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## THE ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY: DEMOCRATS OR TROJAN HORSE ?

### THE ISSUE

On January 16, 1978, U.S. Ambassador to Italy Richard Gardner was suddenly called to Washington for hasty consultations with the President. The immediate reason for his return was the threat of an imminent collapse of the coalition government of Premier Giulio Andreotti. In June, 1976, Andreotti's Christian Democratic (CD) Party formed an alliance with the Italian Communist Party (PCI) in order to provide a stable administration, the 39th government of Italy since the end of World War II. In the second week of January, however, Enrico Berlinguer, Secretary of the PCI, called for the formation of an "emergency government" that would bring an end to the economic problems, corruption, inefficiency, and terrorism that continue to plague Italy. Berlinguer withdrew PCI support from the fragile government, and Premier Andreotti was forced to try to form a new ministry.

The growing popularity of the PCI in recent years and the possibility that Communists for the first time would gain a major position in a democratic government of a NATO state raised serious alarms in both Europe and the United States. The concern that this possibility has generated was the reason for Ambassador Gardner's trip to the U.S., but this concern has not been felt universally. The PCI, along with the French, Spanish, and sometimes the Portuguese and English Communist Parties, is part of what is often called "Eurocommunism," a distinctively West European version of Communism that is allegedly committed to political democracy and the Atlantic Alliance and independent of (indeed, often hostile to) the Soviet Union. Moreover, the programs of these parties are often seen as more moderate and more compatible with the formal structure of constitutional democracy than earlier Communist programs in other countries have been.

Given this characterization of the European Communist parties, many observers in both Europe and the United States have come to believe that there is no particular reason to feel concern over the possibility of an electoral victory by the Communists in these countries. Indeed, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance stated last year that

We have gone on to say that we think the question, the political question of whether or not Communists should or should not play a part in the government of a particular country is a political issue to be decided by the people of that country and one in which we should not interfere.<sup>1</sup>

Secretary Vance went on to say that the inclusion of Communists in some Western states might even contribute to the loosening of the East European regimes. The London Economist, in a somewhat similar vein, has made the observation that "the Communists in Italy have moved forward to receive their new bourgeois supporters by adopting the moderate,<sup>2</sup> technocratic, socially conscious approach of a social democratic party." This view of Eurocommunism has been challenged in recent months by warnings from former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger,<sup>3</sup> historian Arthur Schlesinger,<sup>4</sup> former Secretary of State George W. Ball,<sup>5</sup> and former Secretary General of the Communist Party, U.S.A. Jay Lovestone.<sup>6</sup> Since the return of President Carter from his trip to Europe in late 1977, and especially since the rise of the Italian crisis, there is an indication of a new and more suspicious attitude within the Administration toward "Eurocommunism," as reflected in the Administration statement of January 12, 1978, in which the President affirmed that "We do not believe that the Communists share" the "profound democratic values and interests" of the West, and that the U.S. "would like to see Communist influence in any Western European country reduced."<sup>7</sup>

The controversy over the nature, goals, and beliefs of the PCI and the other West European parties still persists, however. The difficulty in reaching a consensus on their true character derives from their checkered history, their present ambivalence in public statements toward democratic values and policies, and the unclear nature of their relationship to the Soviet Union and the international Communist movement

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1. In U.S. State Department Stock Phrase Book (Washington, D.C., 1977), quoted in Robert Moss, "The Specter of Eurocommunism," Policy Review, No. 1 (Summer, 1977), p. 15.

2. The Economist, February 28, 1976, p. 53.

3. Henry A. Kissinger, "Communist Parties in Western Europe: Challenge to the West," speech of June 9, 1977; reprinted by American Enterprise Institute, No. 70, 1977.

4. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., "Eurocommunism and Detente," Wall Street Journal, August 25, 1977, p. 12.

5. George W. Ball, letter, Washington Post, April 22, 1976, p. A-16.

6. Jay Lovestone, "'Euro-Communism'-Roots and Reality," Journal of International Relations, II, 2 (Summer, 1977) pp. 99-116.

7. Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, "Facing Eurocommunism," Washington Post, January 25, 1978, p. A-21.

as it is led by Moscow. A survey of the history and organization of the PCI may help to clarify this controversy, and a careful examination of their public rhetoric and policy statements should lead toward a resolution.

## THE PCI: HISTORY AND ORGANIZATION

The PCI was founded in 1921 as the result of a split in the Italian Socialist Party. From its beginnings it was closely tied to the Bolsheviks of the Soviet Union and the Comintern. In 1921 the PCI elected 18 deputies to the Italian Parliament, but it was outlawed by Mussolini in 1926. The Fascists imprisoned Antonio Gramsci, a founder of the PCI and one of its principal ideological fathers, as well as other Communists. The effective leader of the Party was Palmiero Togliatti, who lived in Moscow and Paris and who in 1931 committed the PCI to "the destruction of Fascism and capitalism by revolutionary methods; a workers' and peasants' government, a soviet Italy, a dictatorship of the proletariat."<sup>8</sup> Although the Italian socialists also opposed and resisted Mussolini, the PCI refused to form a common front against the Fascist regime with the other leftist groups. In this it followed the Moscow line that the democratic socialists were really "Social Fascists," allies of capitalism and fascism, and should not have the collaboration of the Communists. The effect, if not the intention, of this line in Italy and Germany was to reduce the effectiveness of the leftist resistance to Mussolini and Hitler, to allow the fascist regimes to crush their leftist enemies, and to allow the Communists to retain their organization intact. In Italy this line was changed in 1934 with Stalin's approval, and the PCI and the Socialists formed a "Popular Front." The main accomplishment of this alliance, however, was merely the supply of anti-Franco troops to the Spanish Civil War; the Popular Front had very little effect in Italy.

The Popular Front tactic of alliance with the other parties of the left lasted until 1939, when Stalin and Hitler joined in the Non-Aggression Pact of August 23. The PCI then obeyed the new Moscow line of collaboration with the Axis, and the Socialists in disgust withdrew from the Popular Front. This position of non-opposition to Mussolini was altered again when Germany invaded Russia in June, 1941. The PCI then announced that it would work for the overthrow of Mussolini, and collaboration with the Popular Front was resumed. It was only in this period, from 1941 to the end of the war, that the Italian Communists contributed heavily to the armed resistance to Mussolini, even though he had been in power since 1922.

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8. Quoted in Stanley R. Sloan, "The Italian Communist Party" in A Report on West European Communist Parties. (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, June, 1977), p. 33. Much of the following account of the history and organization of the PCI is drawn from this source (hereinafter cited as "CRS Report").

At the end of the war, the PCI had effective propaganda, a record of armed struggle against Mussolini, a strong organization, and a growing membership. By 1947 there were probably about 2.25 million members. Togliatti now favored collaboration with other political parties and actually served as Minister of Justice in the Christian Democratic government of Alcide de Gasperi. But the Christian Democrats were able to dump the Communists in 1948 following the Soviet seizure of Czechoslovakia and the anti-Communist line strongly adopted by the Vatican. Moscow also attacked the PCI for its policy of participation in electoral politics, and in 1948 the Party adopted a more conventional Marxist approach which emphasized the class struggle.

From 1953 the PCI made gains in Parliament and in mass membership. Better organized and more effective than other parties of the left, the PCI gained while the Socialists lost, though Togliatti's support of the Soviet invasion of Hungary caused some decline in the strength of the Party. In 1963, partly due to pressure from the Kennedy Administration, the Christian Democrats joined with the Socialists in the apertura a sinistra ("opening to the left"), which established a coalition that lasted until 1977. The idea was to make Italian politics more open and progressive than the CD monopoly had appeared to allow. The effect, however, was to implicate the other leftist party in the growing corruption, bureaucratic complexities, and inefficiencies of the Italian government and, by excluding the Communists, to allow the PCI to present itself as a well organized and honest opposition from the left.

Togliatti died in 1964 and was succeeded by his lieutenant, Luigi Longo. The new leader had trouble controlling different factions within the Party, with the result that the Party was torn over the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. In 1969, however, a dissident faction of the PCI called the Il Manifesto group was expelled. In 1972, Longo retired, and Enrico Berlinguer became Party Secretary.

Berlinguer was heavily influenced by the Allende experience in Chile. He argued that Allende had failed in his effort to create socialism because he relied on a narrow majority, and, therefore, the PCI should work for a broad coalition with the Socialists and the CD's. This tactic Berlinguer called the Compromesso Istorico, the "historic compromise." It was not, however, a mere response to Allende's downfall. Berlinguer had been making similar remarks for some time,<sup>9</sup> and indeed there is little break between his version of "Eurocommunism" and the similar version of Togliatti in the late 1940's, when the Party was overtly much closer to Moscow than it is now.

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9. Stephen Hellman, "The Longest Campaign: Communist Party Strategy and the Elections of 1976" in Howard R. Penniman, ed., Italy at the Polls: The Parliamentary Elections of 1976 (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 1977), pp. 165-166.

Berlinguer's leadership has resulted in impressive gains for the PCI. From 179 members of Parliament in 1972, the Party has expanded to 227 (out of 630) in June, 1976. The popular vote for the PCI has also grown from 27.2% in 1972 to 34.4% in 1976. Moreover, the most striking development of the PCI in recent years has been its growing control of local government and its increase in voting strength in new areas. By February, 1976, the PCI controlled 37 of the 94 provisional capitals. Most of these are located in the industrialized North, but they also include southern, Sardinian, and Sicilian cities. These cities include the major ones of Italy -- even Rome, the center of Catholicism -- and the PCI has gained power in innumerable smaller localities. Geographically the PCI has expanded its base from the "Red Belt" of Tuscany and Emilie-Romagna (about 40% of the vote since 1946) to the southern regions of Campania and Sicily (where it received less than 10% in 1946 and 20-30% in 1976).<sup>10</sup> The expansion of the PCI vote has also occurred on a sociological level as well, from the urban industrial workers of the North to the women, Catholics and youth groups throughout Italy.

This growth reflects both Berlinguer's new approach to electoral politics, his espousal of a much more moderate rhetoric than the earlier PCI leaders, and also his continued tight control of the Party.

The history of the PCI is of more than academic interest. Two lessons about the Party can be learned from the history recounted above. First, the PCI has been closely connected to Moscow from its origin; it adopted the Party line of Moscow, no matter how much this might seem to contradict its previous political commitments and positions. The Party's policy toward Fascism changed diametrically twice during Mussolini's dictatorship, and always in response to the Moscow Party line, which in turn was based on what was deemed to be the most expedient means of gaining power for the Communists, not on what was necessary to destroy Fascism or restore a free society.

Secondly, as the Party leadership has perceived, the PCI has made its most impressive gains by disassociating itself from Soviet transgressions (e.g., Czechoslovakia in 1968) but has suffered when it has supported such unpopular actions (e.g., Czechoslovakia in 1948 and Hungary in 1956). At the same time, the Party has gained at the expense of other leftist parties because it has retained a rigid internal organization and has disciplined dissident factions within it. Under the tight leadership of Togliatti from 1946 to 1964, the PCI's share of the popular vote rose by 6.3 percentage points, from 19% in 1946 to 25.3% in 1963. Under the less stable leadership of Longo (1964-1972), the share of the popular vote increased by less than 2 points, from 25.3 to 27.25 in 1972. But under Berlinguer's formula of the "historic compromise," the PCI gained 34.4% of the popular vote, 7.2 points more than four years earlier, and now rivals the popularity of the CD's, who received 38.7% in 1976.<sup>11</sup>

10. Giacomo Sani, "The PCI on the Threshold," Problems of Communism, XXV (November-December, 1976), p. 29.

11. CRS Report, Table 2, p. 45.

The "Eurocommunist" image fostered by the "historic compromise" formula has therefore been beneficial to the PCI, and the motivation of political opportunism should be considered when the sincerity of PCI statements is evaluated. In other words, the change in the image of the PCI may be due less to its leaders' growing commitment to the Western alliance and democracy than to the perception of its leaders that the Party wins votes and influence by sounding as if it has changed. The degree to which the PCI has actually changed since Togliatti's day can be further discerned by looking at its present organization: its structure, leadership, membership, and finances.

Structure: The PCI, like all other Communist parties, is and has been throughout its history organized along the Leninist lines of "democratic centralism."<sup>12</sup> Under democratic centralism, the lower-level members of the Party debate and discuss the positions to be adopted by the higher echelons, which in turn debate, discuss, and adopt a Party line. When this process of debate is concluded by the decision of the Central Committee, or the highest governing body, the Party line is formulated and all members of the Party are required to support it as Party policy. Failure to support the Party line or deviations from it can result in discipline or expulsion from the Party.

But at the local level the PCI has modified the traditional structure of the Party to some degree. After World War II, it eliminated the "cell" and substituted the "section." The 11,000 sections often consist of about 1000 members and meet only once or twice a month. The PCI has also encouraged other groups and organizations, often of short duration, in political activities at a local or regional level. The result has been a highly flexible though still rigorously controlled Party that has been able to command a growing membership and to mobilize increasing non-Party electoral support. The Party, however, still expels members who dissent significantly from the Party line; the very flexibility of the Party's organization means that the leadership must exercise a rigorous control of its own members.<sup>13</sup>

Leadership: Enrico Berlinguer, who has been General Party Secretary since 1972, was born in Sardinia in 1922 of well-to-do middle class parents. Berlinguer has departed from a previous tradition of the PCI whereby other Party leaders represented different tendencies within the Party. He has tended to appoint leaders who more or less conform to his own ideas rather than stimulate debate or design a comprehensive Party line that could accommodate all Party factions. Among other significant Party leaders are Giorgio Amendola; Sergio Segre, in charge of foreign affairs for the Party; Lucio Lombardo Radice, a leading member of the Central Committee; and Pietro Ingrao,

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12. Ibid., pp. 48, 50; The Economist, February 28, 1976, p. 57; James E. Dougherty and Diane Pfaltzgraff, Eurocommunism and the Atlantic Alliance (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis, Inc., January, 1977), p. 12.

13. CRS Report, p. 50.

who was elected President of the Chamber of Deputies -- a post roughly equivalent to Speaker of the House in the U.S. Congress -- in 1976. A leader of the more intransigent and openly pro-Soviet faction is Armando Cossuta, who is in charge of local and regional affairs. Though some of these leaders differ among themselves in emphasis on different points, they represent a generally unified Party with little prospect of schism in the near future.<sup>14</sup>

Membership: The PCI has a total membership of 1,700,000 out of a total population of 56,000,000. It lost members in the 1950's and 1960's but gained strength in the early 1970's. Since then growth in membership seems to have slowed. While the PCI membership is composed largely of the poorer and less skilled groups in Italian society, a new trend has been the expansion within its ranks of certain lower middle class voters. The PCI's position in favor of the unpopular divorce laws, new trends within the Catholic Church, and the apparent easing of East-West relationships have all contributed to the growth and broadening of the Party, as have its own activist recruiting tactics.<sup>15</sup>

Financing: In 1976 the PCI reported a budget of about \$37 million, about one third of which was said to derive from membership dues and another one third from government aid, which also goes to other Italian parties. This was not a complete picture, however, for other sources of Party income were not included. One other source consists of the salaries of PCI members of Parliament; the members are required by the Party to turn over their entire salaries to the Party, for which they then receive a smaller sum as payment from the Party. This would be quite a large sum, but office-holders below the Parliamentary level may not be obligated by this rule.<sup>16</sup>

A second source is business enterprises owned by the PCI. Under the leadership of Palmiero Togliatti, the PCI established Simes soon after the end of World War II; Simes was the first Party export-import company which traded in citrus products with the Soviet bloc. Other export-import concerns over the years have been newsprint imported from Yugoslavia, meat from Hungary, coal from Poland, and, in the 1950's, a blackmarket traffic in U.S. arms shipped to Western Europe but diverted through Eastern Europe by PCI middlemen. In 1976, the largest PCI company engaged in trade with the U.S.S.R. was Restital of Milan, which deals in different manufactured goods and minerals. Also important to the PCI (and to the Italian economy) are its cooperative leagues: the National Cooperative Leagues with 3 million members and an annual business of \$400 billion and the National Association of Consumer Cooperatives with an annual business of \$45 billion.

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14. For leaders in the PCI, see CRS Report, pp. 50-52, and The Economist, February 28, 1976, pp. 54 and 57.

15. CRS Report, p. 46.

16. Ibid., pp. 52-53.

Finally, direct subsidy from the Soviet Union should be included in the financing of the PCI. Until the end of World War II, the PCI received funds from Moscow through the Comintern. In the 1950's, a dissident member of the PCI named Giulio Seniga robbed the safes of the Party where this money was kept hidden. He is said to have collected \$1 million in cash because of a sum delivered from the Soviets the day before. Though the PCI denies that more than 30 billion lire is received from the U.S.S.R. today, this is felt in Italy to be untrue, and the figure is placed at a much higher 30-35% of the PCI's budget.<sup>17</sup> These financial estimates and sources are significant, for they call into question, first, the openness of the Party if it has disguised its financial strength, and second, its independence from Moscow if it still receives a large part of its funds from the U.S.S.R. Regardless of direct payments from the Soviets, the extensive trade linkages with the Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc countries, many of which are concessions from the East, would give Moscow considerable leverage over the PCI.

#### IS THE PCI COMMITTED TO DEMOCRACY?

Many Americans and Europeans believe that the PCI, as well as the French and Spanish Communist Parties, is now committed to preserving a liberal democratic political order and to an anti-Soviet posture in its foreign policy. As such, the Communist parties of Western Europe and Italy would appear to be only slightly to the left of the currently established social democratic parties, and indeed, sometimes to the right. This is close to the publicly stated position of these parties themselves and of the PCI leadership, but other observers have argued that this approach is only a tactical maneuver designed to lull suspicions of the PCI. Once the PCI gains a significant share of Cabinet posts, say these observers, they will renege on their promises, seek to subvert the government, and establish one-party rule. The Eurocommunist parties, therefore, resemble a "Trojan Horse" which will infiltrate the free governments of Europe only to destroy them.

In a recent interview, Altiero Spinelli, a non-Communist who became persuaded that the PCI is indeed democratic and who accepted PCI support for his successful campaign for a seat in the Chamber of Deputies, explained why he believed the PCI's professed commitment to liberal democracy. He argued that the PCI, through long participation in Italian politics, had become "an organic element of our political thinking and political culture."<sup>18</sup> Other reasons why some observers accept the PCI professions at face value are that Italy, unlike the East European countries, is not contiguous with the Soviet Union and could not easily be dominated by a Soviet invasion, and also that the ideological tradition of Italian Marxism follows Antonio Gramsci as distinct from Soviet ideology.<sup>19</sup>

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17. For business and Soviet financing of the PCI, see Michael Ledeen and Claire Sterling, "Italy's Russian Sugar Daddies," New Republic, April 3, 1976, pp. 16-21.

18. Altiero Spinelli, Interview with George Urban, Encounter, January, 1978, p. 8.

19. The Economist, February 28, 1976, p. 54.



This "optimistic" view of the PCI must be countered by consideration of facts drawn from the history of the PCI, from the nature of Communist ideology and practice, and from examination of the Italian Communists' own professions. It is true that the current PCI line expresses a commitment to Western concepts and institutions of freedom and democracy, but it should be recalled that such expressions are by no means uncommon among Communist leaders of the past. For example, in June, 1945, the East German Communist Party stated in an official proclamation:

We take the view that the method of imposing the Soviet system...would be wrong, since this method does not correspond to present-day conditions of development...We take the view rather that the overriding interests of the...people in their present-day situation prescribes...a parliamentary democratic republic with full democratic rights and liberties of the people.<sup>20</sup>

In November 1944, Hungarian Communist leader Erno Gero stated:

The Communist Party does not approve of the idea of a one-party system. Let the other parties operate and organize as well.<sup>21</sup>

In January, 1946, Wladyslaw Gomulka, Communist leader and for many years the dictator of Poland, said:

In our country there is a division of functions, and State power is based on parliamentary democracy. The dictatorship of the proletariat or of a single party is not essential.<sup>22</sup>

In January, 1947, Klement Gottwald, a leader of the Czechoslovakian Communist Party, said:

The coalition of the Communists with other parties is not opportunistic, a temporary limited coalition, but the expression...of all strata of the working people... We seek at present to make certain that our new democratic parliamentary methods...be expressed in constitutional law. If you want the view of the Communists, I can only say that they will be the strictest guardians of the new Constitution.<sup>23</sup>

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20. Kissinger, op. cit., p. 8.

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid., pp. 8-9.

These quotations -- and more in the same vein could be produced<sup>24</sup> -- show the emptiness of the Communists' verbal commitments prior to their coming to power. There is a striking similarity between the statements quoted above and the expressions of the Italian, French, and Spanish Communists in the last few years. That this Communist tactic has not appreciably changed in thirty years is shown by Portuguese Communist Alvaro Cunhal's statements during a recent NBC interview broadcast on January 13, 1978. Mr. Cunhal, whose Party is today considerably less powerful than it was two years ago, assured the interviewer that the Communists believed elections to be an important part of the democratic process. However, in 1975, when Cunhal seemed about to establish his control of Portugal, he told interviewer Oriana Fallaci:

...I have but one answer: we, we do not await election results to change structures and to destroy the past. We accomplish the revolution, and this revolution has nothing to do with all your systems.<sup>25</sup>

Mr. Cunhal also then stated that elections were virtually unnecessary and unimportant in establishing democracy.

It should be recalled that the Soviet Union for many years has had a constitution that, in verbal expressions, is far more democratic and libertarian than the U.S. Constitution and that the Soviet leaders today regard their country as a "truly" democratic society, based on economic and not merely political freedom. The discrepancies between Communist rhetoric and Communist reality should not be surprising, and it is not unreasonable to greet the democratic professions of the PCI with some skepticism.

It must be emphasized, however, that contradictions between language and reality in Communist history are not entirely due to deliberate deception. Marxists from the time of Lenin have made a careful study of the political uses of language and propaganda. Lenin's concept of "Aesopian Language," by which Communist revolutionaries use conventional words with hidden or twisted meanings in order to confuse and corrupt the thinking of the ruling class, is relevant here. According to Dr. Stefan Possony of the Hoover Institution, "Aesopian language is designed to produce a message through a veil."<sup>26</sup> This, with

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24. For other East European Communist assurances of democratic rule, as well as for PCI statements similar to them and to those of Radice below, see The Economist, February 28, 1976, pp. 54-56.

25. Eusebio M. Mujal-Leon, "The PCP and the Portuguese Revolution," Problems of Communism, XXVI (January-February, 1977), p. 30, n. 25. The Fallaci interview with Cunhal was published in L'Europeo (Milan), June 15, 1975.

26. Stefan T. Possony, Language as a Communist Weapon (86th Congress, 1st session, Committee on Un-American Activities, March 2, 1959), p. 32.

the special attention Communists have given to semantics, enables propagandists to disorient those who are not aware of the special meanings of their statements and to turn language itself into a political weapon. It is not necessary to argue that the Communists are consciously lying when they promise to respect democracy. Their real meaning is very often that the Marxian concept of democracy will be respected, but they may not elaborate, unless pressed, upon the differences between this and conventional Western democracy. Furthermore, it is possible for a Marxist to believe that the interests of the "working class" (i.e., the Party) do indeed demand respect for conventional democracy if this approach is useful for gaining power. Once the Party has attained strategic positions in government, the interests and needs of the working class suddenly change to demand a subversive, violent, and anti-democratic approach. So it has been whenever a Communist party has actually gained power.

This mentality was rather clearly but subtly expressed by Lombardo Radice, a leading member of the PCI Central Committee and a spokesman for "Eurocommunism," in an interview last spring.

Though Radice was very critical of the Soviet Union and defended "freedom" vocally, close examination by the interviewer revealed the rather ambiguous nature of his concept of freedom. Asked if there would be freedom under PCI rule for every kind of opinion, Radice answered:

Yes, every kind of opinion as long as it does not amount to conspiracy. Nowhere is conspiracy permitted -- East or West. But every kind of opinion -- yes.<sup>27</sup>

In another reply Radice said:

...there continues to be a great variety of opinions and perspectives which must be given free expression if only to maximize the chances of the further development of socialism. Freedom is a tool for the creative advancement of socialism.<sup>28</sup>

Speaking of a "liberalization of socialism in Russia and Eastern Europe," Radice stated:

But even if the single-party system came to stay, there would be wide-ranging debate within that party, there would be a progressive and a conservative wing -- there would be internal democracy.<sup>29</sup>

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27. Lucio Lombardo Radice, interview with George Urgan, Encounter, May, 1977, p. 10.

28. Ibid. p. 11.

29. Ibid., p. 18.

Under close questioning, it developed that Radice believed freedom in Eastern Europe and Russia would not threaten socialism because "It is entirely unhistorical as well as unreasonable to suppose that they would want to turn the clock back."<sup>30</sup> What Radice or the PCI would advocate if some groups in the "free" society really wanted to reject socialism and "turn the clock back" is not specified. These responses indicate that Radice considers freedom useful for "advancing socialism" and that one-party rule is consistent with freedom. Freedom to him is thus a means to an end and not an end in itself, as in conventional Western concepts of freedom. It is inconceivable to him that freedom could be used to reject socialism. This is an idea of freedom that is explicitly elaborated in the new Soviet Constitution of June, 1977, in which the rights of the individual are subordinated to the needs of Soviet society:

Therefore it is directly stated in the draft, for example, that the use of rights and freedoms by the citizens must not inflict harm on the interests of the society and state, the rights of other citizens, that political freedoms are granted in accordance with the interests of the workers and for the purpose of strengthening the socialist order.<sup>31</sup>

On Leninism, Radice asserted that

Leninism is a profound, scientific approach to revolution in a relatively under-developed country. It was the spirit and the engine of the greatest progressive breakthrough of our century. Far from being a failure one would want to disown, it was and is the most powerful motor for liberation in human history.<sup>32</sup>

However, later on he stated:

As I've just said: for us in Italy the Leninist conception of party dictatorship is utterly false. It wasn't, of course, false for Lenin, because in Russia's particular circumstances in 1917, dictatorship by a small and ruthless party was the only way of having a revolution.<sup>33</sup>

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30. Ibid.

31. Leonid Brezhnev, quoted in "At Long Last: The New Soviet Constitution" in Soviet World Outlook, Vol. 2, No. 6, June 15, 1977, p. 2.

32. Radice, op. cit., p. 17.

33. Ibid., p. 19.

This last quotation is very revealing, for it betrays much of Radice's thinking. Dictatorship or conventional ideas of freedom are "true" or "false," good or bad, depending on the historical necessity of the moment. It apparently was "necessary" for Lenin to cooperate with the parliamentary democracy that existed in Russia before 1917, and dictatorship was then "false;" but as soon as dictatorship became necessary for the revolution, it became "true."

The Western defense of democracy and civil liberties has always rested on the idea that rights derive from the will of God, the nature of man or society, immemorial traditions, or other permanent realities that are now and always true and opposed to other ideas that are now and always false. For Radice, however, and for Marxists in general, "historical necessity" is the source of rights as well as of "truth" and "falsity." What is true for the bourgeoisie may not be true for the working class, and what is necessary today may not be necessary tomorrow. Right and wrong, truth and falsehood come from class relationships and the dialectic of history. With such an ideology, it is impossible to know what "historical necessity" will require in the future, and we may well doubt that a future under the PCI would be different from the past under other Communist parties.

This interpretation of Radice's remarks is buttressed by examination of his attitude toward the Soviet Union. He incorrectly stated that

once he realized the dangers of Nazism, it was Stalin who...objectively speaking, supported the struggle for freedom, democracy, and peace.<sup>34</sup>

He does not point out that Stalin "realized the dangers of Nazism" only after Hitler invaded the Soviet Union in June, 1941. Though Radice criticizes the U.S.S.R. for its suppression of human rights and questions its dominance of Eastern Europe as being historically outmoded, he still defends the achievements of the Soviet Communists:

But we must not ignore the fact that, historically speaking, socialism in Russia has given the Russian people more real freedom than they had before the October Revolution, because it put an end to the exploitation of man by man, outlawed unemployment and inequality.<sup>35</sup>

Also,

Today's Soviet citizens are members of an enlightened, scientifically inspired and technologically advanced civilization.<sup>36</sup>

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34. Ibid., p. 9.

35. Ibid., p. 17.

36. Ibid., p. 11.

Though Radice and the PCI protested the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia in 1968, they have different attitudes toward the Hungarian invasion of 1956:

I was in favor of Russian action in Hungary, and this is no secret...of controlling it, because the danger of counter-revolution was strong. There was Cardinal Mindszenty speaking for the former land-owners; there was violence against Communist workers and so on. Socialism was as yet without roots, therefore the roots had to be protected.<sup>37</sup>

Finally, asked by the interviewer "what would you do?" in the event of a Soviet-Western crisis in international politics, Radice at first stated "we would choose the Soviet side, of course, and we would do so on grounds of principle...." But in the printed version, he insisted that his answer be changed to

It depends. If there is an imperialist aggression with the avowed objection of rolling back socialism, we would feel entirely absolved of any objection of "loyalty" to the "defensive" character of NATO and take side of the Soviet Union.<sup>38</sup>

Nowhere does he consider the possibility of allying with the West against the Soviet Union.

Radice is a member of the ruling Central Committee of the PCI; and what he says, though he is only one individual, should be regarded as authoritative for extracting the current Party line. In some respects, his remarks seem to be a clear defense of political pluralism; but under close questioning, he appears to be much more ambiguous and evasive.

## CONCLUSION

There is little reliable evidence that the PCI is significantly committed to preserving democracy in any conventional sense. The principal evidence that is often alleged to support such arguments -- that the PCI has long participated in Italian Politics and has thus proved itself democratic and that the PCI has verbally committed itself to democracy -- is not convincing. As far as participation is concerned, the PCI has tailored its policies to suit its political advantages since its founding and has usually been closely associated with the Moscow Party line. It retains its structure as a democratic centralist party and permits little dissidence within its ranks. Its funding is still largely based, directly or indirectly, on Soviet contributions and trade concessions. The performance of the PCI when

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37. Ibid., p. 18.

38. Ibid., p. 10 and n. 2.

it has gained power at the local level has been less than reassuring. In Naples and Turin the Party has been accused of trying to place its members in government jobs, illegally requiring Communist union membership for employment in the city council, and gerrymandering electoral districts to promote its own political fortunes.<sup>39</sup> In Parliament, the PCI has obstructed legislation which it had promised to support and which is needed to deal with Italian crises ever since it formed the partnership with the Christian Democrats in 1976.<sup>40</sup> Another revealing example of PCI performance is the fact that, prior to the elections of 1976, the Party did not defend the government monopoly of the Italian broadcasting corporation, RAI. Since the election, the PCI has had six representatives who, with two socialists, dominate the board. The PCI now defends the RAI monopoly.<sup>41</sup> Although the PCI takes a strong stand against the increasingly violent terrorism in Italy, its local office-holders have thus far failed to deal with terrorists in their areas. It is interesting to note that recent terrorism is most serious in those urban areas where the PCI has most recently made gains: Turin, Milan, Genoa, Naples, and Rome.<sup>42</sup>

The verbal commitments of the PCI are even less reassuring than its political performance. They resemble Communist rhetoric of the late 1940's too closely to be taken seriously by themselves and, when closely examined, are not very convincing.

It is, of course, possible for a Communist party to become democratic and genuinely anti-Soviet, just as it is possible for an individual Communist to change his mind, but some concrete test must be applied in order to weigh the degree and depth of change. For a political party, the test should consist of whether it has genuinely democratized its internal structure (i.e., discarded "democratic centralism"), whether its financing is open to the public and independent of foreign sources, and whether its ideology, statements, and performance are irrevocably rooted in time-tested concepts of Western political pluralism. By all these tests, the PCI fails to show itself committed to any end other than what Churchill stated as the goal of Soviet Communism: "not war, but the fruits of war, and the indefinite expansion of its own power and influence."

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39. The Economist, February 28, 1976, p. 59.

40. Claire Sterling, "Why the Communists Junked the Italian Government," Washington Post, February 2, 1978, p. A-19.

41. Enzo Bettiza, "Censorship on the March," Encounter, May, 1977, p. 15.

42. Paul Hoffman, Washington Post, January 15, 1978, section 4.

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