

CHAPTER ONE

The PCI's formative years: the genesis of a strategy

This chapter's relevance to the thesis is that it discusses the early background to the development of the Italian Communist Party's strategy for achieving the support of the Italian people and participation in government. In order to appreciate Palmiro Togliatti's development of the strategy intended for the party to progress to government by a process of compromise, adaptation and the seeking of alliances, it is useful to examine some of the early events and decisions from which the party's changes of direction were made.

The chapter discusses Togliatti and some of the Turinese comrades who were to bring the party's long-term strategy into being, the birth of the Italian Communist Party and Antonio Gramsci's and Togliatti's path to its leadership. The chapter also reviews some of the conflicts involved in sorting out the party leadership; Togliatti's relations with his comrades, the party's relationships with Moscow and Togliatti's role in them. The review recognises that the party's survival was a prerequisite to maintaining its strategy, notes how Togliatti survived, sometimes at the cost of expelling valuable and talented comrades, and how he gained ascendancy to leadership in the pre-Second World War period.

Togliatti and his Turinese comrades

Togliatti played the major role in shaping the policies of the PCI in the post - Second World War period (Sassoon 1981, 5). This section examines some aspects of his move into this role and the development of his leadership skills during the early fascist period.

Some comments on Togliatti during his more mature years indicated that his personality was not prepossessing. According to Giorgio Bocca (1977a, Vol. 1, 1), Togliatti

...è ricordato come uomo freddo, scostante, che portava occhiali da professore, parlava con voce nasale, un intellettuale avaro nei sentimenti, un politico scaltro che conosceva la langue russe, cinico.

Elizabeth Wiskeman (1971, 6) described him as cool, even cold, with the air of an exceedingly orthodox Cardinal;

his faith too, seemed to have something in common with that of a catholic prelate, and he seemed intensely aware of Catholic values in Italy. One would guess that he attached no importance to personal liberty except perhaps his own. He made the impression of an astute, even subtle politician who wanted his own game to succeed; he did not appear to feel much sympathy for suffering; he was not particularly eloquent.

Paolo Spriano (1978 Vol. 1, 317) quotes a fascist police informer who described Togliatti, among other things, as ‘...*il più furbo dei comunisti italiani*’.

However, there were other views. Ragonieri (1976, 4) reports one of Togliatti’s teachers as describing him as ‘a serious young man, diligent and intelligent, composed and very attentive’ and notes that his fellow students thought him to be a jolly fellow. Mario Spallone (1976, 25-6), Togliatti’s physician and long-term friend, emphasises his early impression of Togliatti’s humanistic qualities.

Togliatti was born in Genoa on 26 March 1893. Although his adolescence was spent in a state of ‘dignified poverty’ (Agosti 1996, 3), his lower middle-class family encouraged his education. He excelled at school, eventually gaining a bursary to study at the University of Turin. He was an exceptionally diligent student and his extraordinary academic record should not be overlooked. After completing his degree in jurisprudence, under Luigi Einaudi — Agosti (1996, 9) speculates that Togliatti probably inclined towards liberalism in this period — he commenced studies in literature, philosophy, Greek, palaeography, psychiatry, ecclesiastical law and finance. He was also attracted to extra-curricular courses in German romantic drama and poetry and was exposed to both liberalism and idealism. The extent to which he studied Marxism then is not clear although Rodolfo Mondolfo held a course on Marxism at Turin in the year when Togliatti commenced his studies (Ragonieri 1976, 4).

Agosti (1996, 7) draws attention to the fact that in the period when Togliatti was at university there was an atmosphere of fervent interest in Italian nationalism among students but Togliatti showed no active interest in this. He seemed to be an interested spectator rather than a protagonist. Nevertheless, although he did not appear to show any revolutionary characteristics he must have had some leanings towards the left. He must have been aware of his father's interest in the Socialist Party (PSI) which had been founded in 1892. Also, he could hardly have escaped the influence of his intimate friend Antonio Gramsci, who was a member of the youth section of that party, during his university years. Togliatti joined the PSI himself in 1914 — the year before he completed his university studies (Agosti 1996, 12). It is pertinent to note the intellectual discipline developed by Togliatti in his formative years and his apparent capacity to detach himself from matters of public interest, so as to appreciate comparison to be made later in this chapter and in Chapter Two between Togliatti's and Antonio Gramsci's respective contributions to theory and practice.

At least until completion of his university studies, Togliatti was very family orientated, being particularly close to his sister Maria Cristina, both as a brother and a scholar.¹ His family was catholic in a traditional sense. In an interview with *Noi donne* in 1964, Togliatti was to say

...il clima familiare in cui vivevo non era bigotto, anche se molto religioso. Per abitudine si andava a messa tutte le domeniche, ma non sentii mai il problema religioso con troppa intensità (Bocca 1977a, Vol. 1, 5).

The fact that Togliatti, through his family life, knew the Catholic Church well provides some explanation of his long term confidence in his political life, that a rapprochement between his party and the Church would be facilitated by his and other communists' catholic background and hence their understanding of the Church. This will be discussed in Chapter Three.

¹ Togliatti had two brothers, Eugenio (born 1890), Enrico (born 1900) and a sister, Maria Cristina (born 1892). On his attachment to his family, see particularly, Agosti 1996, 1-7; Bocca 1977a, 3-10; Ragionieri 1976, 4-6.

Togliatti first met Gramsci at the entrance examinations for the University of Turin (Agosti 1996, 11)² and developed a friendship with him. Gramsci was more mature politically. They had a common interest in problems of Sardinia. Gramsci, also from a lower middle-class family, was born in Ales in January 1891 (Spriano 1978 Vol. 1, 14). He did not enjoy good health, a factor which probably contributed to his not graduating and which was to be to his disadvantage, later, while in prison. Gramsci had a close friendship with another student, Angelo Tasca who had been a founder of the Socialist Youth movement in Turin in 1907. Tasca was born at Moretta in 1892 and graduated in Letters at Turin (Spriano 1978 Vol.1, 48). He was heavily committed to the trade-union movement and was later to oppose Gramsci's concept of the factory councils. Umberto Terracini, born in Genoa in 1895, and a graduate in Law from Turin, joined the Socialist Youth movement in 1911 and became secretary of its Piedmontese federation in 1916 (Spriano 1978 Vol. 1, 48). Terracini was to say later that he had no memory of Togliatti in his university years, but he remembered his post-university interventionist attitude and that he had joined the Red Cross (Gismondi 1978, 6-8). These four young men became the nucleus of a very active and quite large group of avant-garde members of the PSI who became known as the Turinese group and were to be involved in the split within that party and the formation of the communist party.

During the First World War, the PSI had already experienced a split on the question whether Italy should intervene in the war. Togliatti and Gramsci, as interventionists, were then in conflict with PSI philosophy (Bocca 1977a, Vol. 1, 19-24). Their stand was shared by none other than their future enemy, Benito Mussolini, whom they and other young Turinese then greatly admired. Togliatti demonstrated his position by joining both the army and the Red Cross. He passed exams to become an officer but became ill and was invalided out (Bocca 1977a Vol. 1, 25-6; Agosti 1996 13-14). He became regularly involved in socialist activities and saw Gramsci and other of his university friends more frequently. At Gramsci's invitation he participated in the production of the Piedmontese edition of *Avanti*, the PSI newspaper, which had commenced distribution in December 1918. At *Avanti* he met the editor, Alfonso

² It is interesting to note in Agosti (1996, 6), that Togliatti gained second place in the

Leonetti. Leonetti, born in 1895 in poor circumstances in Puglia, became one of the left's outstanding journalists. He was particularly friendly and loyal to Gramsci but regarded Togliatti as an opportunist (Leonetti 1978, 7-8).

On 1 May 1919, Gramsci, Terracini, Tasca and Togliatti, with the help of a young factory worker, Mario Montagnana, founded *L'Ordine nuovo* which was to become a vehicle for new ideas expressed by many Turinese who became known as *ordinovisti* (Agosti 1996, 17). This journal is important in the history of the Italian labour movement for two reasons:

first, because the men associated with *L'Ordine nuovo* became in time the directing nucleus of the Italian Communist Party; and second, because the newspaper was a vehicle for Gramsci's campaign to organise Italian soviets (*consigli di fabbrica*), and the soviet was a crucial issue in the postwar period (Cammett 1967, 71-2).

Tasca played a major role in administering and obtaining finance for the new publication. Togliatti once described Tasca as 'a useful idiot' (Bocca 1977a, Vol. 1, 35). Ignazio Silone (1968, 87) later claimed that Togliatti detested and was jealous of Tasca.

The birth of the Italian Communist Party

The seizure of power by the Bolsheviks in Russia in October 1917 stimulated conflicts between factions in the Italian socialist movement, which triggered a long process of antagonism between party members. On 18 November 1917, a clandestine meeting of about twenty members of the PSI met in Florence to discuss a line of action. Among those present were Gramsci and Amadeo Bordiga from Naples. Bordiga was born at Resina in June 1889. He was a graduate in engineering, had an imposing personality and generally was highly regarded, although Gramsci described him as being '...inflexible and tenacious to the point of absurdity'. Bordiga expressed a position close to Lenin and had founded *Il Soviet* in Naples (Spriano 1978 Vol.1, 11-12). The Florence meeting was part of a prelude to a movement to

form a breakaway party from the PSI. Many PSI members were in a revolutionary mood but Gramsci and Bordiga agreed to defer consideration of revolutionary action until after the war.

In the aftermath of the war there was a social situation and political vacuum in Italy which created conditions for revolutionary change. The country had been badly treated by its allies after a war in which its casualties were exceptionally high — over half a million killed, 600,000 captured and a million wounded, of whom 450,000 were permanently disabled (Blinkhorn 1984, 9). Even by 1919 Italy had become a country submerged in disappointment, disenchanted with its wartime leaders, disrupted by strikes and inflation and affected by the attitudes of thousands of ex-servicemen unable to adjust to peacetime (Procacci 1973, 408-9). By 1920 there was great social tension, with strikes and factory occupations, increasing peasant demands for redistribution of land, and growth in the strength of the fascist para-military *squadristi* groups which organised punitive expeditions against working-class organisations (Shore 1990, 29-30).

The PCd'I³ was formed following debate at the Seventeenth Congress of the PSI at Livorno from 13 to 21 January 1921. The breakaway group left the Congress and transferred to the Teatro San Marco where the new Party was formally constituted. It adopted all of the 21 Terms of Admission to the Communist International formulated by Lenin and laid down by the Comintern's Second Congress in 1920. Cris Shore emphasises that the PCd'I modelled itself on the Russian Bolshevik Party and 'was created directly in response to Lenin's challenge to the socialist movement, and to the enormous prestige of Bolshevism — as both a strategy and model of organisation' (Shore 1990, 146). Members of the new party had been, in fact, calling themselves 'communists elect' in 1920 (Ragionieri 1976, 53).

The PCd'I arose from the influence of three basic ideological currents. First, there were the 'abstentionists' led by Bordiga, who was elected as the first Secretary-

³ The party was called the Partito Comunista d'Italia (PCd'I), that is, the Italian section of the Communist International, until 1943 when it became the Partito Comunista Italiano (PCI) when the Communist International was dissolved (Shore 1990, 29).

General of the new party. Second, there was the group formed around *L'Ordine nuovo* in Turin, led by Gramsci, Terracini, Togliatti and Tasca — this group was not then widely known outside Turin — and third, the largest group, known as the ‘maximalists of the left’ led by Egidio Gennari, who was the leader of the PSI at the beginning of the Livorno Congress (Secchia 1977, 31). Despite the revolutionary mood that prevailed during the lead up to the Livorno Congress there were also some who felt that, among other things, the PSI had deviated from its classic revolutionary role, a role which would need to be strengthened by the new communist party. Also Leonetti (1978, 71-2) felt that:

Il Partito socialista italiano era diventato in un certo senso il partito dei ricchi, il partito degli arrivati, dei funzionari, dei capi parlamentari.

The PCd'I elected a Central Committee of fifteen members based on the numerical strength of each of the above-mentioned groups: five for the first, including Bordiga and Ruggero Grieco; two for the second, Gramsci and Terracini; and eight for the third including Gennari, Luigi Repossi and Bruno Fortichiari. Giuseppe Berti, Secretary of the Federation of Socialist Youth, was co-opted to the Central Committee as a consultant. The Executive Committee of five, effectively the party leadership, included Bordiga (Secretary), Grieco (Propaganda), Terracini (Organisation), Repossi (Unions) and Fortichiari (Illegal activities). A Central Committee of Communist Youth was established with ten members including, among others, Berti, Edoardo D'Onofrio, Luigi Longo and Ignazio Silone. Later, Mario Montagnana was co-opted (Secchia 1977, 31-2; Spriano 1978 Vol. 1, 116-17; Leonetti 1978, 70-73). Togliatti did not attend the Congress and was not present at the founding of the new party. He was not a delegate and at the time was busy with the distribution of *L'Ordine nuovo* (Sassoon 1979, 8; Ferrara and Ferrara 1953; Seniga 1978, 30) Gramsci did not speak at the Congress, a fact that may appear surprising considering his high profile regarding the development of the party. Gramsci did not have the leadership profile then enjoyed by Bordiga, who had a hegemony among not only his own supporters but those of the maximalist group,

whereas the Turinese group was not widely known. Terracini was elected to the Executive Committee whereas Gramsci was elected only to the Central Committee.

Pietro Secchia (1977, 34-7) records that by the end of 1921 the new party had enrolled 42,956 members in 1400 sections, the major grouping being in Northern Italy. In the 1921 elections the party's results were disappointing. No inroads were made into the PSI's vote as the PCd'I had expected. The PSI gained 1,569,559 votes and 122 seats whereas the PCd'I obtained only 291,000 votes and 15 seats (Spriano 1978 Vol. 1, 129). Figures presented to the Second Congress of the party showed that 42, 956 members had been enrolled by the end of 1921 (Spriano 1978 Vol. 1, 178). However, Davidson (1982, 115) claims that at the end of 1921, the membership had halved to only 24,638 and by the fascists' March on Rome on 28 October 1922 (Chabod 1963, 55) and Mussolini's taking power, it had fallen to 8,709. In view of the brutal fascist aggression against working class organisations which took place in 1920 and continued against the PCd'I in 1921 (Agosti 1996, 34; Davidson 1982, 117; Shore 1990, 30), this fall in membership is not surprising.

Gramsci and Togliatti take the lead in Turin

The work done by Gramsci and Togliatti as members of the PSI in the period leading to the formation of the PCd'I cannot be overstated. While Bordiga and Gennari and their followers were concerned to follow the line of the International, Gramsci and Togliatti and their colleagues put emphasis on the concept of *L'Ordine nuovo* derived from their associations in Turin and particularly at that city's university. Gramsci had developed the concept of 'factory councils' and received considerable support from Togliatti and others in putting them into practice. His hopes for the widespread acceptance of the councils were not realised even though there were some successes. Like Lenin, Gramsci regarded the Trade Union movement, with its rights agreed to by employers and others, as part of the capitalist system they sought to destroy; and this became a central philosophy of the communist movement. Gramsci had seen the main purpose of the factory councils as that of

preparing men and organisations in order that they may be ready to replace management's power in the factory [...] and to organise the whole social life in a new order (Mancini 1980, 6).

Gramsci eventually abandoned the concept of the factory councils in the face of considerable opposition from his then fellow socialists, who overwhelmingly supported trade unionism (Mancini 1980, 10-11). He had had to suspend work on the councils in 1922 because of Bordiga's hostility to them (Cammett 1967, 157). However, Gramsci's response to this setback was to transform his theory of proletarian dominance through the councils to that of dominance through the communist party. It is important to emphasise that Gramsci did not invent the concept of the councils — it had been developed among socialist revolutionary groups throughout Europe (Cammett 1967, 77). In Turin, it became a mass movement which, Gramsci and Togliatti believed, resulted from a practical program based on the policies of *L'Ordine nuovo*. In implementing these policies, Gramsci, Togliatti, Tasca and Annibale Pastore, professor of theoretical philosophy at the University of Turin, with other professors from the University, gave lectures to workers and students at a 'School of Culture and Socialist Propaganda' established by *L'Ordine nuovo* (Cammett 1967, 81). There was some concrete success in the movement as, by October 1919, more than 50,000 Turinese workers in 30 plants were organised in councils. This figure grew to 150,000 by the end of 1919. The Turin Section of the PSI had accepted the councils and appointed Togliatti to head a study committee to look at the question of councils representing the union in the shops (Cammett 1967, 77).

The concept behind the councils demonstrates that the idea of a revolutionary movement being based on a mass party germinated long before Togliatti introduced it during the Resistance. It must also be recognised that the PSI had been a mass party long before the schism which resulted in the foundation of the PCd'I.

One can gain a superficial impression that the chief distinction between Gramsci and Togliatti was that the former was the theorist and the latter the practitioner. Close analysis of their activities shows that there was not such a clear dichotomy.

Gramsci's personal contribution to the development of the socialist and then the communist causes is well documented. While his contribution to socialist and communist theory was indisputably massive, he was also a practitioner. Pastore, whose lectures Gramsci attended in 1915, saw him as being increasingly disenchanted with mere intellection and eager for practical action. His main concern during his last academic year, according to Pastore, was 'how thought brings about action..., how thought makes hands move, and how and why we can act with ideas' (Cammett 1967, 18). Gramsci had played an active role in setting up the Turin office of *Avanti* and demonstrated outstanding practical leadership skills in setting up the new publication *L'Ordine Nuovo*. He directed the penetration of *L'Ordine Nuovo* into the factories and, of course, was in the forefront of organising the factory councils. From 1922 he was to work for the Comintern in Moscow and Vienna and to assume the leadership of the party after Bordiga was imprisoned. He was elected a member of the Italian Parliament in 1924 and took part in the opposition's protest after the fascists' murder of the socialist MP Giacomo Matteotti (Showstack Sassoon 1982, 154-5). These were the activities of a man with a great capacity for practical leadership, a capacity he was unable to extend because of his long imprisonment

As for Togliatti, his career demonstrated that he was one of the outstanding Italian political leaders of his time and one who, after a very long apprenticeship, developed extraordinary management skills. After his return from service in the First World War and subsequent illness, he played a very active part in the socialist movement. He became editor of the Turinese edition of *Avanti* and later chief editor of *L'Ordine Nuovo* (Spriano 1978 Vol. 1, 105). Like Gramsci, Terracini and Tasca, he felt that *Avanti* was inadequate as it preached revolution but did nothing about it and that Bordiga's *Il Soviet* was too concerned with the question of abstention from elections. They decided to use *L'Ordine Nuovo* as a vehicle to organise the factory councils and Togliatti collaborated with Gramsci in promoting them (Cammett 1967, 71-2). In fact, he had had a strong interest in this movement before his involvement in *L'Ordine Nuovo*. Agosti relates that

*Togliatti partecipa intensamente allo sviluppo del movimento:
non passa praticamente giorno che non sia impegnato in*

dibattiti, conferenze, comizi, per spiegare e popolarizzare la funzione dei Consigli. Negli ultimi mesi del 1919, la sua assunzione in pianta stabile come redattore dell' Avanti piemontese gli permette di abbandonare l'insegnamento: si può dire che inizi da questo momento la sua carriera di 'rivoluzionario professionale' (Agosti 1996, 22).

Togliatti was elected to the executive committee of the PSI Commission responsible for the factory councils and later became secretary. He was in the forefront in organising workers' activities during the factory occupations in Turin in 1920. As a result of this experience he was convinced of the necessity for a communist party in Italy. According to Agosti (1996, 29), *'Tutta l'azione e tutti gli scritti di Togliatti negli ultimi mesi del 1920 sono ormai dominati da questo obiettivo'* (See also Ragonieri 1976, 56). Although critics like Giulio Seniga (1978) may have interpreted his non-attendance at the Congress at Livorno as a lack of involvement, the record, at least according to Agosti and Ragonieri, shows that Togliatti worked for the creation of the PCd'I as hard as any one else.

However, Togliatti's engagement in political practice did not lead him to neglect theory. He wrote extensively on his interpretations of socialist and communist theory. He analysed fascism, capitalism, the Catholic Church, the Southern problem, the peasantry and many other subjects, the better to understand how Italian communism should relate to them. He had a special facility to interpret theory, particularly in writing, to others: and, in Togliatti, *'si precisa per la prima volta la figura dell' intellettuale moderno che opera e vive fra gli uomini'* (Bocca 1977a, Vol. 1, 40). The large number of books and the much larger number of newspaper and magazine articles attributed to him are testimony to his ability to create, interpret and distribute ideas.

Comrades and their differences

One of Bordiga's first actions after Livorno was to transfer Togliatti to Rome as chief editor of *Il Comunista* which commenced publication as a daily on 11 October 1921. This situation was not to last very long as, following the March on Rome, the

daily's premises were raided by armed fascists and Togliatti was lucky to escape with his life. At the Fourth Congress of the International, Bordiga raised applause by referring to Togliatti's 'truly heroic attitude' (Agosti 1996, 44). Togliatti developed a rapport with Bordiga, a situation which did not please Gramsci, because he was opposed to the directions Bordiga was taking with the new party and had understood that Togliatti had been also opposed to them. Togliatti was showing that he had independent views. By October 1922, he had become one of the more authoritative personalities in the party. He had been elected to the Central Committee of the party at its Congress in Rome in March of that year and had responsibility for the party's press (Agosti 1996, 43). With Mario Montagnana, he distributed *L'Ordine Nuovo* illegally in the factories (Agosti 1996, 45).

Early in 1923, Togliatti seemed to disappear from party activities for more than two months. Two of his colleagues, Andrea Viglongo and Mauro Scoccimarro, thought that he had left politics (Bocca, 1977a Vol. 1, 15). In an autobiographical letter of 26 March 1964, kept in the party's archives, Togliatti explained

Verso febbraio mi ammalai seriamente per ricaduta di un'apicite allora preferii tornare a casa dai miei, dove rimasi in cura sino a che, a metà di marzo, la compagna di Umberto Terracini venne a recarmi la disposizione di recarmi a lavorare nel centro del partito che si stava ricostituendo (Ragionieri 1976, 91).

Togliatti's sister, Maria Cristina, was later to tell Giorgio Bocca (1977a Vol. 1, 78)

(...) Palmiro è tornato in casa nostra [...] e si è praticamente ritirato dalla vita politica. Stava benissimo di salute, [...]. Non era malato, leggeva e scriveva fino a tarda notte, riceveva anche con molta cautela i compagni Santhià e Robotti. Entravano alla chetichella, si trattenevano per poco, lui non ce ne parlava. [...] Un giorno mi pregò di andare all'Università per chiedere come potesse rimettersi in ordine con l'iscrizione a filosofia e per conoscere il calendario degli esami.

In interview with Bocca, Battista Santhià confirmed that Togliatti was not ill.

[E]ra incerto, amareggiato e prendeva tempo. Veniva a galla il dissenso con Bordiga, non gli perdonava, lo ricordo, di averlo depennato dalla delegazione al IV Congresso (Bocca 1977a Vol.1, 78).

Furthermore, according to Bocca, Viglongo later told him *seccamente* that Togliatti *non era ammalato, aveva semplicemente tagliato la corda* (Bocca 1977a Vol. 1, 78-9). Following correspondence with Terracini in which the latter appealed to him to return to his position on the Executive of the party, Togliatti returned to work. Later, in response to criticism of his absence, he confessed that: *Anche noi preferiremmo forse fare la vita degli studiosi* (Bocca 1977a Vol.1, 79). This comment seems to be consistent with his sister's abovementioned statement to Bocca on her brother's temporary intentions.

In July 1923, Viglongo made derogatory comments in *Avanti* about Togliatti's absence, to which Togliatti responded bitterly in a letter to Terracini (Agosti 1998, 48). Togliatti then gave some taste of things to come when he sought to expel Viglongo from the party for refusing to return to work as editor of a party newspaper in Trieste (Bocca 1977a Vol. 1, 82). It seems that the matter was dropped then; nevertheless, Viglongo was eventually expelled (Agosti 1996, 48)

By mid-1923 three factions could be recognised in the leadership of the new Party. Bordiga and his long-time supporter Grieco represented the Left, Tasca and Giuseppe Vota the Right and, according to Agosti (1996, 54), Gramsci, Togliatti and Scoccimarro the Centre. Tasca and Giuseppe Vota, representing the Minority were nominated to the party Executive only thanks to the support of the Comintern. Togliatti had some reservations about their nomination but pragmatically accepted it to maintain good relations with the International and ensure continuity of the party's Executive (Ragionieri 1976, 107). Gramsci saw the struggle for the support of party members as

a struggle between the Majority led by himself and other continuers of the traditions of the party, and a new "extreme Left" of isolated elitist intellectuals who wished to return to the traditions of the Second International (Davidson 1982, 140).

Regarding the designation of factions, Davidson (1982, 140) stresses the importance of noting that 'Gramsci continued to be on the Left and that the Centre so often referred to by the Minority and the Comintern, did not think of itself *politically* as a Centre'. Within the three factions there were shifts of support between individuals without those concerned leaving their factions.

In trying to distinguish whether tensions between 'comrades' were based on ideological or personal differences one can recognise that in some cases both elements were involved. It must be recognised, also, that for the first two decades of its existence the party had to operate against a background of extraordinary fascist oppression, an oscillating and sometimes declining membership and a dramatic power-shift in Moscow, and with its leadership scattered: some in prison, others in exile or posted by Moscow to other countries. There was also the problem of reconciling the objectives and views of different individuals and groups regarding the direction that communism should take in Italy.

In late 1923 and early 1924, Gramsci initiated planning for a new orientation of the party (Cammatt 1967, 166-7; Showstack 1982, 154). He operated from Vienna. He raised the circulation of *L'Ordine Nuovo* in Rome and increased correspondence with Togliatti, Terracino, Scoccimarro and Leonetti 'in an effort to imbue them with a new and more flexible conception of the party' (Cammatt 1967, 166). Gramsci returned to Italy in May 1924, having been elected a member of Parliament, therefore entitled to immunity. He undertook to transform the PCI into an effective weapon against fascism (Showstack Sassoon 1982, 154). He travelled extensively throughout Italy to encourage support for the concepts of the *L'Ordine nuovo* group. Gramsci's efforts, and those of Togliatti and their group, came to fruition at the party's Third Congress, in exile at Lyons, in January 1926 (Secchia 1977, 41). The importance of this congress in marking the ascendancy of Gramsci's line over Bordiga's has been emphasised by many authors including Spriano, Ragionieri, Agosti, Bocca and Secchia. As Secchia (1977, 41) put it: the Congress

sanzionò il passaggio dalle posizioni settarie bordighiani a una nuova concezione della lotta di classe, a una strategia basata sull'analisi scientifica della società italiana, delle caratteristiche del regime capitalista e del fascismo in Italia.

This outcome was based on theses prepared by Gramsci, with a major contribution by Togliatti (Ragionieri 1976, 194-8). Agosti (1996, 76) refers to Togliatti saying that he and Gramsci discussed the text of the theses for two days; then he, Togliatti, wrote the final draft. This is partly confirmed by Ferrara and Ferrara (1953, 152, quoted in Cammett, 1967, 170) who say that 'Gramsci came secretly at night to Togliatti's house and stayed there for two days. They talked, decided on the main points, and prepared an outline. Then the Theses were written out by Togliatti.' The theses dealt extensively with 'a rigorous scientific and historical analysis of the Italian social structure, the development of the labour movement, and the nature of Italian capitalism' (Cammett 1967, 170). Secchia (1977, 41) quotes Togliatti as saying that in one thesis were

individuare le forze motrici di una rivoluzione che dovesse portare la classe operaia e le masse lavoratrici al potere. Tali forze motrici dovevano essere il proletariato, le grandi masse contadine dell'Italia meridionale e il ceto medio urbano cattolico.

This short extract from the thesis, attributed by Secchia to Togliatti, is a threshold statement that justified, and projected into the future, the bases of policies adopted by the PCI under Togliatti's leadership. The statement foreshadowed the policy of creating a mass party including the working and middle classes, and the seeking of alliances with political groups representing those classes. It foreshadowed attempts to seek a rapprochement between the party and the church and recognised particularly that the middle classes captured by the fascists must be won over to the party. Very importantly, it addressed the 'Southern question' and recognised that the success of a mass party and revolution depended on the involvement of the peasantry as well as the factory workers. Also, one could extract from the above quotation, ingredients of a concept which was to be known later as the 'Historic Compromise'.

This concept, which became a key part of the PCI's strategy to achieve government, is discussed in Chapter Four.

The Congress also agreed that the party's future organisational structure be based on the factory cell, in accordance with a Comintern directive. Actually, the Communist Federation of Turin had long adopted this form of organisation because of its experience in the factories, but other more conservative areas of the party had maintained structures based on those of the PSI (Secchia 1967, 41).

Gramsci was confirmed as the new Secretary-General, replacing Bordiga, and with Scoccimarro, Togliatti, Terracini, Ravera, Ravazzoli, and Grieco, formed the Executive Committee. Secchia (1967, 42) notes that only after lively insistence by Gramsci, did Bordiga agree to take a position on the Central Committee.

Surviving conflicts in Moscow

Almost immediately after the Lyons Congress, in February 1926, Togliatti went to Moscow to lead the Italian delegation, which included Bordiga. Within the Russian Party, there was tension regarding its future direction, between Zinoviev and Kamenev on the one hand, and Stalin and Bucharin on the other, with the latter pair holding the upper hand. At a meeting between the Italian delegation and a large part of the Russian party, presided over by Togliatti, Bordiga made a speech which Agosti (1996, 81) describes as being

forse l'ultimo vero discorso apertamente di opposizione che sia pronunciato in un assise ufficiale del movimento comunista internazionale.

To Togliatti's embarrassment — he was uncomfortable about any clash with Stalin — Bordiga attacked the political line taken by the major communist parties in Western Europe, criticised the structure of parties based on factory cells — approved at the Lyons Congress — and made a sarcastic remark about the internal regime of the Comintern. When Togliatti spoke he put Bordiga down, making it very clear that Bordiga was not only out of line with the Comintern but also with the PCd'I.

Tutti qui avete udito il compagno Bordiga, e forse avete simpatia per lui. In realtà, quando il compagno Bordiga parla, sembra che i suoi discorsi scaturiscano dalla sincerità e dalla forza rivoluzionaria di un capo (...) Noi, compagni, non crediamo che Bordiga sia un grande capo rivoluzionario (...) Se avessimo seguito negli ultimi due anni la linea politica consigliataci dal compagno Bordiga, avremmo distrutto il partito comunista (...) Una politica la cui conseguenza è la distruzione del partito non è una buona politica, non è la politica di un capo rivoluzionario (Agosti 1996, 81).

Bordiga's situation was not helped by the fact that before making his speech he had visited Trotsky to obtain material with which to attack Stalin and had done so (Davidson (1982, 178). In his response to Bordiga, Stalin invited the other parties not to interfere in internal Russian matters. Davidson (1982, 179) comments: 'The cat was out of the bag despite Togliatti's attempts to smother Bordiga's troublesome questioning.'

However, Togliatti himself moved away from the PCd'I's position reached at Lyons, as Davidson points out. Davidson says, quoting Berti, that Togliatti moved close to Tasca's position — that is, the position of the Russian Right with which Stalin was then allied. Togliatti argued in the Comintern that the unions should be defended, whereas the Lyons theses had insisted on the latest variant of factory councils, agitation committees, and a frontal attack on reformist unions. Scoccimarro had, on 13 April 1926, written to Togliatti: 'I must confess my, Silvia's and Antonio's surprise at reading your exposition of this. It is truly extraordinary that neither I nor Antonio ever realised that there existed disagreement between us on so important a question, already debated at our Congress' (Davidson 1982, 179). This attempt to make Togliatti adhere to PCd'I policy was ignored.

The position taken by Togliatti does seem extraordinary particularly as he had written the Lyons theses in collaboration with Gramsci and, according to some, had taken credit for their authorship. It must be noted also that Togliatti took this change of direction as leader of the Italian delegation — he was not leader of the PCd'I nor had its authority to make this move. He may have been trying to keep a personal rapport with Stalin and the Comintern which, dominated by the CPSU (B)'s internal

struggles, then disapproved strongly of the Lyons theses. Davidson (1982, 179) reports: 'It insisted that the very open democratic centralism proposed by Gramsci, be rectified and Grieco reported back in July that the party would bow to its wishes.' On the other hand, Togliatti may have been doing what other members of his party's leadership had been doing, that is, simply what he personally thought was best for the party.

Togliatti was taken under Bucharin's wing and developed a rapport with him. He became a member of the Executive and the Presidium of the Comintern. This was to be a difficult situation, not only because he was under some criticism from his own party for this relationship but also because Bucharin was in line to be removed by Stalin as the latter consolidated his position as head of the Russian Party.

The internal problems of the Russian Party were considered by the Executive of the PCd'I between 18 and 26 October 1926. The outcome was that Gramsci was requested to send a letter to the Comintern and the Russian Party expressing the PCd'I's opinions (Spriano 1978 Vol. 2, 50-60; Agosti 1996, 86-90). Gramsci's letter appealed for unity among the parties and, while expressing criticism of Trotsky, acknowledged his contribution to the movement. In the week following the receipt of the letter, the internal conflict between Stalin and the 'opposition' led by Trotsky came to a head. Togliatti, with the agreement of Bucharin and Manuilski, decided not to forward the letter to the Central Committee of the Comintern. He wrote to Gramsci telling him that his letter was 'late and inopportune', that he (Gramsci) did not know enough about what was going on and that Trotsky had been worsted; but did not tell him details of the dramatic events that had occurred within Moscow since the receipt of his letter. Jules Humbert-Droz, a member of the Comintern Executive, was sent to Italy to explain the situation to the Italians. There was a clear rift between Gramsci and Togliatti. Gramsci wrote to Togliatti saying that his views that the concrete needs of Russia were imposing themselves were 'without value'. Davidson (1982, 179) says that Togliatti consigned Gramsci's letter to the waste-paper basket, ending the unity of position they had had. Amendola commented that Gramsci's arrest soon after made it impossible to continue the discussion (Agosti

1996, 89). Even before Gramsci's correspondence, the Comintern had become uneasy about his leadership and there were rumblings about renewed support for Bordiga (Bocca 1977a Vol. 1, 124). It would be difficult to believe that Togliatti was not aware of these. At the time, Ignazio Silone asserted that Togliatti and Gramsci were not then friends (Bocca 1977a Vol. 1, 124). Their relations were never the same again. Gramsci's *'lettere dal carcere'* do not include any to Togliatti (Henderson 1988).

Togliatti to power, myriad expulsions

Following an attempt on Mussolini's life on 31 October 1926, the fascist regime passed repressive laws which resulted in the arrest of many leading communists including Gramsci, on 8 November. Terracini had been in gaol since August (Spriano 1978 Vol. 1, 62). A retrospective view of the party's history indicates that Togliatti became leader after Gramsci. In fact, Gramsci was still recognised as leader for some time while in prison. Davidson comments on the conflicts between other surviving leading members as to who should lead in Gramsci's absence; and outlines the very difficult background of fascist oppression against which these conflicts took place. Over a period of a couple of years, Togliatti, Tasca, Longo, Ravera, Secchia and Leonetti argued about the direction the party should take, with diminished membership and resources. Central arguments revolved around the question whether the party should be led from inside or outside Italy — through so-called Internal and External Centres; and how to respond to the criticism of the younger members of the party — much of it directed at Togliatti — who had been bearing the brunt of the party's work 'at the coalface' in Italy. Davidson says that 'Togliatti had a number of personal enemies as contenders for leadership, like Tasca and Grieco. He seemed too "cold, cynical and even calculating" for some, and to others he was almost dishonest in his hair splitting'. (Salinari 1976, 92-3 quoted in Davidson 1982, 184). The appellation 'comrade' seemed to require some flexible interpretation.

On 31 October 1927, the party held a conference in Basle, where it formally reaffirmed its Lyons Conference line (Davidson 1982, 187). However, by July 1929, the leadership had split into two groups, one led by Togliatti and the other by

Leonetti. Following failed attempts to re-establish organisation at the base — membership having dropped to about 4000 after the fascist repression — Longo insisted that the reconstitution of the Internal Centre as the real basis of the party was essential. Togliatti backed Longo while Leonetti and Pietro Tresso took the opposing position — that the External Centre should contain the Secretariat and regional conferences should be held outside Italy (Davidson 1982, 194).

Leonetti, Tresso and Ravazzoli believed that there would have to be a democratic prelude to any socialist revolution. They did not believe that the fascist regime could be overthrown by revolution without this prelude. However, Togliatti, Longo and Secchia, with the backing of the recent Tenth Plenum of the Comintern, did not believe that a democratic prelude was possible (Davidson 1982, 194). By August 1929, the PCd'I's disagreements had surfaced at the Politburo. Davidson says that the bitterness of the debate was unprecedented in the party's history. Leonetti compared Togliatti unfavourably with Gramsci and accused him of 'lack of principles', 'continuous oscillation', and 'intolerance of other views'. In his response, Togliatti, among other things, implied that his opponents had involved themselves in 'political fantasy' (Davidson 1982, 195). The conflict came to a head when Togliatti excluded Leonetti, Tresso and Ravazzoli — the 'Three' — from Secretariat meetings (Davidson 1986, 195). By this time there must have been some degree of acceptance that this was legitimate. Tresso spoke of the 'latest opportunist metamorphosis of Togliatti'; Leonetti and Tresso were accused of 'liquidationism'. In comradely fashion, rispostes were made about each other's wives; it was claimed that Togliatti was responsible for the loss of some money; but others thought that Montagnana was responsible (Davidson 1982, 195). In June 1930 'the Three' were expelled with the support of the Comintern. They formed the New Italian opposition with its publication *Bollettino*. The expulsion of the 'Three' in June overshadowed that of Bordiga in March 1930, when, on his release from prison, he failed to appear before the Executive of the party to show cause why he should not be expelled. He was expelled (Spriano 1978 Vol 2, 254-7).

It is extraordinary that four comrades who had contributed so much to the party could be excluded from it. Gramsci and Terracini in prison ‘showed themselves firmly against the measures taken against the “Three” and in favour of their assessment of the situation and the policies they thought advisable’ (Davidson 1982, 198). Gramsci’s opposition to Togliatti’s position was extreme. Silone, who had been a member of the party’s delegation, led by Togliatti, to the Executive meeting of the Comintern in May 1927, and had worked with ‘the Three’ since the party’s inception, wrote:

Three of the best men in our organisation - Alfonso Leonetti of the underground press; Paolo Ravazzoli, leader of the union movement; and Pietro Tresso, head of the administrative office - criticised the Internationale’s demands, pointing out their absurdity with respect to the situation in Italy. For their audacity, they were summarily expelled from the Central Committee and later from the ranks of the party. For grotesque reasons utterly without foundation, they were offered as scapegoats for Togliatti’s Bukharinist past. Unfortunately, the three who were expelled soon expressed themselves in acts and words which seemed to justify the measures which had been taken against them. No doubt they were driven by burning resentment for their unjust and unexpected treatment, and by the very logic of such factional controversy (Silone 1968, 91-2).

Silone, who had been ill and on leave from the party for some time, received a visit from Togliatti who typed a six-line statement for him to sign, condemning the three who had been expelled. To Silone’s assertion that it would be against his convictions, Togliatti replied: ‘I know, but accepting this kind of coercion is a worthy sacrifice to the party’ (Silone 1968, 94). Silone had kept in touch with Tresso and, in correspondence, listed his personal reasons for preferring to remain at the edge of the party, approving neither Trotsky’s policies nor the new orders from Moscow. When excerpts of this correspondence were published in a Trotskyite bulletin in Paris with all anti-Trotsky material excluded, Silone was expelled (Silone 1968, 94-6). The expulsion notice referred to him as ‘a clinical case’; while Berti’s *Stato operaio* referred to him as ‘a soft intellectual’ (Spriano 1978 Vol. 2, 324).

Silone writes that he said to Togliatti one day; ‘The final struggle will be between the Communists and the ex-Communists.’ Silone then elaborates very prophetically:

What I meant was that perhaps the experience of Communism itself would kill Communism. And it is possible that the Russians themselves are in the process of administering the *coup de grâce*. What will happen when the millions who have returned from the forced labour camps of Siberia are able to speak freely?’ (Silone 1968, 97)

Tasca was another prominent comrade to be expelled. He had been a founder of *L’Ordine Nuovo* yet did not agree with all its concepts. He was in the Right faction of the party which Gramsci regarded as more dangerous than the Left. During the fascist repression in 1926-27 he suggested that the party be dissolved and that it should establish itself in exile (Davidson 1982, 184). While he had shared a de facto leadership of the party with Togliatti for a period after Gramsci’s imprisonment, he was often out of step with the Executive’s views. He supported Bucharin whom Stalin was seeking to remove from power, and openly opposed Stalin’s interference in the leadership of the German party.

Davidson (1982, 210) says that, according to Togliatti, Tasca’s views had put him in the position of being a ‘majority of one’ within the PCd’I.

[...] he had favoured working with democratic forces against Fascism to attain a “socialist republic” which was neither capitalist nor proletarian [...] he had favoured a transitional programme which would have deprived the Party of an independent, struggle for working class hegemony over other classes, [...]

Tasca’s objective was not consistent with the Comintern’s current line, also held by Togliatti, Longo and Secchia ‘that a revolutionary situation was developing in Italy’ (Davidson 1986, 210). Criticism of Tasca by the Comintern through the PCd’I fell heavily on him. He was expelled in September 1929 (Agosti 1996, 118-24; Spriano 1978 Vol. 2, 181-98). In 1933 Tasca settled in France, became a French citizen and worked with the French socialists. Amendola (1974) records that later, Tasca, as a member of the PSI, opposed the Secretary, Pietro Nenni with the support of

Giuseppe Saragat and Giuseppe Modigliani. He was not popular in the PSI and was attacked by *Stato Operaio* which had been established by Berti in New York. Cannistraro (1982, 529) records that during World War II, Tasca collaborated with the Vichy Government as a journalist and radio commentator.

The expulsions of Tasca and ‘The Three’ were by-products of bitter debates and conflicts within and between the Comintern, the Italian party and the Russian party. The prevailing policy that emerged from this prolonged brawl was in favour of revolution as the only way of defeating fascism. The policy was developed at the Comintern’s Tenth Plenum which also signalled Stalin’s triumph as being totally in control of the Comintern, and his immersion in the ‘cult of the personality’ (Spriano 1978 Vol. 2, 210) Silone (1968, 90) lamented that

The repression of the moderate currents in Russian Communism was extended simultaneously to all sections of the International in a complete swerve to the left of its entire policy, motivated by an alleged world revolutionary crisis then in progress. The new tactic, according to its supporters, was directed chiefly at freeing the spirit of the workers from the debilitating illusions of democracy. Parliamentary democracy was therefore denounced as the biggest obstacle in the path of the proletarian revolution, and its disappearance was seen as a sign of progress. Traditional Democratic Socialism was rebaptised Social Fascism, in other words, a simple faction or variety of Fascism, and every accommodation with it was to be severely condemned.

The prevailing policy became known as a ‘svolta’ — a term almost as common as ‘crisis’ in Italian politics — on the part of the PCd’Italia. According to Davidson (1982, 196)

What had taken place in the PCd’I was a great turning point in its development, a turning away from the Gramscian practice to that of Marxism-Leninism. This had expressed itself both in the rejection of the line of the Lyons Congress and the people who upheld that line [...] and the expulsion of those who gave physical continuity to that line, with the exception of Togliatti himself.

Since 1928 there had been increasing threats to Togliatti's leadership. Gramsci, although in prison, was still recognised by many as the legitimate leader of the party. Moscow was inviting younger members of the PCd'I to criticise Togliatti's leadership (Bocca 1977 Vol. 1, 216-17). Bocca (1977a Vol. 1, 217) claims that Longo had told him, in interview, that after attending the party's Fourth Congress at Cologne from 14 to 21 April 1931:

L'Internazionale era pronta ad appoggiare una mia Segreteria. È vero, anche se poi si è esagerato sulla vicenda. Io a Colonia sapevo che se avessi voluto fare la guerra a Togliatti avrei avuto il pieno e decisivo appoggio di Stalin. Non la feci per due ragioni: ero convinto che sarebbe stato di danno al Partito e non me la sentivo di avere per avversario Togliatti. Se è lecito direlo la pensavo come Giolitti il quale 'preferiva essere secondo a Roma che primo a Dronero.'

Agosti (1996, 148) asserts that there is no documentary evidence supporting Longo's testimony that the International would have looked favourably on Togliatti's removal from the party Secretariat. Agosti believes that the Comintern had full faith in Togliatti, although not unconditional, and would not consider any alternative to his leadership.

There were two more expulsions of prominent party members: Terracini and Camilla Ravera. Their expulsions resulted from their attitudes to Russia's non-aggression pact with Germany in April 1939. The pact was a shock to the anti-fascist forces. The PCd'I had been strongly supporting negotiations between the Russians, Britain and France. Togliatti had long been conscious of the threat of Hitler's Germany; therefore, it would have been logical for him and the PCd'I to be strongly critical of the pact. In August 1939, Russia's Foreign Minister Molotov explained his country's attitude in part: 'The art of politics in the sphere of foreign relations does not consist in increasing the number of enemies of one's country but on the contrary in reducing the number of these enemies' (Sassoon 1981, 15-16). The Comintern followed the USSR's line, as did Togliatti. Sassoon (1981, 16) records that Togliatti never considered it more than a purely temporary situation. Nevertheless, in the issue of *La Voce degli italiani* of 25 August 1939, he declared:

(...) the action undertaken by the USSR in accepting to discuss a non-aggression pact with Germany is a powerful contribution given to the peoples who are now under the yoke of the fascist dictatorship (Sassoon 1981, 16).

Terracini and Camilla Ravera, foundation members of the party, serving part of their eighteen and thirteen years respectively in prison, because they were communists, were highly critical of the pact simply because it represented a drastic deviation from the line previously taken by the Comintern and the party. Terracini had also been critical, in prison, of the differences in decisions taken by the Sixth and Seventh Congresses of the Comintern — which will be discussed in Chapter Two. He disagreed with the USSR-German pact but understood that the party was under pressure to follow the Stalin line (Gismondi 1978, 116-24). Terracini and Ravera were not formally expelled by the party leadership until May 1942, more than two years later — while still in prison (Spriano 1978 Vol. 4, 103-6). Spriano (1978 Vol. 4, 103) makes the point that at no time did Terracini or Ravera actually condemn the Soviet-German pact.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the formation of the Italian Communist Party and the principal members who brought it into existence. In particular it discussed Togliatti's contribution and his development into a dominating leadership role. The discussion highlighted:

first, how Togliatti, Gramsci and the Turinese group gained ascendancy in the leadership of the party; and how the party survived in the face of fascist oppression and the arrest or exile of key members of the leadership;

second, how ideas developed around *L'Ordine nuovo* and theses prepared jointly by Gramsci and Togliatti, and accepted by the party's Lyons Conference in 1935, became elements of a political strategy intended to achieve the support of the Italian people and ultimately government. That strategy was not to become clearly

recognisable until Togliatti announced his strategy for a mass party — to be discussed in Chapter Two;

third, how differences in objectives within the party were sorted out even to the extent that long serving and talented members, including foundation members, were expelled if they did not accept the current party line; a line maintained by Togliatti even though it oscillated in response to changes of direction taken by the Comintern; and

finally, how, despite some dissent from Togliatti's claims to leadership and significant disagreement with his position, his views prevailed and, with support from Moscow, he developed a platform from which to take a firm hold of the party leadership during the Resistance and the post-war years.

CHAPTER TWO

Togliatti's partito nuovo

This chapter's relevance to the thesis is that it sets out how Togliatti began to convert the elements of the party's strategic theory, developed in the pre-war years, into practice by means of the mass party — the *partito nuovo*. It shows how Togliatti's application of the concepts of compromise and adaptation drew criticism from some members and supporters of the party, which was to adversely affect the strategy's long-term application and contribute to its eventual failure. The chapter discusses: Togliatti's *svolta di Salerno*; his acceptance as leader of the party and its embarkation on the *via italiana*; the party's leading role in the Resistance and contribution to the formation of Italy's early post-war governments; the antagonisms between communists and Catholics; the party's exclusion from government, its electoral defeat and the need to maintain its strategy while in opposition.

In reviewing decisions taken by Togliatti in the post-war period, it is necessary to consider the political environment in Italy when he arrived there on 27 March 1944 to take over officially the leadership of the Italian Communist Party. The party's clandestine representatives in Italy had developed a competent organisation which took a leading role in the Resistance, and many had also developed expectations about the party's post-war role, which were to be somewhat thwarted by the strategy announced by Togliatti after his arrival. This strategy had been largely unknown to them — even though Togliatti had been broadcasting to the Italian people from Moscow for some time under the assumed name of 'Ercole Ercoli' (Ginsborg 1990, 9). It should also be reiterated that even for many years before the war, communications within the entire party were very difficult to maintain, due to the fascist repression and the split leadership between internal and external centres. This, coupled with fluctuating membership and the difficulties experienced by the party's leadership in keeping up with the oscillation in policy at the Comintern and Moscow level, could only result in conflict and misunderstanding between the leadership and a substantial part of the membership of the party over strategy in 1944. In fact, 'oscillation' is a fair description of the sequence of *svolte* in which the party was involved between 1921 and 1944 and even beyond. Nevertheless, within the oscillation there was a discernible trend, which was given emphasis by Togliatti in his

svolta di Salerno of 1 April 1944. This was his announcement of the PCI's intentions, summarised by Gray (1980, 24) as: participation by the PCI in the Badoglio government; recognition of the Italian monarchy; political peace between the parties; and social peace between the classes.

To understand the ingredients of misunderstanding which characterised this *svolta* it is necessary to consider the role played by the party in the Resistance and some more details of the background to Togliatti's strategy.

The communists' role in the Resistance

A very loose and uncoordinated anti-fascist movement had existed in Italy, almost since fascism had first come to power. Despite the trials it faced, the PCd'I provided the most organised opposition to the regime. Anti-fascist feeling strengthened after the murder of Matteotti in June 1924 (Chapter One); but made no major impact on the regime, which was able to keep dissident elements under control by isolating some, known as *confinati*, in remote parts of the country, and others in prison camps, in not too severe conditions, at Ponza, for instance (Amendola 1980) or, in extreme cases, in conventional prisons. (Bocca 1977b,15). The Resistance grew rapidly in northern Italy after the fall of Mussolini in 1943. While southern Italy was occupied by the Allies and a new Italian government was established there, the North was occupied by the German army, aided by the remnants of fascist organisations.

The most militant leadership of the Resistance came from the proscribed left-wing parties, with the Communist Party well in the vanguard and also from outlawed labour organisations, stifled journalists, harassed academics and professionals. In the shadows behind these 'activists' stood the 'quietists', who represented another variety of anti-fascism, and one which won the tacit approval of many Catholics and conservatively minded liberals. In 1943, all these groups gained co-ordinated expression by the formation of anti-fascist Committees of Liberation (CLN), which were organised by Central Committees of National Liberation (CCLN). Their constituent bodies were: the PCI, the Christian Democratic Party (DC), The Italian Socialist Party of Proletarian Unity (PSIUP, later to become the Italian Socialist Party

or PSI ; the Action Party (Pd'A); the Labour Democratic Party (DL); and the Italian Liberal Party (PLI) (Cannistraro 1982, 127-29).

Of the six parties, the PCI, the PSIUP and the Pd'A leaned furthest to the left and were decidedly anti-monarchist. The right-wing and moderate parties were the DC, DL and PLI. The PLI was furthest to the right, and played a greater role in the councils of the CLNs than in their military activities. It aimed at a return to pre-fascist conditions in Italy. Three CCLN's evolved: one for northern Italy, centred in Milan (CLNAI — *Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale per Alta Italia*); one in Florence (CTLN — *Comitato Toscano Liberazione Nazionale*); and one in Rome, which was invested with great prestige, partly because of the presence of such figures as Alcide De Gasperi, effectually the founder of the DC, and Pietro Nenni, the leader of the PSUIP. CLNs were also established in southern Italy but they had no military forces and no formal ties with the Badoglio government, and carried little weight in political affairs (Cannistraro 1982, 127-29).

While the CLNs played a strong political and co-ordinating role it was the partisans who built up formidable military resistance to the fascists and the German army. The *partigiani* also had a strong political role through the CLNs. From 1943 their numbers grew quickly, although estimates of these vary. Mammarella (1966, 121-22) gives a total figure of 100,000 in 1944 and quotes 'official estimates' of 231,831 people who had, at any time, participated in activities with the partisans; and 125,714 who had participated regularly in the resistance movement. Ginsborg (1990, 54, 65) records that by the end of 1943 there were about 9000 partisans and 100,000 by April 1945. Sassoon (1981, 29) says that by the end of fighting there were 300,000 members of the 'armed resistance' of whom at least 40-50% were in the communist Garibaldi Brigades. He also says that of 70,000 partisans killed, 42,500 were communists. He also points out, referring to Spriano (1978, Vol. 5, 257ff), that

to concentrate exclusively on the figures of the armed Resistance can be misleading, for one of the peculiarities of the Italian Resistance is that it operated in conjunction with a movement of strikes and sabotage in the factories. The strike of more than

500,000 workers in March 1944 was the largest strike which ever took place in Nazi-occupied Europe.

Whatever the total numbers of people involved, the authors agree that the PCI took a leading role in the Resistance. For a long time before Togliatti returned to Italy, the PCI had fostered and co-operated in united action by all parties against the fascists. The communists were better organised internally than the other parties and some may well have seen themselves as the representatives of the Russian Revolution in Italy. They had anti-monarchist feelings and looked towards a post-war revolution backed by international communism. It is understandable that some members of the PCI expressed opposition when Togliatti, soon after his arrival, outlined the strategy that he wanted the party to pursue: to put aside the PCI's hostility to the monarchy and persuade all anti-fascist forces to join the royal government. This would be the first step towards national unity, in opposition to the nazis and the fascists. In June 1944, Togliatti wrote:

Remember always that the insurrection that we want has not got the aim of imposing social and political transformations in a socialist or communist sense. Its aim is rather national liberation and the destruction of Fascism. All the other problems will be resolved by the people tomorrow, once Italy is liberated, by means of a free popular vote and the election of a constituent assembly (Ginsborg 1990, 43).

Any confusion among PCI members would have been compounded if they had seen a memorandum sent by Gromyko, the Soviet Union's Minister for Foreign Affairs, to the Allies eight days before Togliatti's arrival in Italy. Bocca (1977a, Vol. 2, 364), quoting from *Foreign Relations of the US*, vol. III, 1944, Washington, 1965, p 1065, records that the memorandum recommended the resolution of antagonism between the committees of the anti-fascist parties and the Badoglio government '*per mezzo di "una certa riorganizzazione e miglioramento" dei rapporti*', and suggested that steps be taken towards '*la possibile unione di tutte le forze democratiche antifasciste dell'Italia liberata sulla base di un appropriato miglioramento del governo di Badoglio*' ' Again, Bocca (1977a, Vol. 2, 363), quoting from a letter from Togliatti to a comrade, Vincenzo Calace, dated 8 May 1951, in *Il Ponte*, June 1951, p.364, notes that Togliatti claimed that he did not have any inkling of the Soviet Union's intention to recognise the Badoglio government. However, Barth Urban (1986, 194)

surmises that Togliatti's departure was delayed until Moscow's policy toward Italy was finalised and sums up the point as follows:

it is improbable that he was not involved in shaping a policy in which he was to play so central a part. Indeed, there are those who speculate that Togliatti himself pressed for the entire *svolta* — including Soviet diplomatic recognition.

Agosti (1996, 273-75) agrees with this view. Moscow had been considering the proposed *svolta* for some time and as late as January 1944 had been receiving reports about the unwillingness of communists in Italy to co-operate with the king or Badoglio. Certainly, for several months before his departure, Togliatti was impatient about the delay. As early as October and November 1943 he sought Dimitrov's and Manuilski's support for the urgent return of himself and other comrades legally to official positions and insisted that there was danger in further delay (Agosti 1996, 275-76).

On the day that Togliatti left Moscow, Andrei Vyshinsky commented to Giulio Cerretti that '*tutti aspettavano a Salerno l'arrivo di Togliatti.*' Cerretti noted to himself that while all might have been awaiting Togliatti with great expectations, among some there could be a certain amount of disappointment (Agosti 1996, 276). Cerretti was right. There had been some dissension on the question of Togliatti's authority over the party, in particular when he was broadcasting from Moscow. On 18 October 1943, the CLN in Rome had declared its refusal to co-operate with the king or Badoglio, and had called for a government composed of the anti-fascist parties. The PCI leaders there, including Scoccimarro and Amendola, were intransigent in their refusal to accord any legitimacy to Badoglio. At a CLN meeting on 28 September 1943, Scoccimarro had said: 'it is not possible to unite the Italians around the King or Badoglio; they must therefore step aside in order to permit the unity of Italians.' He went on to warn that 'if the English insist on championing the King and Badoglio, they will provoke a schism in Italy... There is no possibility of compromises with the Badoglio government' (Barth Urban 1986, 172). Amendola was to say later that he was the youngest of the leaders in Rome — the last man in — and was influenced by the others. However, in Milan, Longo pleaded for a more

flexible approach. He was supported in this stand by Secchia (Amendola 1974, 179-82, 216-17; Longo 1977, 56-61).

Togliatti gained overwhelming acceptance as leader within the party despite the mixed views about the direction he proposed to take. Contrary to Scoccimarro's concern that other anti-fascist parties would not support the line proposed in the *svolta*, Togliatti was successful in gaining their co-operation, although there was some dissension about the *svolta* among the socialists and the members of the Action Party for the same reasons as within the ranks of the PCI. These groups had envisaged that the efforts of the partisans would result, among other things, in the deposing of the king, and the bringing to justice of Badoglio's supporters and other fascists, but under the terms of the *svolta*, this sort of aspiration had to be set aside. The support that Togliatti received from within the PCI can be attributed largely to the party's perceptions of his experience in Moscow, to his association with Stalin, and to the fact that, in 1944, the Italian communists' faith in the Soviet Union was reinforced by its military success against the Germans. Some believed that the Soviet Union was capable of establishing communism in Italy by force. Indeed, in the later context of the Cold War, the Western Powers had some concern that this might happen.

The support that Togliatti received from other parties can be attributed to his liaison with key leaders including one of the socialist leaders, Nenni (Agosti 1996, 279), with whom Amendola had had long discussions about co-operation between the socialists and the communists in Paris in 1942-43 (Amendola 1974, 62-75), and Benedetto Croce who had met Togliatti and Gramsci at the University of Turin in 1920 (Spriano 1978, Vol. 5, 327ff). On 3 April 1944, Togliatti addressed a meeting of anti-fascist parties in Naples. Filippo Caracciolo, of the Pd'A, made this observation:

Togliatti prende a parlare con voce suadente e controllatissima. La sua esposizione colpisce per l'urbanità del tratto e per la stringatezza e lucidità dell'eloquio. Sembra un eminente professore che s'indulgia a spiegare un problema ai suoi assistenti senza mai dare a vedere di saperne più di loro...Il suo discorso piace alla grande maggioranza dei presenti. Si intravede una conclusione sostanziosa al nostro cammino errabondo e donchisciottesco (Spriano 1978, Vol. 5, 327).

At this gathering, Togliatti had a personal meeting with Croce who spoke of the '*compromesso liberale-comunista*' (Spriano 1978, Vol. 5, 327). Togliatti silenced continuing criticism about the *svolta* by the Rome section of the party at its meeting on 27 April. He made a severe call for discipline and told the meeting that the current debate was useless and should be put off until after liberation (Amendola 1974, 323).

As a result of the *svolta*, Togliatti and the PCI enjoyed great prestige. Hitherto, the party had been illegal, but by participating in the Badoglio government, the PCI became a legal entity. When the new Badoglio government was formed on 21 April 1944, Badoglio took the external affairs portfolio and gave the interior portfolio to Aldisio, a christian democrat — not to a communist — to 'tranquillise particularly Churchill' (Spriano 1978, Vol. 5, 328). There were five ministers without portfolio including Croce and Togliatti. Fausto Gullo of the PCI became minister for Agriculture and Forests while two other PCI members, Mario Palermo and Antonio Pesenti, became under-secretaries. Prior to the formation of this government, British and American diplomats pressed the king, Vittorio Emanuele III, to retire in favour of his son Umberto. He did so on 12 April and Umberto became Lieutenant-General of the Kingdom (Ginsborg, 1990, 52).

The liberation of Rome by the Allies on 4 June 1944 was followed by a change of government. Ivanoe Bonomi replaced Badoglio as Prime Minister. According to Cannistraro (1982, 81-2) Bonomi had been a moderate conservative who represented Italy's pre-fascist tradition. He had been expelled from the PSI for his support of the Italian invasion of Libya, and had succeeded Giovanni Giolitti as Prime Minister (June 1921-February 1922). His attitude then to fascist violence had been ambivalent, leading to charges that he secretly favoured the movement. The Bonomi government, which was marked by conflicts between the left-wing and the right-wing parties of the CLN, lasted from 10 June 1944 until 12 June 1945, when the whole of Italy was liberated. Togliatti's support for Bonomi, as the person most acceptable to the majority of parties, showed his capacity for compromise and, taken together with his support for Badoglio, demonstrated that he was quickly starting to implement the strategy he had set out for his party in the *svolta di Salerno*.

Togliatti's svolta

Svolta means turning point or change of direction. Although Togliatti's announcement in 1944 of the strategy to be followed by the party was dubbed the *svolta*, it was by no means a complete change of direction for Togliatti or the party, but reflected a line of action for the party to follow which had been developed over a long period. Togliatti confirmed this development when, in 1950, he wrote:

La politica da me seguita a Napoli allora non fu niente altro che l'applicazione concreta di una linea tracciata e battuta dal PCI, nel confronto dei gruppi monarchici, molto prima del 1944.
(Bocca 1977a, Vol. 2, 365)

This view was echoed by Amendola (1963, xxxvi, quoted in Bocca 1977a, Vol. 2, 365):

La svolta di Salerno...era la necessaria conclusione di una linea strategica che già a Parigi, nel marzo 1940, Togliatti aveva indicato al partito.

Togliatti can be linked with the development of the strategy over a long period. Sassoon (1979, 16) notes that Togliatti has been defined as the 'great tactician' and that he was a member of the *Ordine nuovo* group of intellectuals

whose originality was that it saw the necessity to connect the form of the political organisation to the world of production and to economic life in general, rather than create a working class organisation whose tasks were external to the class itself until the moment of crisis (Sassoon 1979, 16-17).

As discussed in Chapter One, Togliatti and Gramsci had prepared the Lyons theses of 1926, which foreshadowed the creation of a mass party involving a broad cross-section of society. At the Seventh Congress of the International in Moscow in 1935, Togliatti with Dimitrov, the Bulgarian representative, after giving detailed analyses of the international situation, proposed that the communist movement should put itself at the head of a democratic mass movement, on a world-wide scale, capable of advancing towards socialism, and working to fight fascism and prevent war (Ragionieri 1976, 770; Agosti 1996, 193). Togliatti's address there included the following appeal:

Possiamo includere le masse dei lavoratori socialdemocratici e le grandi masse dei pacifisti, dei cattolici, delle donne della gioventù, delle minoranze nazionali. Possiamo includere nelle file di questo fronte persino quei governi borghesi che in questo momento sono interessati al mantenimento della pace (Spriano 1978, Vol. 3, 35).

Togliatti's foremost goal, upon his return to Italy, was to prevent political polarisation. He hoped to forestall a schism among the three mass parties of the left and centre: the PCI, the PSI and the DC. He thus took pains to project a public image of the PCI as a democratic party geared to the defence of the Italian nation (Hamrin 1975, 138). Following the liberation of Rome, he promoted the PCI as the *partito nuovo* and asserted, in numerous speeches and articles, that the party was confronting a development far more complex than just the simple passage from illegal to legal status. The *partito nuovo* implied a vast social and political presence of Italian communism in Italian society. Togliatti said:

We are the party of the working class...But the working class has never been foreign to the national interest. We want a democratic Italy, but we want a strong democracy which will not let anything that resembles Fascism or reproduces it to [sic] rise again. As a Communist party, as the party of the working class, we claim the right to participate in the construction of this new Italy, conscious of the fact that if we do not claim this right or were not able to fulfill this function now or in the future, Italy would not be reconstructed and the prospects for our country would be very grave indeed (Gray 1980, 25).

This statement identifies the PCI as the party of the working class; but Togliatti was to further identify the *partito nuovo* as a mass party:

The fact is that we communists in Italy, first among the communists of all of Western Europe, are faced with a new problem...we must intervene in the question of power in the government of this nation. What do I mean when we say Nation? We mean the working class, the peasants, the intellectuals, the salaried labourers, the professional working classes...This is why our party must become a mass party, and it is why we tell our older party members — those who would have the tendency to stay in a small group and would remain “pure” and faithful to traditional communist ideals and thought — that is why we tell them: “You are wrong!” We will be a leading party in so far as we are able to transform our party of cadres into a large, mass party,

able to establish links with all social categories of the Italian people (Gray 1980, 29).

Later, in 1947, he said:

We can still find new roads different from those, for example, followed by the working class and working masses of the Soviet Union (Gray 1980, 35).

Gramsci's contribution to the strategy of the *svolta* must be recognised. Togliatti and Gramsci had not had any direct communication during the latter's imprisonment and Gramsci's *Prison Letters* (Henderson 1988) do not include any to Togliatti. However, Togliatti had access to Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*, which were smuggled out of Italy to Moscow by Gramsci's sister-in-law in 1938 and edited and published under Togliatti's supervision in the late 1940s. It can be assumed that Togliatti had the opportunity to study them for the purposes of shaping future PCI policy. A key notion in Gramsci's writing before and during his time in prison was hegemony. Peter Hamilton, in his introduction to *Hegemony* (Bocock 1986, 11), defines hegemony as 'moral and philosophical leadership, leadership which is attained through the active consent of major groups in a society.' Gramsci emphasised the importance of active consent in his concept of hegemony, which has been central in the emergence of a new form of Marxist theory, especially in Italy, since the end of the Second World War (Bocock 1986, 21). Bocock (1986, 22) asserts that:

The experience with the workers' councils in Turin helped to shape Gramsci's later views about party leadership and its relationship to the masses, views which differed greatly from those who stressed party discipline and centralism. Gramsci was concerned with people giving their full understanding and consent to the policies which political leaders aimed to carry out...He argued that it was important to establish this mutually reciprocal relationship between leaders and the masses before a revolution, for otherwise, after any revolution, the relation between government and the people would become dictatorial.

Bocock (1986, 22) asserts further that: 'Before Gramsci, the concept of hegemony had not been a central one in Marxist social theory. It was never an explicit concept in Marx.' Gramsci was concerned with the problem of bureaucratic centralism which could lead to dictatorship. His solution to this was democratic centralism by which

‘the leadership must develop methods of listening to, and really responding to, the masses’ (Bocock 1986, 91). Bocock (1986, 91) notes that Gramsci never used the term ‘the dictatorship of the proletariat’ in the *Prison Notebooks*. Stephen Hellman (1988, 18) confirms the PCI’s commitment to democratic centralism as defined by Gramsci.

Leonard Weinberg (1995,100), after Maurice Duverger and Sigmund Neuman, describes mass parties or parties of social integration as follows:

First as seeking to advance the interests not of citizens in general, but of specific social categories in the population: the working class or catholics for example. Next, they typically display commitments to ideologies on whose behalf they seek believers or converts. Third, as the term “mass” suggests, these parties aspire to recruit large numbers of committed and dues-paying members. Finally in order to win supporters and members, mass parties...evolve various ancillary or “flanking” organisations and other operations designed to absorb a substantial part of the members’ after work time in the life of the party: the goal is to “integrate” the members and their families into the party’s activities.

The ‘parties that failed to adopt the mass party format were doomed to failure’ (Duverger 1959, 63-71, quoted in Weinberg 1995,101). Weinberg asserts that, in the context of Italian politics, this proved to be correct, citing ‘the two most successful parties’, the PCI and the DC, as having developed mass organisational forms in the post-war decades. Togliatti’s concept of the mass party differs from Weinberg’s in that it did not require members to be committed to the party’s ideology or to be converted to communism. The PCI sought members who supported the party’s policies as being in the national interest. Hellman (1988, 16) notes:

While it paid lip service to the tenets of Marxism-Leninism as its guiding doctrine, this party ignored these tenets for its mass membership, insisting only that those who joined agree with its political program for the war-torn country. Taking an unprecedented step for the period, the PCI invited every one, regardless of philosophical or religious conviction, to join on this basis. This was clearly an open appeal to Roman Catholics — and it greatly annoyed the Russians.

Togliatti was aware that the mass party was a distinct departure from the Bolshevik vanguard party concept, and there was initially considerable resistance to the idea from many leaders and militants. On the other hand, among the opponents of communism there was:

a popular conception of the activities of the Communists as being characterised by political cunning, double dealing and a single-mindedness which put them into an advantageous position when dealing with their supposedly more squeamish liberal allies (Sassoon 1981, 30).

Sassoon (1981, 29-30) suggests that this view was not unlike that of some members of the party who, at its Fifth Congress held between 29 December 1945 and 5 January 1946,

expressed the opinion that, having defeated fascism, the Communists should take up once more the flag of the class struggle and call for a definitive clash with the forces of the bourgeoisie.

Despite Togliatti's denials that the party line represented by the *svolta* and the mass party involved 'tactics', trickery', or a 'secret plan', he and the party had to live with suspicions of what Togliatti himself was to call in 1956 — *doppiezza*, or 'duplicity' (Sassoon 1981, 30).

Togliatti coined the phrase *partito nuovo* precisely to underscore its novelty (Hellman 1988, 16). Sassoon (1981, 33-4) points out that conflict over the mass party concept arose partly because of the varied composition of the leadership. There were the founders: Togliatti, Secchia, Longo, Grieco and Giuseppe Di Vittorio. The second generation which had joined the party in the 1930s included Giorgio Amendola, Pietro Ingrao, Gian Carlo Pajetta, Renato Guttuso, Lombardo Radice and Mario Alicata. They were veterans of the Spanish Civil War, clandestine activities in the 1930s and 1940s, and the Resistance. What Sassoon calls the third generation was by far the largest and had joined the party in the years 1943-45.

For them the Communist Party was the party of the Resistance, but they were also attracted to Communism by the example of the Soviet Union in the war and by Stalin. What we know of Stalin

and Stalinism must not obscure what the name of Stalin then meant to the Italian working masses. To them during and after the war Stalin possessed a mythical quality; he was the invincible leader of the heroic Soviet workers, the conqueror of Europe and the annihilator of fascism, the man who would bring the Soviet paradise to the Italian masses... This, of course, caused endless problems for the PCI leadership (Sassoon 1981, 34).

These three generations were prepared to give leadership to the Italian people in the immediate post-war years. They enjoyed the prestige of leadership in the Resistance and confidence derived from the party's association with the Soviet Union. Party membership, which stood at 501,960 in 1944, had grown to 1,770,896 in 1945, to 2,068,272 in 1946 and then to an all time peak of 2,252,446 in 1947 (Lazar 1992, 398; Flores and Gallerano 1992, 268). Although the sociological composition of the party in 1946 was predominantly working class, it did represent a broad cross-section of society. The major occupational groups were factory and agricultural workers, but there were also significant groupings of clerks and technicians, intellectuals and teachers, students, commerce workers and artisans, small businessmen and managers, professionals, housewives and pensioners (Lazar 1992, 400; Flores and Gallerano 1992, 271). However, as the party approached the New Republic, lying dormant was the problem of the horrors and deficiencies of Stalin's regime. Only Togliatti and a few leaders who had been in Moscow knew of these; the later revelation to the other leaders and the masses was to be detrimental to the party's advancement of its strategy.

The immediate post-war years: the catholic-communist cleavage

Following the liberation of northern Italy, a government composed of all anti-fascist forces was established on 19 June 1945. The man appointed Prime Minister was Ferruccio Parri, a member of the Pd'A who, with Longo, had played a major role in the leadership of the partisans. His government was seen by the *partigiani* as *il vento del nord*, the beginning of political renewal. However, for Togliatti, it was an accident, a delay, neither foreseen nor desirable for the implementation of his strategy (Bocca 1977a, Vol. 2, 437). Togliatti became Minister for Justice, Nenni became Deputy Prime Minister and Grieco was made High Commissioner to purge fascists from key positions and institutions. The parties of the left were well positioned to

initiate a renewal of the State. In theory they ought to have been able to abolish the fascist laws, purge the bureaucracy and the military of fascists, and put ex-partisans partisans in the police forces. Bocca also claims that they should have been able to change the monetary system, tax speculators and inheritances heavily, and insert the influence of the CLN into the State institutions (Bocca 1977a, Vol. 2, 438) However, Parri's government lasted only five months. Cannistraro (1982, 396) records that 'Parri's major accomplishments on the home front were the disarming of the Resistance (in co-operation with the Allies), the dissolution of the CLN, and the ensuring of the continuity of political institutions.'

After Parri, the DC leader Alcide De Gasperi became Prime Minister in December 1945. He was to preside over eight consecutive ministries, lasting eight and a half years (Ginsborg 1990, 6). According to Cannistraro (1982, 160) he had been a committed anti-fascist and a participant in the Aventine secession,¹ deprived of his seat in Parliament and imprisoned for one and a half years. In view of the later gravitation of views within both the PCI and the DC towards an 'historic compromise', it is pertinent to note that De Gasperi saw the DC as a party of the centre that would eventually move to the left, occupying some of the PCI's and PSI's territory. Because of the absence of well developed party machinery he was willing to accept the aid of the Catholic Church, and especially of its lay organisation *Azione cattolica* in electoral contests (Cannistraro, 160-61). After the Parri government, there was a blossoming of cordial relations between the PCI and the DC, and particularly between Togliatti and De Gasperi. Camilla Ravera (quoted in Bocca 1977a, Vol. 2, 445) recalls that when she expressed doubts about this relationship, Togliatti's response was:

Ma no, credi a me, io e De Gasperi siamo d'accordo su un sacco di cose, dalla riforma agraria all'unità sindacale. Vedrai, faremo insieme del buon lavoro.

Clearly, the PCI leader's seeking of close relationships with De Gasperi and the DC was part of the strategy of the *partito nuovo*. In fact, Togliatti had sought as early as

¹ The 'Aventine secession' refers to the withdrawal from parliamentary duties by a number of opposition deputies in May 1924 following the murder of the socialist deputy Matteotti by the fascists (Chabod 1961, 64).

possible to develop relations with the Church. For some years, a group known as communist christians operated within the Church but it was ultimately banned. One of the leaders of the group, Franco Rodano, (quoted in Bocca 1977, Vol. 2, 443) asserts that, as early as the end of 1944, Togliatti had made contact with Don De Luca, a counsellor at the Vatican, and enjoyed amicable relations with him. He also records that later, during the Cold War period, Togliatti had many meetings with Cardinal Ottaviani, the head of Vatican administration.

For De Gasperi's part, Forcella (1974, 189, 196; quoted in Ginsborg 1990, 49) records that 'De Gasperi had considered the principal battle of his lifetime to be between christianity and communism', and 'had, in 1934, rejoiced at the defeat of the Austrian Social Democrats...' In 1937, De Gasperi had thought that the German Church was correct in preferring Nazism to Bolshevism. However, on 23 July 1944, he spoke in conciliatory terms about the Soviet Union, saying:

co-operation between Russia and the West would produce a new and better world. Russia was to be commended for seeking a fusion of races. This effort, this attempt at the unification of the human race is Christian; it is eminently universal in a Catholic sense. Also Christian is the attempt to minimise the differences between social classes [...] to elevate manual labour. (Carrillo 1965, 160)

The following statements by Togliatti and De Gasperi suggest that both considered dialogue between the two parties essential. In a speech to the cadres of the Rome Federation, Togliatti said:

Therefore we have declared, the Communist Party has declared — and I repeat that here today in Rome, in the capital of the Catholic world — that we respect the Catholic faith, the traditional faith of the Italian people; but I do ask, at the same time, that the representatives and the spiritual guides of this faith respect in turn our faith, our symbols and our banner (Togliatti quoted in Hamrin 1975, 138).

De Gasperi responded to Togliatti as follows:

We have appreciated, as is deserved, your declaration of respect for the Catholic Faith of the majority of the Italian people, and we hope that the entire Party will draw the practical consequences of your declaration. The mutual tolerance in the forms of civil living which you propose and which we willingly accept, constitutes, as opposed to the past, a notable advance, which may make us meet more often on the hard road that we must traverse for the redemption of the Italian people (Carrillo 1965, 132).

One could assume that De Gasperi was motivated to be more conciliatory towards communism in 1944 than he had been before the war for partly the same reasons as Togliatti was motivated to seek co-operation with the DC. They both had to do what the situation demanded. They were influenced by their association in the common fight against fascism and by the fact that Britain and the United States regarded Russia as a gallant ally. They also needed to work together to reorganise civil and economic life in the liberated provinces, with the help of the Allied Military Government.

The Constituent Assembly was elected on 2 June 1946. Its mission was to draft a Constitution for the Republic. Shore (1990, 34) comments that during the election campaign:

Communist partisans now found themselves in the paradoxical position of vigorously proclaiming such bourgeois notions as constitutionalism, law and order and parliamentary democracy.

Despite its organisational strength, with more than two million members, the PCI fared badly at the Assembly elections, gaining only 19% of the popular vote, compared with the DC's 35.2% and the PSI's 20.7% (Ginsborg 1990, 99). Following the drafting of the new constitution and the ratification of the Lateran Pact² on 24 March 1947 with the support of the PCI, De Gasperi removed the PCI and the PSI from government in May 1947 and formed a new government together with the PSDI, the PRI and the PLI. He was influenced in doing this by pressure from the United States to get the left-wing parties out of government, recent losses by the DC

² The Concordat or Lateran Pact signed in 1929 between Mussolini and the church proclaimed Catholicism the official religion of the state, made religious education compulsory in state schools and included a number of repressive measures such as civil sanctions against ex-priests (Ginsborg 1990, 101).

in the Sicilian regional elections, and De Gasperi's perception that he was losing the support of the Church hierarchy (Shore 1990, 36; Ginsborg 1990, 111-12). Allum (1978, 264) quoted in Shore (1990, 33) asserts that after the collapse of the Parri Government:

Deep disagreements between the leaders of the Resistance had undermined their precarious unity, and these now set the pattern for post-war Italian politics for almost the next 30 years.

Togliatti was strongly criticised for the PCI's and his own performance in government in the period 1945-1947. According to Ginsborg (1990, 91), in that period 'no attempt was made to reform the central administration at Rome in spite of it having greatly increased under Mussolini.' No moves were made to alter the structure or recruiting patterns of the judiciary, even though Togliatti was Minister for Justice throughout this period. There was some attempt, under a process known as *epurazione*, to punish activists of the fascist regime. Scoccimarro and Grieco successively held the position responsible for this process. Ginsborg says that '*epurazione* proved a disastrous failure'. He claims that: 'Leading fascists were acquitted on outrageous grounds' and cites examples of atrocities carried out by fascists who escaped punishment (Ginsborg 1990, 91-2). Heavy criticism was directed at an amnesty marking the end of *epurazione*, drafted by Togliatti in June 1946, although it was proposed with humane intentions. The amnesty allowed even fascist torturers to escape justice (Ginsborg 1990, 92).

As stated above, Bocca had been critical of the PCI for having lost the opportunity to fulfil the expectations of the CLNs and the *partigiani* when in government. Agosti (1996, 310-12) mitigates this criticism. He refers to Nenni's view that prolonged arguments about the terms of the Constitution and the referendum, would have produced a ministerial crisis resulting in

un sussulto della piazza contro le nostre polemiche e diatribe, qua e là delle provocazioni fasciste e monarchiche, l'intervento degli Alleati e forse un intervento non soltanto politico...Il rischio è grosso (Nenni quoted in Agosti 1996, 310).

According to Agosti it was probable that Togliatti and the PCI leadership shared Nenni's judgement but that there may have been an element of error in their judgement. However, considering the masses' expectations of structural reform, Agosti concedes that Togliatti's dominant concern was to avoid any break with political alliances which could threaten the new democracy. Togliatti's establishment of the independence of the judiciary, with virtually no change in personnel was intended to avoid any delay which would result if there were recriminations. As for the amnesty:

Nelle intenzioni di Togliatti, è un atto di clemenza che risponde alla necessità che la Repubblica si presenti "sin dai primi passi come il regime della pacificazione e della riconciliazione di tutti i buoni Italiani", e allo stesso tempo un "atto di forza e di fiducia nei destini del Paese" (Agosti 1996, 311).

Despite Togliatti's intentions, Agosti acknowledges that the amnesty appeared to be another example of the weakness of the left, always constrained to be on the defensive. Togliatti had to accept criticism not only from PCI members but from Stalin, who, at a meeting of the Cominform in Poland in September 1947, made a personal attack on Togliatti whom he thought lacked the qualities '*per essere un capo che trascina il suo popolo*' (Reale 1958, 40; quoted in Bocca 1977a, Vol. 2, 480).

The first election under the new constitution was set down for 18 April 1948. The PCI and the Nenni wing of the PSI, 'both emphatically Marxist parties at that time' (Shore 1996, 36), had made a 'Pact of Unity' in 1946 and agreed to present a joint list of candidates at the election. Their Popular Front was faced with formidable opposition from the Church and a barrage of propaganda and practical threats from the United States. Its cause was not helped by the communist *coup d'état* in Czechoslovakia in February 1948. Shore writes that:

Overnight, 'Red' scaremongering and anti-communism rose to a frenzy. The Italian election campaign was immediately transformed into a struggle of 'apocalyptic proportions and the vote depicted as a battle between Christ and the Anti-Christ, between Rome and Moscow' (Kogan 1983, 39; quoted in Shore 1990, 36).

According to Ginsborg, American intervention in the election campaign was

brehtaking in its size, its ingenuity and its flagrant contempt for any principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of another country (Ginsborg 1990, 115).

Serfaty (1980, 72) states that the 1948 election campaign in Italy ‘was one of the many battlefields on which the cold war was fought.’ The Popular Front had to contend with the fact that the DC not only benefited from the American intervention but also from the support of the church. The parishes and the 300,000 strong *Azione cattolica* under its President, Luigi Gedda, provided a ready made organisation which the DC was able to use effectively (Ginsborg 1990, 117). Several parties produced a variety of elaborate posters. The PCI’s posters were positive and appealing whereas the DC’s were negative and threatening. As the campaign progressed, the DC tended to copy the PCI’s style (Sartogo 1977). The Popular Front seemed to have popular support and attendances at its election rallies were greater than at those of the DC. Whatever the expectations of the Popular Front, the election results were disastrous for it. The DC received 12,751,841 votes the Popular Front 8,025,390, the Social Democrats 1,806, 528, and the Liberals 1,101,156.

Pajetta told Antonio Gambino later: ‘What we failed to understand was that only the majority of the politically active population was with us’ (Gambino, 467 quoted in Ginsborg 1990, 117). However, Nenni believed — as did Togliatti — that the Popular Front could win, until the last days of the campaign, when he realised that certain groups on which the Front had counted for victory were turning away, owing to a confused fear of communism and the Soviet Union’s domination over Eastern Europe.

We overlooked one seemingly minor detail — that, in a world in which the country modelled itself according to which troops were liberating and occupying it, our country hosted the British and American Armies. We also overlooked another seemingly minor detail: the United States had the atom bomb and Moscow did not (Nenni in interview with Tamburrano 1977, quoted in Colombo 1981, 69).

A central issue in Italian politics after the elections was the question of accepting Marshall Aid. Togliatti was in favour of this, provided that there were no strings

attached (Sassoon 1981, 68). After speaking to the question in Parliament on 10 July he made the following provocative comments which, together with his speech, drew very strong reaction from extreme extra-parliamentary anti-communists.

Desidererei dirvi però anche un'altra cosa: ed è che se il nostro paese dovesse essere trascinato davvero per la strada che lo portasse a una guerra, anche in questo caso noi conosciamo qual è nostro dovere. Alla guerra imperialista si risponde oggi con la rivolta, con la insurrezione per la difesa della pace, dell'indipendenza, dell'avvenire del proprio paese! Sono convinto che nella classe operaia, nei contadini, nei lavoratori di tutte le categorie, negli intellettuali italiani, vi sono uomini che sarebbero comprendere, nel momento opportuno, anche questo dovere (Montanelli and Cervi 1987, 15-17).

Four days later the event known as *l'attentato* occurred. Togliatti was shot near the entrance to Parliament by Antonio Pallante, who claimed to have acted on his own, but there were insinuations that he was an agent in an anti-communist plot. Bocca (1977a, Vol. 2, 511-115) claims that the general reaction in Italy was without precedent. He describes the effects of the *attentato* as devastating; 'the closest Italy has come to civil war in the post-war period.' There was a general strike in the major cities. It was not instigated by the PCI, but its scale and ferocity surprised the party. Thousands of workers marched to the centre of Rome where police had to fire in the air to check repeated assaults on the Parliament Building. Wild scenes occurred in the Senate and in the House. In Genoa, the police headquarters were attacked, six police taken prisoner and five armoured cars blocked by demonstrators. Armed workers occupied the telephone exchange and an electric power plant and installed machine guns on the roofs of strategic buildings, attacked the police barracks, erected roadblocks, overturned vehicles, cut railway lines and disarmed *carabinieri* at various places. Over 120,000 workers packed the piazza, among them soldiers saluting with clenched fists. In Turin, workers occupied the Fiat factory and took sixteen hostages including a university professor, Valletta, one of the country's leading industrialists. Marzani (1980, 94; quoted in Shore 1990, 37) says that the PCI appeared to be in a state of general alert; ex-partisans took command, and 'machine guns and bazookas once used against the Germans were taken out of their hiding places, cleaned of

protective grease, and mounted on buildings facing police and *carabinieri* headquarters.’ For many party activists it seemed that the revolution had begun.

Within the spontaneous mass demonstrations of 14-15 July 1948, there were people who wanted to avenge themselves on the fascists and against the DC; and there were those communists who openly ignored the declared strategy of the PCI. The insurrection demonstrated the wide availability of arms in the community, and that there were people who were prepared to take the opportunity to put their ideologies into practice. The speed and efficiency with which unidentified groups — the DC took the line that they were all communists — assembled and distributed arms and attacked and occupied or wrecked DC offices, police stations and telephone exchanges does suggest a high level of pre-planning. In fact, Shore (1990, 99) confirms that

even until the 1950s the PCI continued to maintain a paramilitary underground organisation formed by ex-partisans who had hidden their weapons when the war had ended.

Marzani (1980, 102; quoted in Shore 1990, 99) argues that there was nothing secret about the existence of the PCI’s armed sector. ‘Given their history, Italian communists had every reason to fear for their fragile democracy and the possible need to resort to arms again’. The speed and scale of the demonstrations, strikes, occupations and armed attacks — on the same day that Togliatti was shot, gave some credence to the implied threat implied in his provocative statement of 10 July. Shore (1990, 99) suggests that the PCI’s maintenance of its armed sector was an element in the party’s ‘duplicity’. However, Agosti (1996, 363) records that Togliatti, at his first meeting with the Central Committee after *l’attentato* adhered to the party’s strategy by reiterating the need to advance towards socialism, not by insurrection but by a series of compromises.

Conclusion

This chapter has illustrated that in the pre-Second World War situation the PCI was the only political party that demonstrated any organised resistance to fascism, even as it wrestled with its leadership problems and developed its own political philosophy

under the influence of, and at times in confrontation with, the Comintern and Moscow. As a consequence of its leading role in the Resistance, the party was potentially in a position to take a leading role in the future government of Italy. Many envisaged that role being obtained through armed revolution supported by the Soviet Union. However, Togliatti's arrival and his declaration of the *svolta* of Salerno, supported by Moscow, identified the direction which the PCI would take in accordance with the strategy developed over many years. Despite some dissension and confusion, Togliatti asserted his leadership. It was time to implement the strategy. No one else had his command on the background, development and philosophy of the strategy. The partisans had established the prestige of the party as a patriotic participant in the quest for a democratic Italy. Their military and political task had been completed. Because of the power of the USA and Britain and the acknowledgement by Moscow that Italy would remain in the Western camp, it would have been impossible for the party to achieve government by revolutionary means. To the extent that the PCI participated in government and opposition in a parliamentary democracy and was successful in influencing the terms of the new Constitution, the strategy was on track. However, the party's removal from government, its devastating loss in the 1948 elections, the *coup d'état* in Czechoslovakia, the strong anti-communist feeling in the West, and the *attentato* and its consequences changed the scenario for the further implementation of the strategy. How the PCI reacted to that change will be discussed in Chapter Three.