcome monopoly capitalism by democratic means. It was an expression of the western communist parties' break from the influence of the Soviet Union or any form of international communism. It was denounced by the Soviet Union and shunned by the British Labour party (Urban 1978, 7-31).

By its normalising relations with the post-Mao Chinese leadership in April 1980 the PCI shifted from its support for autonomy and pluralism to outright disengagement from the Moscow-aligned communist movement. The most serious rift between the PCI and Moscow developed following the revolt in the Lenin Shipyard at Gdansk, Poland, which resulted in the introduction of martial law. Berlinguer argued that the countries of the Soviet bloc had exhausted 'the propulsive force of the October revolution' (Gilbert 1995, 67). The Berlinguer group 'debunked the CPSU's contemporary revolutionary credentials and denied the vanguard role of the

international Communist movement as such in the world march toward socialism' (Barth Urban 1986, 261). The tensions caused by the rift between Moscow and the PCI continued through 1982-3 and threatened to split the party. The pro-Soviet wing was defeated on the issue at the 1983 PCI Congress. The leadership was then free to proceed with its interpretation of the Italian road to socialism and Berlinguer's new concepts: 'the transformation of Italy', 'the third way' and the 'new internationalism' (Shore 1990, 45).

Giorgio Bocca (1982, 250-251), commenting on the situation in Italy in the spring of 1982, and particularly on the PCI's move away from the influence of Moscow noted, prophetically, that

The real change, the Republic's only hope, was the historic change of direction of the communist party: the PCI's decision to break with the USSR and, after the coup d'état in Poland, starting to become a Western socialist party. Perhaps because of this *svolta* the First Republic was really dead...new institutions, new parties were needed.

In the 1983 national elections the PCI's share of the vote dropped again. On 11 June 1984 Berlinguer died of a cerebral haemorrhage. Only a few days later, the PCI received an extraordinary 34.4 percent of the vote in the European elections, making it the largest single party in the European Parliament. However, as Shore (1990, 47) notes: 'this success — which many attributed to a sympathy vote for Berlinguer — represented little more than a momentary blip in an otherwise steady electoral fall'. Alessandro Natta succeeded Berlinguer and at the party's Seventeenth Congress presented a 'new' image of the PCI as part of the 'European left' and referred to the possibility of a coalition government with other left-wing reformist forces. The image was not exactly new, as Eurocommunism had been previously advocated and soon abandoned, while the coalition proposal had been part of an ongoing strategy for decades. In this regard, the PCI had burnt its bridges, as over a long period it had failed to treat the PSI as an equal partner and, even in its negotiations with the DC, had behaved as though the PSI had subordinate status. The PSI leader, Bettino Craxi, 'consistently refused to enter a left-wing government coalition — which the PSI feared, perhaps correctly, would be dominated by the communists' (Shore 1990, 48). According to Gilbert (1995, 68), Natta's ambiguous stance of flirting, like Berlinguer,

between the PSI and the DC, caused the party to lose credibility in the eyes of the electorate, especially the young, and resulted in electoral setbacks.

The PCI did badly in the 1985 regional elections, was embarrassingly defeated in the referendum on wage fixing, and suffered a major defeat in the 1987 national elections, obtaining only 26.6 per cent of the vote, almost the same percentage it had achieved twenty years previously. By contrast, the DC slightly improved its position compared to 1983, although it was well down on its 1979 vote, whereas the PSI jumped to 14.3 per cent, which compared very favourably with its 1983 vote of 11.4 per cent and the 9.6 per cent it had achieved in both 1972 and 1976 (*Il Messaggero*, 5 April 1992,). As Gilbert (1995, 68) points out, the PCI's results in the 1987 elections, in numerical terms, were not devastating — it retained over 25 per cent in the Senate — but they were psychologically damaging. According to Piero Ignazi (1992, 60) the PCI's defeat in the 1987 elections was the 'decisive element in beginning the transformation of the PCI'.

The PCI's situation in the 1980s was not helped by the attitude of Bettino Craxi, the PSI leader who led the socialists back into power. He paid lip service to the future unity of the left, and in the process of maximising his party's advantage, was in competition, inside the government coalition, with the DC. He set about underscoring the PCI's obsolescence and irrelevance. This put the PCI in a dilemma as its strategy in the 1980s required good relations with the PSI (Hellman in Gundle and Parker 1996, 79-80).

### **The new era in Italian politics**

Because of the 1987 national election results, further disaster at the local elections in May 1988 and ill health, Natta resigned the leadership of the PCI on 13 June 1988. Achille Occhetto was confirmed as the new leader at the Eighteenth Congress on 13 June 1988 (Shore 1990, 48); 'after a tense internal debate among the party's grandees' (Gilbert 1995, 68). He was elected in the party's first secret ballot by 235 votes to 2, with 6 abstentions (Gilbert 1995, 71). Membership figures in Shore (1990, 48) indicate an important element of the nature of the party when Occhetto took charge. While electoral support at that time had fallen to 1968 levels, there had

been a great turnover in the membership of the party '375,000 new members — 25.8 per cent of its total membership — joining the party since 1980, and 143,000 — 9.5 per cent — since 1986'. Many of the young delegates to the 1989 Congress were

politicised at school or university; became politically active over major issues such as abortion, divorce, nuclear power and the environment — in all of which there have been national referenda — and finally joined the PCI as a logical continuation of these single-issue campaigns (Shore 1990, 48).

Despite the fall off in total membership, thanks to the extensive recruitment enjoyed in the 1970s and 1980s, Occhetto was able to lead a membership and cadre of leaders who were not products of old schemes and mores, and who were thus prepared to break with the past (Hellman in Gundle and Parker 1996, 82). Occhetto began a campaign called the 'new course' to radically change the party. The watchword was 'discontinuity'. He brought forward 'young colonels' — members of a new generation of PCI leaders such as Walter 'Speedy' Veltroni, Massimo De Angelis, Livia Turco, Fabio Mussi and Massimo D'Alema, all in their mid-thirties.

A fairly quick result of Occhetto's coming to the leadership was a substantial downgrading of Togliatti's image. At the party's Eighteenth Congress there were important changes in three crucial areas: party discipline, its communist identity and the composition of the party leadership. Democratic centralism was abolished, although factions remained outlawed. There was an explosion of amendments and motions criticising the leadership. The party described itself as a 'non ideological' movement and removed all references to Marx, Lenin and Togliatti from the new party statute (Gilbert 1995, 71).

Three weeks after becoming secretary, Occhetto delivered an important speech at the unveiling of a bust of Togliatti at Civitavecchia. Weinberg (1995, 54-55) asserts that he did this 'as a matter of symbolism, if nothing else'.

After praising the late PCI leader for his willingness to pursue a new direction for the party after 1956, Occhetto went on to say that Togliatti would inevitably have to bear some responsibility for Stalinism, given the important role he had played in the Third International.

While criticising Togliatti, and by implication Togliatti's heritage, on that occasion, Weinberg (1995, 55) records that Occhetto later delivered another speech in which he said that the PCI should follow the examples set by Willy Brandt and Olaf Palme, neither of whom had been leaders of the communist movement.

There was, of course, much criticism of Occhetto. Pietro Ingrao, who had been the PCI's custodian of Marxist principles and the leader of the left faction, wished Occhetto well at the Eighteenth Congress but the Stalinist Armando Cossutta and his followers were preparing opposition to him. Following the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, Occhetto announced suddenly a complete break with the past, suggesting that the party change its name and symbol. The party was to be 'a democratic party, a socialist, popular party of progress' (Sabetti and Catanzaro 1991, xxviii, xxvix). This caused massive upheaval in the party. After fierce debate the Central Committee resolved to call a special party Congress to decide the future of the party. Although factions had been banned, three developed: one representing the pro-Soviet left led by Cossutta; one led by Ingrao and Natta seeking retention of the party's communist identity; and the other, led by Occhetto, seeking to found

a new democratic, popular and reforming political movement that is open to progressive elements from both the lay and catholic communities. It should be able to interpret new questions being raised in the world of work, and of culture, as well as by youth movements, environmentalists, women's groups and pacifists and proponents of non violent resistance (Gilbert 1995, 72, 75).

Excluding 'environmentalists' and putting less emphasis on 'women's groups' and perhaps 'pacifists', Occhetto's concepts are reminiscent of some of Togliatti's and Longo's, not to mention Vittorini's *Il politecnico*.

Ingrao strongly opposed the proposals for change (Sabetti and Catanzaro 1991, xxviii, xxvix). At the Nineteenth Congress and for the remainder of the year the party was rift by the debate over its future. On 10 October 1990, Occhetto introduced the proposed name — Democratic Party of the Left, PDS, and its emblem, to the press. The Twentieth and last Congress of the PCI, on 3 February 1991, voted overwhelmingly in favour — 807 for, 75 against and 49 abstentions — of the transformation to the new party (Weinberg 1995 82;). The non adherents immediately

constituted themselves as the Communist Refoundation, RC (Hellman and Pasquino 1992, viii).

The RC officially became a party in May 1991 and was joined by the Proletarian democratic Party, DP, in June. By the end of the year RC was claiming 150,000 members. In January 1992 Cossutta was elected President and Sergio Garavini Secretary. It attracted the remnants of other New Left organisations like DP, *Lotta continua* and also former PCI supporters who had dropped out in disgust. 'It remained, however, the party of the stubborn: those who believed that the PCI should not cease to be Communist' (McCarthy in Pasquino and McCarthy 1993, 44-45).

McCarthy (in Pasquino and McCarthy 1993, 45) sums up the very poor performance of the PDS in the 1992 elections:

...the PDS won 16.1 per cent — 17 per cent in the senate — down by 10.5 per cent from the PCI vote in 1987... If one adds the PDS-RC vote and compares it with the PCI-DP vote of 1987 and the regional elections of 1990, the decline is still sharp: 21.7 per cent compared with 28.3 per cent and 23.7 per cent. The fall slowed after 1990 but was not reversed.

McCarthy (in Pasquino and McCarthy 1993, 46) also notes the relatively sound performance of RC:

which won 5.6 per cent nationally and 6.5 per cent in the senate. Obviously its vote was linked with the previous strength of the PCI: it won only 2 per cent in Palermo and 3.8 per cent in Bari, but it soared to 7.3 per cent in Turin. Here RC benefitted [sic] from the strong working class component in the Communist rank and file, while elsewhere it took advantage of the rebellious strand within the PCI.

However, the combined vote for the PDS and the RC was less than the PCI's in 1987. After the 1992 elections, 'Occhetto's leadership was still vacillating, while the factions continued to press for their flawed policies' (McCarthy in Pasquino and McCarthy 1993, 47). The right wanted to enter government but that was hardly likely as the PSI was reeling from daily accounts of bribe-taking in Milan. The left wanted to remain in opposition but with no clear objectives.

Despite its defeat in the 1992 elections, the PDS was the only established party to remain intact after the DC and the PSI collapsed under the weight of corruption scandals. It had 800,000 members, but its strength was declining (Bull in Gundle and Parker 1996, 160). On the formation of the Ciampi government in 1993, the PDS participated in government by holding three ministries even though there were members, including D'Alema who had reservations about joining a government led by a leader of the 'establishment'. This participation was shortlived when, one day after the birth of the new government, parliament refused to lift Craxi's immunity as requested by magistrates. Occhetto withdrew from the government, causing some further dissension in the PDS. Yet the party did not form an opposition; it merely abstained on the Ciampi government and the PDS was left in disarray (Bull, in Gundle and Parker 1996, 161). Occhetto began to seek alliances with other parties and despite having presented the PDS as a bastion of protection against the *Lega Nord*, early in 1993 flirted with that party. This threw the PDS into turmoil and caused Pietro Ingrao to resign (Bull, in Gundle and Parker 1996, 162).

Occhetto brought together the Progressive Alliance comprising the PDS, the PSI, *Rinascita Socialista* — a breakaway group from the PSI — the *Rete*, the Greens, the Social-Christians — a breakaway group from the old DC — the Democratic Alliance AD and the RC (Bull in Gundle and Parker 1996, 167). The Progressives failed at the 1994 elections principally because the PDS had failed to exploit the collapse in the DC's and the PSI's vote, and because of the nature and strength of *Forza Italia's* victory (Bull in Gundle and Parker 1996, 168).

The right-wing coalition government led by media magnate Silvio Berlusconi, formed after those elections did not hold together for long. Following questioning of Berlusconi by the magistrates and Umberto Bossi's decision that the League should break with the government, and facing three no-confidence motions, Berlusconi was forced to resign in December 1994 Bull (in Gundle and Parker 1996, 170). The PDS was unable to propose a political alternative. Pressure had already been put on Occhetto to resign, particularly by D'Alema. Occhetto resigned following the European elections in June 1994 when the PDS vote dropped to 19.5 per cent and

after a contest with Walter Veltroni, Massimo D'Alema became leader (Bull in Gundle and Parker 1996, 170).

For the 1996 elections, the PDS formed a centre-left coalition, the *Ulivo*, with other left wing forces and the Popular Party (PPI), one of the DC's descendants, and the movement led by Umberto Dini who had gained prominence as Prime Minister in a government of technocrats in 1995. Their major opponent was the centre-right coalition *Polo delle libertà* comprising *Forza Italia*, other minor parties and the neo-fascist AN. The League ran alone. The *Ulivo* won with the PDS gaining the major vote over all parties: 21.1 per cent compared with *Forza Italia's* 20.6 per cent, and then became the major party of the government, which however, depends on RC support as it does not have an absolute majority.

## **Conclusion**

The Moro affair confirmed the great gap between the attitudes of rank and file PCI members and supporters and that of the leadership who supported the DC's *fermezza* policy, the subject of great criticism and suspicion within the electorate. Although the PSI claimed to have wanted to negotiate with the BR, it did not. Therefore, temporarily, on the Moro question, the PCI was aligned in a sort of government of national solidarity with the DC and the PSI. The tacit support given by many of the left-wing to the BR continued a trend which had been developing since 1968 and confirmed that the PCI was continuing to lose its hegemony over many areas of the working class.

Togliatti's influence over the PCI, backed by his close association with the International and Moscow, had made his leadership unchallenged. He had been defeated by the Central Executive in 1956 but his leadership had never been in doubt. Berlinguer's leadership was heavily based on personal charisma and his ability to attract the party by maintaining its Togliatti-derived strategy. The achievement of the party by reaching the peak of its electoral 'parabola' was aided by Berlinguer's widespread national appeal. His entry into the government of national unity was an attempt to follow the Togliattian line — and practice — but the end result did the party more harm than good. After his death the party's electoral fortunes continued

to slide. Occhetto was faced with the problem of completely changing the face of the PCI, aided by an influx of new and young members brought up under social and economic conditions completely different to those of the ‘hardliners’; but at the same time having to deal with the intransigence of the older members. He formally abolished ‘democratic centralism’ but continued to practise it even to the extent that he alone announced important decisions before telling the membership. The term *svolta* applied fairly to both Togliatti’s and Berlinguer’s innovations and certainly Occhetto’s contribution in pushing the party through its transformation was also a major *svolta* but the term ‘vacillation’ could often be applied to him. Occhetto’s transformation of the party was helped by the fact that it was frustrated by being in opposition close to four decades. His failure in the 1994 elections by selecting the wrong alliances — even though he must be given credit for the idea behind them — meant that he had to go. The selection of better alliances and the League’s split from the centre-right coalition, brought the PDS into government with nine out of twenty ministerial posts. There are still many people of communist background in the PDS and the *Ulivo* government is supported in parliament by RC. It is a development based on the strategy of adaptation and alliances which originated in 1935. Who can say that it is a party transformed rather than a collection of memberships with ideas adapted from different eras?

In an interview with *Panorama* (9 May 1996, 31) Massimo D’Alema said:

The politics of the PDS has always followed two inter-twined directions: to construct the centre-left and to converse with the right on reforms, avoiding a reciprocal demonisation. I have always done so and I will also do so.

One could interpret this statement partly as an echo of the Togliattian strategy of compromise, adaptation and the seeking of alliances.

## **CONCLUSION**

The PCI's strategy for the attainment of government was unsuccessful because of contrary forces applied by: the DC in its own right and in centre-left governments, the church, the USA, heavy influence on the party by Moscow at least until 1956, the entrenchment of consumerism in Italian society following the so-called 'economic miracle', and eventually, prolonged inertia in the management of the party due to the over-bureaucratic and authoritarian style of Togliatti's leadership.

The PCI's strategy to attain government did not succeed but the party established itself as the second largest party in Italy in the post-war period, repeatedly holding more than 25 per cent of the national vote in the 28 years before its transformation into the PDS in 1991. The party's survival and acceptance as a major force in Italian politics must be attributed largely to Togliatti's leadership in the period from Gramsci's imprisonment in 1926 until his own death in 1964. His extraordinary management skills, his contribution to the leadership of the Comintern, his ruthless determination to follow the Moscow line in order to assure his party's survival and his ability to withstand challenges to his leadership in the face of so many changing conditions, stamp him as one of the great leaders of the left in the Twentieth Century.

The strategy which Togliatti enunciated in 1944 would never have evolved but for the existence of the young group of *turinese* who started to express their political views in *L'Ordine nuovo*. Nor would it have evolved if that group, led by Antonio Gramsci, had not gained the leadership of the party and, at its Lyons Conference in 1926, approved theses prepared by Gramsci and Togliatti in which germs of the strategy can be detected. The strategy was a major part of the party's program, certainly an alternative to revolutionary action. The party had to be unified and to survive against a background of policy changes in Moscow as Stalin consolidated his power there. Togliatti largely achieved this unity but at the expense of expelling experienced and talented party members, including foundation members, because their views were not in accordance with Moscow's, and therefore Togliatti's, at particular times. Despite some dissent from Togliatti's claims to leadership and significant disagreement with his position, his views prevailed and, with support from Moscow, he took a firm hold of the leadership during the Resistance and the post-war years.

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's strategy, there were some who wanted to revert to the pre-war revolutionary model. Then there were those who thought that the process of implementing the strategy should be speeded up. The party's support for the DC's economic policies bore a stamp of conciliation, adaptation and compromise, but those policies encouraged monopoly capitalism and consumerism. There was dissension in the party concerning its lack of action to combat the influence of monopoly capitalism as well as attacks, supported by newer members, on the over-bureaucratisation of the leadership and its rigid views on the long-standing policy of democratic centralism. The party had strong electoral support at the local level and increased its national vote gradually, but strains within the party remained. Expulsions of members who diverged from the prevailing party line continued. There were continuing attacks on Togliatti's style of leadership, calls for more consultation with the rank and file, and there was underlying dissatisfaction with Togliatti's role as a member of the Comintern. His apparent support for some of Stalin's crimes was the subject of ongoing criticism.

While the two great ideologies, communism and catholicism, formally remained in conflict it must be conceded that the PCI's electoral results demonstrate that it had substantial success in winning catholics to its cause. As for the Southern question, the PCI's success was mixed and certainly not overwhelming. Its strategy of including the agricultural workers as well as the southern middle classes in the mass party failed, because it attempted to apply a strategy developed in the North to the South where vastly different social and economic conditions existed.

The late 1960s and early 1970s produced situations which Togliatti would not have envisaged and severely tested the PCI's ability to implement the strategy which he had done so much to foster. There were strains in Italian society due to increasing modernisation and pressures on the university system. 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. Some PCI members' sympathy for left-wing extra-parliamentary activity showed antipathy to 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 ineffective government, the threat of an MSI-led mass movement and the coup in Chile. Also, the PCI's failure to form a coalition of the left with the PSI forced it to seek participation in government with the DC. There were threats to the party from extreme right political groups seeking a *coup d'état*, Operation Solo and the anti-communist designed Gladio. There were threats from the revolutionary parties of the left, including the BR who saw the PCI as part of the state system which they wanted to destroy. However, the shift to the left which occurred in the 1970s benefited the PCI, as its share of the vote in national elections increased and its membership was restored to the level it had reached twenty years before. The party was still seeking government by a process of compromise, adaptation and the forming of alliances.

The Moro affair confirmed the great gap between the attitudes of rank and file PCI members and supporters and those of the leadership who supported the DC's *fermezza* policy. On the Moro question, the PCI was temporarily aligned with the DC and the PSI. The tacit support given by many of the left-wing to the BR continued a trend which had been developing since 1968 and confirmed that the PCI was continuing to lose its hegemony over many areas of the working class.

Berlinguer's leadership was strongly assisted by his personal charisma, his widespread national appeal and his ability to maintain Togliatti's strategy. His entry into the government of national unity was an attempt to follow the Togliattian line — and practice — but the end result did the party more harm than good. After his death the party's electoral fortunes continued to slide. Occhetto was faced with the problem of completely changing the face of the PCI, aided by an influx of new and young members brought up under social and economic conditions completely different to

those of the ‘hardliners’; but at the same time having to deal with the intransigence of some of the older members. He formally abolished democratic centralism but continued to practice it even to the extent that he alone announced important decisions before telling the membership. Occhetto’s contribution in pushing the party through its transformation was a major *svolta* but the term ‘vacillation’ was often applied to him. The transformation was helped by the fact that the party was frustrated by being in opposition for nearly four decades. His failure in the 1994 elections through selecting the wrong alliances — even though he must be given credit for the idea behind them — meant that he had to go. It was the D’Alema-led party’s selection of better alliances and the trend against the *Polo* coalition, that brought the PDS into government.

The historic compromise was the last gasp of the Togliattian strategy. When that strategy failed, the PCI lacked *raison d’être*. As the party entered a period when the Soviet empire was showing signs of crumbling, the party needed a strategy which would compensate for the distaste for communism being expressed by the Soviet satellites and ultimately by the USSR itself. In a supreme act of adaptation the party formally shed its communist past and, as the PDS, offered new leadership to the Italian left. While the PCI’s strategy failed with the historic compromise, the PDS succeeded by adapting itself to the political, economic and social circumstances of the 1990s, achieving a compromise with a party comprising former members of the DC, and alliances with a carefully selected group of other parties. Whatever its future, the PDS cannot escape the fact that it evolved from the PCI. The relevance of the PCI as a communist party linked to the deficiencies of international communism and the Soviet Union, diminished rapidly. Nevertheless, even as it declined it still attracted substantial electoral support and membership. Its platform was based on its establishment as one of the two major political parties in Italy. The leading protagonist in the creation of that platform, from which the PDS was launched, was Palmiro Togliatti.

**Table 1 National election results (Chamber of Deputies) for the PCd'I, PSI and PPI: 1921**

	<b>PCd'I (votes)</b>	<b>PSI (votes)</b>	<b>PPI (a) (votes)</b>
	291,952	1,569,559	1,347,000

(a) *Partito popolare*, founded in 1919, ceased to exist in 1926. Precursor to the DC.  
Sources: Chabod 1963, 35; Ginsborg 1990, 48; Spriano 1978, Vol. 1, 129.

**Table 2 National election results (Chamber of Deputies) for the PCI, PSI and DC 1948-92.**

<b>Year</b>	<b>PCI (%)</b>	<b>PSI (%)</b>	<b>DC (%)</b>
1948	31.0 (a)		48.5
1953	22.6	12.7	40.1
1958	22.7	14.2	42.4
1963	25.3	13.8	38.3
1968	26.9	14.5	39.1
1972	27.1	9.6	38.7
1976	34.4	9.6	38.7
1979	30.4	9.8	38.3
1983	29.9	11.4	32.9
1987	26.6	14.3	34.3
1989 (b)	28.6	14.9	32.6
1992	16.1 (c)	13.6	29.7
	5.6 (d)		

(a) In 1948, the PC and PSI campaigned jointly as the Popular Democratic Front (FDP). (b) European elections. (c) PDS. (d) RC.

Sources: Ginsborg 1990, 442; Flores and Gallerano 1992, Appendix, Table 1.

**Table 3**      **National membership of the PCI/PDS (at year end), 1921 and 1944-91**

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<b>Year</b>	
1921	42,956
1944	501,960
1946	2,068,272
1948	2,115,232
1958	1,818,606
1968	1,502,862
1976	1,814, 263
1981	1,695,085
1988	1,450,156
1989	1,412,722
1990	1,319,905
1991	1,000,000 est.

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*Sources:*      Secchia 1977, 34-7; Spriano 1978 Vol. 1, 178; Lazar 1992, 398; Hellman 1992, 126.

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