

THE ITALIAN LEFT

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IT is often said at the present time that the Italian Left is in a state of crisis. This is a fair enough assessment, provided it is not meant in a purely negative sense. The crisis is one of moving out of one stage into another; it is a phase which lays bare many of the left's weaknesses, but it also contains dynamic potential for recovery.

To make the present situation clearer, it may be useful to recall some salient aspects of the Left's recent history. The Italian working class movement is undoubtedly the one in Western Europe which has best resisted integration into capitalist society. When the First World War broke out, the P.S.I. (Italian Socialist Party) was the only Socialist Party in the West which took up a position against it, and when the war was over, it refused to join the Social-Democratic International. It was only when the party was in enforced exile during the Fascist period—and was therefore a party of *émigrés*—that it joined the International, in which it held a left-wing position; at that time it was one of the leading parties to establish joint action with the Communists against Fascism. At the end of the Second World War, Italy had a strong Communist Party, which was in alliance with the P.S.I. The P.S.I. took part in reconstituting the International, but then left it immediately in order not to have to break its alliance with the Communists and accept the pro-American Cold War positions then being imposed upon it by Bevin, Spaak, Mollet, etc.

One important reason for the strength of the Left at the time was Italy's economic backwardness; Italian capitalism kept the masses particularly oppressed; illiteracy was extremely high; wages were low; unemployment was widespread. Entire regions languished in permanent misery and economic stagnation. The conditions did not exist for integrating the working class into the system. This produced a situation in which many people, including many intellectuals, adopted radical left-wing positions; it kept class consciousness at a high pitch, and stimulated vigorous mass struggles throughout the early post-war years. On the other hand, capitalism was quite advanced in the North, where the working class also had its main strength, and this situation made the idea of a traditional type of revolution difficult in Italy, as in the rest of Europe. With the Social-Democratic surrender to integration, and the traditional idea of a violent revolution at a discount,

the Left was forced, for the sake of its own survival, to seek a new way to socialism, and it has, in fact, in the course of the years since the war, made definite progress in this direction.

However, the harshness of ruling class attacks on the workers, particularly during the Cold War years, the need to defend democratic rights which were constantly in jeopardy, and the urgent need to improve wages and working conditions, all led the left-wing parties to concentrate their attention on the problems of the moment: fighting off an attack from the adversary, struggling for some immediate aim, trying to bolster the party's electoral position, etc. Because of this, a gap appeared between the Left's theoretical work on trying to find a way to reach socialism in the capitalist countries, and practical activity, which was still mostly devoted to immediate, short-term tasks; party documents and declarations continued to stress the close connection between day-to-day action and the struggle for socialism, but in practice this meant little.

The Left's strategy (remembering that the P.C.I. and the P.S.I. were closely united until 1955) was to concentrate its attacks on the backward, pre-capitalist features of Italian society, as well as on the more blatantly negative aspects of Italian large-scale capitalism; the purpose of this was to try and bring together the largest possible number of political and social forces, on whom, it was hoped, the left-wing parties would then be able to acquire greater influence. In applying this policy, the P.C.I. displayed considerable flexibility and great ability at inserting itself into the most diverse situations to mobilize the masses; it had sizeable successes, its prestige increased, and it built up sound support in the electorate, which even the 1956 crisis (the 20th Congress of the C.P.S.U. and the Hungarian events) could not dent. However, this policy did not attack the structures and real power of Italian capitalism, and operated entirely within the system and for goals which the system itself was, partially, able to accept; but even more important, it gave no answer to the question: what relation do these policies have to the achievement of a socialist society? To over-simplify somewhat perhaps, it could be said that the problem was left in abeyance: in the immediate post-war years, the tendency was to think that socialism would advance in Europe physically as the U.S.S.R. advanced; later, most of the Left tended to think that socialism would come as an automatic result of the victory of the Soviet Union in the peaceful competition between the two systems; but in neither case was there any real strategy for attacking capitalism on the basis of the existing conditions in Italy.

The left-wing parties gradually came to concentrate more and more on parliamentary struggles; as the Left won bigger and bigger victories at the polls (with the prospect of even better results ahead), the logic of electoralism and parliamentarism insinuated itself silently into the Left, including the P.C.I.; the idea gradually grew in many

people's minds that the democratic road to Socialism, which began to be talked about again after 1956, was in fact the traditional parliamentary road advocated by the old reformists.

Given these premises, it is not surprising that the Italian Left at a certain moment was thrown off balance by a number of events which it was unable to fit into its schema, this schema being mainly based on two ideas: that capitalism was incapable of overcoming its difficulties, of eliminating backwardness and misery, of abandoning the Cold War and the crusade against at least part of the Left; and that a homogeneous and monolithic Socialist bloc was on the way to victory, along the road of continuous successes. Naturally, many people realized that the situation was somewhat different, but the general tendency, and the tactics it produced, do by and large fit this description; when reality was found to be different, the schema was shattered.

The main factors in the collapse were the following: (a) the 20th Congress of the C.P.S.U., the denunciation of Stalinism, the Hungarian events, the collapse of monolithism, the Sino-Soviet quarrel, and the revelations of the growing difficulties in the construction of socialism; (b) the New Frontier and the advent of Pope John XXIII; (c) the developments in international capitalism, and particularly the process of integration in the Common Market; (d) the sudden growth of Italian capitalism in the years of the economic "miracle." All these factors together helped to bring about the Centre-Left "experiment."

On the one hand, the ideological crisis which ensued from the 20th Congress shattered the myth of the Soviet Union as a revolutionary model and threw wide open the gates to the idea of a democratic road to socialism. indeed fostered the illusion that there was a parliamentary road, as outlined above. Since it had not managed to move significantly forward in working out an original road to Socialism, the Italian Left found itself thrown back by the crisis in the Communist world onto social-democratic solutions. The classic case of this was Nenni, who swung openly to a social-democratic position immediately after the 1956 events but was forced to beat a retreat under pressure from his party.

The other major development which stimulated the shift was the evolution in American foreign policy from Dulles to Kennedy, with the first experiments in coexistence. It was easy to confuse peaceful coexistence between States with peaceful coexistence or even full-scale collaboration between antagonistic classes, and Kennedy's open backing for an "opening to the left" in Italy gave a further boost in this direction. The shift in Vatican policy with John XXIII had no less influence and went deeper than the change in American policy; under its influence, whatever reforming *élan* or progressive potential there was in the Christian Democrats was allowed to blossom out—and this was another factor which helped to sow illusions about the real nature

of the Christian Democratic Party and the real possibility of a "turn to the left".

Finally, there was the effect of the economic boom and of Italy joining the Common Market. This had two major aspects: firstly, it forced Italian capitalism to modernize and, secondly, it allowed wages to be increased considerably and raised the possibility of full employment, which for Italy would have been a miracle. Thus, the erratic course of the Left and the crisis in its old policies coincided with a series of unexpected changes in the opposing camp, and this conjunction produced the Centre-Left—the entry of the P.S.I. first into the parliamentary majority and then into the Government.

Today, it is fairly clear that far from representing a shift to the Left, the Centre-Left moved the axis of political life to the Right, and proved the means both of consolidating capitalism and of pushing the P.S.I. further rightwards. However, in its initial stages, it did seem as if it might develop in a different way. In 1960 popular demonstrations had swept away the Tambroni Government (which relied on the neo-Fascist votes for its majority) in a few days, and this marked a definite end to the possibility of any further Christian Democrat-rightist coalition. In the succeeding years, thanks in part to the economic boom and the rapid rise in employment, the strength of the working class increased and major gains were wrenched from the employers after extensive industrial struggles. The Social Democratic Party refused to take part in any further coalition with the Liberal Party (a conservative party, supported by big business), and this therefore ruled out the possibility of carrying on with a traditional centre majority (Christian Democrats plus Liberals plus Social-Democrats). Throughout public opinion, there was a sizeable shift towards the Left, later confirmed by the 1963 general election. The Christian Democrats had to ask for P.S.I. support to form a government; as Moro put it to the Christian Democratic congress, the coalition with the Socialists was forced on the party "by necessity". Inside the Christian Democratic Party, Pope John XXIII's policy had given new life to the various left-wing groups and the Left's main leader, Fanfani, showed himself ready to carry out a reform programme. Big business was divided: the Confindustria (Confederation of Italian Industry) was at the time still hostile to the idea of the Centre-Left, but important major firms like Fiat and Montecatini, and state companies like E.N.I. were in favour.

At the time, the balance of forces favoured the Left, but unfortunately the Left had no programme; the majority of the P.S.I. simply viewed getting into the Government as their maximum goal. Like Mollet in France and Wehner in Germany, Nenni was not concerned with actual policies; his main objective—perhaps his only one—was to get into the Government and stay there, and to do this he was prepared to accept almost any conditions. This kind of approach easily

transforms a position of strength into one of weakness; the leader of the Christian Democrats, Moro, realized that he could use the Centre-Left to break the unity of the working class movement and set the Socialists against the Communists. Of course, it was clear that the Socialist rank and file would not accept a sudden reversal of the party's positions, and so the operation was carried out in various stages. Two congresses of the P.S.I. were needed (1959 and 1961) to reach the formula of P.S.I. support from outside for the Fanfani Government and a third congress (1963) to reach the point of the Socialists actually taking part themselves in the Moro Government. Each time, Nenni only won by a slight majority (55 per cent), each time promising that the P.S.I. would only give its backing to a programme for the thorough overhaul of the country's structures; on this basis, Nenni managed to win the support of those people like Riccardo Lombardi, who seriously thought that such reforms could be won by going into an alliance with the Christian Democrats.

The Communists also helped the experiment to succeed; they also fell into the illusion that major reforms would actually be carried out by the new coalition, but, more important, they also thought that their old ties with the P.S.I., and the reform programme, would turn them into essential allies, and that they would thus at a certain moment be able to insert themselves, if not actually into the Government, at least into the parliamentary majority backing the Government. To be fair, this line of reasoning was never expressed publicly, but it seems implicit in the P.C.I.'s attitude throughout this period. Besides, the Communists did not hesitate to attack the anti-Nenni Socialist left as sectarian for denouncing the real nature of the Centre-Left; as for that Socialist left, its weakness was that it was better at criticizing the Centre-Left's policy than at indicating one of its own.

In these circumstances, the Socialists' participation in the Government, instead of forcing the whole situation to the Left, rapidly led to the party itself swinging to the Right. The most advanced position the Centre-Left ever reached was in 1962 under the Fanfani Government, with the nationalization of electricity. But even this was done in such a way as to increase rather than decrease the power of the big monopolies; the Edison-Montecatini merger which is now taking place, under the benevolent eye of the Government, has only been made possible by the enormous sums of money paid over to Edison as compensation for nationalization; the merger will create far the biggest private combine that has ever existed in Italy. After electricity nationalization, the reform programme was halted by the Christian Democrats, without any reaction from the P.S.I. There was, however, a counter-attack from business and finance (the flight of capital abroad, the semi-collapse of the Stock Exchange, a critical drop in investment) which found the Government, and the Socialists in particular, absolutely unprepared. In the face of possible inflation and

the threat of a recession, the Fanfani Government was liquidated in the spring of 1963 and the premiership was again handed over to Moro, who invited the P.S.I. to join in his Government. By now, it was evident that the P.S.I. was no longer a threat to the bourgeoisie; it had been wholly won over to the policy of defending the lira and restoring "confidence".

Under these conditions, even the Confindustria now accepted the P.S.I. in the Government as the best way to carry out its own policy. The fact that the P.S.I. was in the Government was also seen as a means of paralysing the C.G.T.L., the biggest and most active trade union federation, in which the P.S.I. was still united with the Communists.

More than two years have now elapsed since the Socialists went into the Moro Government in December 1963, and in these years not only has every single promised reform been postponed under the pretext of the difficult economic situation and the need to safeguard the lira, but economic planning, which was supposed to be the foundation of the Centre-Left, has continually been postponed to allow an incessant series of amendments to be made to the first Five-Year Plan, mainly to satisfy the demands of big business. The original idea of having a plan was to eliminate the traditional imbalance between the regions (developing the South), between the different sectors of the economy (helping agriculture and the tertiary sector), and overcoming the enormous social differences in the country; it was, basically, a plan for aiding investment in the less developed regions and sectors, and thus went against the prevailing pull of the market. But in its latest form (which has not yet been finally approved) it has been changed into a plan which promotes business concentration and channels investment towards the already advanced sectors; it is thus bound to aggravate existing ills. Above all, the purpose of the plan and of P.S.I. support is to force the unions to accept an incomes policy so as to finance new investment at the expense of the workers.



What is the situation of the Left after two years of Moro-Nenni Government? The Centre-Left has definitely helped to split the working class movement, but it has also helped to stimulate and clarify the various positions on the Left. There are two focal points, which are becoming clearer every day: firstly, the Social-Democratic position, which stands for integrating the working class into the capitalist system and forcing it to submit to the leadership of the bourgeoisie (the Confindustria and the Christian Democratic Party), and there is secondly, the position which stands for class unity and independence, round which are grouped all the forces which refuse to play a subordinate role and be integrated; these forces are being pushed by the logic of events to fight not only against the Government but against

the system of which the Government is the expression. On the basis of present tendencies, it is possible that instead of four parties which are or claim to be Socialist (P.C.I., P.S.I.U.P., P.S.I. and P.S.D.I.), there will soon only be two.

The process of Social-Democratic unification is already well under way. Both the P.S.I. (in its November 1965 congress) and the P.S.D.I. (at its congress in January 1966) came out in favour of unifying the two parties, which now hold almost identical positions.

There is nothing now to distinguish Nenni's position from that held by Saragat before he became President of the Republic, and from the position still held by the latter's party: it is no exaggeration to say that Saragat took a more independent line towards the Christian Democrats than the majority of the P.S.I., which is obsessed with the idea of staying in the Government at all costs. Of the P.S.I.'s whole tradition of anti-imperialism, its refusal to see the world in purely pro-American "Atlantic" terms, its policy of neutrality for Italy, nothing now remains in the present leadership; the latter has shown itself ready to stomach every pro-American attitude and policy of the Italian Government, which is, among the N.A.T.O. Governments, one of the most zealous supporters of the United States. However, the secretary of the party, De Martino, tries to cloak this behind a smoke-screen of words so as not to lose further ground among the workers; his objective is to maintain a balance between the party's policy in the Government and the protests of the party's minority.

The leader of the minority is Riccardo Lombardi, who can in a certain sense be considered the man who made the Centre-Left. It was Lombardi who handled the negotiations over the programme for the Fanfani Government on behalf of the P.S.I., in particular over electricity nationalization; and it was he who enabled Nenni to win a slender majority in the Congresses which decided on the shift in policy. However, the difference between Lombardi and Nenni is that, while Nenni merely seeks participation in the Government, Lombardi and those most closely associated with him are mainly concerned with the Government's programme. Lombardi has backed the Centre-Left out of the conviction that it was a formula which would enable major reforms to be carried out and which would trigger off an irreversible general move towards the Left. This approach obviously suffered from a miscalculation as to the nature of the Christian Democratic Party. Although this party does contain broad strata of workers, it is still fundamentally the party of the ruling class, and it is impossible to carry out a left-wing policy with it. After the experience of these last few years, Lombardi has recognized that not only has the Centre-Left gone in the opposite direction from that which was intended, but that, with the Christian Democratic Party as it is today, it would be difficult for it to do otherwise. Lombardi has now taken up a courageous stand against the Government's proposed Plan,

against an incomes policy, against the Government's acquiescence in American imperialism, against the P.S.I. staying in the Government and, naturally, against unification with the Social-Democrats.

However, in spite of this, and in spite of the tactical reluctance of De Martino, all the signs are that unification will come fairly quickly: the whole of the P.S.D.I. is in favour of it, and so are Nenni and the majority of the P.S.I., who are anxious not to have to face on their own a number of important municipal elections (Rome, Genoa, Florence) which are due to take place before the end of this year. It is obvious that when the two parties unite, the P.S.I. will have to abandon even the thin veneer of "leftism" which, at least on a few international issues, it has continued to possess: it will have to accept the Frankfurt Charter and line up officially with the positions of social democracy.

This unification will raise two practical problems: the local administrations (town and provincial councils) where there is still a P.S.I.-P.C.I. majority and much more important, the C.G.I.L., which is still the union which members of the P.S.T. are required to join according to the party statutes.

The first of these problems is already in the process of being solved. Over the last few years, the Socialists have abandoned their alliance with the Communists in a very large number of cases and allied themselves with the Christian Democrats, and this is something which will continue. There are areas of Italy where long years of co-operation with the Communists and deep popular aversion to clericalism have made it difficult for the P.S.I. to do this, but all the same it is obvious that as the P.S.I. goes ahead, it is bound to have steadily worse relations with the P.C.I. and to prepare its supporters for the final break. Moreover, for years now, there has been a gradual change going on in the membership of the P.S.I.: tried and tested party militants, faithful to the cause of socialism, leave the party, while new members more attuned to Government policy come in (the party now has a vast number of members among the civil servants and the employees in the semi-state companies); these new members are pushing the P.S.T. further and further towards social democratic positions.

The C.G.I.L. is a more difficult problem. Although the P.S.I. has lost some of its influence among the working class, it has kept some of it in the main industrial centres—though this largely depends on the fact that its members join the C.G.I.L. and take an active part in its campaigns. There is also a small Social-Democratic trade union, the U.I.L., but the P.S.I. has always denounced it, rightly, as a "bosses' union", and it is difficult to think that the P.S.I. leadership could persuade their working class members and supporters to move lock stock and barrel out of the C.G.I.L. into it. In fact, on this score, the P.S.I. leaders appear to be divided: some are in favour of leaving the C.G.I.L., but most still seem to prefer to stay in it, if for no other

reason that they can thus curb it and by holding over it the permanent threat of splitting the federation, prevent it from taking up over-militant positions against the Government. Perhaps, as far as the question of the unions is concerned, the only immediate effect of the P.S.I.-P.S.D.I. unification will be that the clause in the P.S.I. statutes which enjoins members to affiliate to the C.G.I.L. will be removed, and it is possible that, at the beginning, members of the new party will be allowed to join any union they want.

What are the effects of this unification likely to be on the rank and file of the P.S.I.? A lot will depend on the attitude of the leaders of the minority, Lombardi and Santi (formerly one of the secretaries of the C.G.I.L.). The positions they have adopted in the past would lead one to believe that they will leave the P.S.I., and in this case there will be a second split, somewhat smaller than the first one two years ago. However, there are two other factors which will influence the attitudes of members of the P.S.I. and will presumably contribute to a gradual, more subterranean exodus from the party: Government policy and the attitude of the P.S.I.U.P. If, as everything indicates, Government policy continues along the lines of the last few years, without any reforms and in accordance with Confindustria policy, the P.S.I. will probably gradually lose all its genuinely socialist rank and file members. Much will depend on the attitude of the P.S.I.U.P. and the P.C.I. whether the left-wing forces still tied to the P.S.I. will be able to find new leadership and join in unifying all the Left.



What are the forces, and the basis, on which all the forces of the Left could be united?

The forces available for a policy of left-wing unity are those which reject the perspectives of Social Democracy. Mention has already been made of Lombardi and Santi as two people who will presumably play an important role in this if, as seems likely, they refuse to fall into the trap of re-unification. They should attract not only the minority of the P.S.I. (about 20 per cent) which spoke out against the Centre-Left at the Party congresses, but also left-wing lay groups who at present are not in any party at all, and who are currently expressing their views in a weekly called *Astrolabio*, edited by Ferruccio Parri, who was Prime Minister in 1945.

It may seem strange that though Catholicism is so widespread in Italy, there should be so few left-wing Catholic groups, in contrast to other countries such as France, for example. But Italy is probably the only country where the Church is still openly in favour of all Catholics being united in one single party. This has been—and still is—one of the most serious handicaps to the growth of socialism in Italy, as it forces large numbers of workers and left-wing intellectuals to cohabit with the most reactionary forces of the Right, to accept

conservative leadership and to live in a permanent state of compromise and fence-sitting. The attitude of the P.S.I., which has lost all its reforming *élan* and has merely tagged along behind the ruling Christian Democratic cliques, has ultimately helped to neutralise what few left-wing forces there used to be in the Christian Democratic Party. It is difficult for its members to challenge the position of their party and of the Christian Democratic Prime Minister, when both Socialists and Social-Democrats support it. This has become even harder since the advent of Pope Paul VI; the Vatican has abandoned its position of relative detachment from Italy's domestic politics which John XXIII favoured, and the Vatican has applied considerable pressure to keep all Catholics together in the one party. The only important figure among the Christian Democrats who has kept a certain independence is Fanfani, who has managed at times to make his voice heard, as recently over the admission of China to the United Nations, and in relation to Vietnam. But inside the Party, the radical elements are certain to be reduced to impotence and wishful thinking. On the other hand, there are many groups of young Catholics who spent their intellectually formative years under the more liberal climate of Pope John XXIII's reign and the Vatican Council, who refuse to join the Christian Democratic Party and to be thus neutralised; and these have openly raised the question of political independence for Catholics. At the moment, they are still only minor groups without much influence, mostly centred on reviews or cultural circles, but they could play a role in the future. Some of the groups have shown clear anti-capitalist tendencies, though, at present, they are, for the most part, only at the stage of groping towards definitive positions.

The existence of the P.S.I.U.P., the new Socialist party which was formed in January 1964 after the split in the P.S.I., is an important factor in the Italian Left. When the first Moro Government was formed in December 1963, with the P.S.I. actually in the Government, and with Nenni as Vice-Premier, two things were immediately clear: firstly, that it was no longer possible to stop the P.S.I. moving further along the road it had chosen, much less to get it to turn back, and secondly, that this path was not simply a mere tactical option, but an outright reversal of the P.S.I.'s whole position. This assessment entailed a strongly negative judgement on the Centre-Left, based on the conviction that the Centre-Left would inevitably be taken over by the Conservatives and that the resulting policy would be one of capitalist stabilization. The facts have confirmed this assessment. Relations between the Government and the Confindustria have probably never been so close and friendly as they are now.

Twenty-five members of the Chamber of Deputies and thirteen senators from the P.S.I., representing about 30 per cent of the party's parliamentary strength therefore refused to give their support to the Moro Government, and it was from this rebellion that the split was

born. Yet, while, broadly speaking, the whole of the P.S.I.U.P. agreed on its assessment of the Centre-Left, there was some uncertainty inside the party as to what its strategy ought to be. The party's origins led it to concentrate its fire on the P.S.I. and it was natural for it to devote more time to criticizing the Centre-Left than to offer positive solutions of its own. Besides, the great majority of the new party's leaders, both in the central apparatus and in the provinces, had been in positions of authority in the P.S.I. in the era when the party was in alliance with the Communists, and there was a strong tendency, however unconscious, to take up the old positions of the pre-1956 P.S.I.—even though, unfortunately, the P.S.I. of that period did not show much independent political initiative and was dominated by a bureaucratic outlook. At the other extreme, some of the young people who rushed to join the party, full of bright hopes because the party was "new"—including some people who left the P.C.I. to be able to take part in the new venture—wanted to try and turn the P.S.I.U.P. into an "ultra-revolutionary" party, attacking the P.C.I. vigorously from the Left.

The first P.S.I.U.P. congress in December 1965 marked a major step forward in the party's evolution towards a more mature attitude. The obsession with the split from the P.S.T. has been overcome, and the party no longer thinks predominantly in anti-P.S.I. terms, much less in anti-P.C.I. terms. It thinks and acts as a party with an autonomous position of its own towards the problems of the class struggle in Italy. The party has, admittedly, had a hard time expanding its organization—it has about 150,000 members, which is not much in a country where party membership figures are extremely high, and where the P.C.I. has more than 1½ million members; in the various local elections which have been held during this period, the party has polled on an average about 4 per cent. But in spite of these difficulties, the party realizes it has an important role to play, and that it represents an essential synthesis of continuity and innovation—continuity with all that was good in the old Italian Socialist tradition, its democratic conception of Socialism, its refusal to submit to foreign models, its determination to stick close to local conditions while at the same time maintaining a thoroughly international outlook; and innovation with regard to the defects of the post-war period, in order to overcome the spirit of routine which had pervaded pretty well the whole of the Left in Italy, and which showed itself in the failure to develop any really comprehensive strategy for reaching socialism; innovation also as regards the need to recognize the new dimensions of Italian and international capitalism, the new problems posed by imperialism, the new conditions in which the struggle has to be carried on today, which need new study, a new approach, a new strategy, new methods and new organizational forms.

The P.S.I.U.P. is a new party and being relatively unencumbered can play a dynamic role of considerable importance within the Left,

provided it continues to harmonize independence—which must not mean isolation or sectarianism or anti-Communism—with a strong drive for unity—which must not mean trailing along behind the Communists. This policy of unity is completely different from the old P.S.I. policy of unity with the P.C.I. as practised at the time of the "joint action pact", when unity was conceived as an absolute *a priori* duty over and above any differences of opinion whatsoever, which in practice forced the P.S.I. always to follow the P.C.I., the stronger party. Today, unity is seen as the target to be reached by each party working out its own policies independently, leading the two parties to the same operational conclusions and thus the same militant positions. On this score the existence of the P.S.I.U.P. has proved a stimulating factor, and has also had a definite effect on the P.C.I., which is at present in a critical phase of transformation.

Along with the right turn in the P.S.I. and the appearance of the P.S.I.U.P., this change in the P.C.I. is a factor of crucial importance for the Italian Left; given the P.C.I.'s size and influence, it is the most important factor contributing to the formation of one large unified party. There are three main subjects which concern the other forces which might join in a new united party: the new party's international connections, internal democracy and a strategy for socialism.

On the first point, international connections, the non-Communist forces are not asking the P.C.I. to give up an internationalist outlook, but to adopt a more independent attitude towards the Soviet Union. The feelings of the Left in Italy are as internationalist as ever, and if anything even more so than usual as the pressure of U.S. imperialism grows throughout the world: everyone realizes that the enemy, however different the forms the struggle may take, is the same enemy in Europe, as in Latin America, Asia and Africa. This requires close international ties and therefore closer unity in the struggle against imperialism, but this closer unity must tolerate diversity; it cannot entail applying the same formulas all over the world; it must not be subordinated to the particular interests of one state, which, however legitimate they may be, cannot be allowed to become an obstacle to the struggle of the other countries. Togliatti started moving towards this position a long time ago—when he broached his ideas on "polycentrism" in 1956—and he took a further major step forward in the Yalta memorandum written a few hours before he died. Since his death, the P.C.I. has continued this policy: in the Sino-Soviet conflict, while firmly criticizing the Chinese position, the P.C.I. has consistently opposed "excommunicating" the Chinese, or anyone else; it has worked for the continuation of existing links and it has maintained, in general, an independent attitude of its own. The evolution of history, and the emergence of new generations of young people who have not experienced the preceding epoch will undoubtedly strengthen the P.C.I.'s independence in international affairs, which is

obviously a necessary condition for the realization of the project for a single united party.

The task of attaining genuine internal democracy in the new party is more difficult. For some years now, the P.C.I. has been going through a change; there has been much more lively discussion and confrontation of different opinions, and in the spring of 1965, for the first time for many years, there was a split vote in the Central Committee, with a number of votes against the concluding resolution, and several abstentions. The disagreement on these questions exploded at the meeting of the Central Committee in October 1965; Pietro Ingrao, one of the members of the secretariat, who had been outnumbered in the commission which prepared the "theses" for the party congress, launched an open attack on the document and called for more guarantees for democracy in the party. He demanded, for example, that the debates in the Central Committee should be published and that the rank and file should play a greater role in deciding party policy; and he opposed the old "monolithic" approach which, he said, was no longer suitable, and no longer worked ("a conception of the Party and of the Communist movement as a bloc in which any disagreement is interpreted as a deviation, a split, which gives assistance to the enemy"); instead, he urged that the Party should find "a way to unite on the basis of an ever more open confrontation of ideas, tolerating disagreement without turning the Party into a Social-Democratic organization and without collapsing into factions and losing its ability to fight as a compact body." Amendola answered him for the majority by saying that "nobody has the right to claim to be the standard-bearer of democracy in the party", adding that "the question of democracy in the party is not only a question of the party statute. For a party like ours, which is a revolutionary party, it is something more, it is a way of life".

All this is no doubt true, but precisely because the democratic road is neither simple nor short, the P.C.I. must commit itself decisively to overcoming certain obstacles which derive from a way of thinking and behaving which prevailed in the party for too long. Without, however, taking sides in the Ingrao-Amendola discussion, the fact that such a vigorous discussion should have taken place between the top party leaders on such important topics is, from one point of view, positive; it has certainly encouraged discussion among the rank and file and has perhaps delivered a mortal blow to dogmatism. But there is still a long way to go; however, internal democracy is an absolute precondition of unification; the Left can only unite in a climate—and a spirit—of real democracy.

The question then remains: what kind of programme could these different forces agree to unite on? It should be said straight away that, unfortunately, the Social Democrats have an easier task on this score. Social democracy has come late to Italy, but it is well estab-

lished in most of Europe and has nothing new to discover. Even joining a coalition with a stronger Christian Democratic Party has been tried out in Austria and Belgium, and Nenni does not have to make the effort to work out a new programme: the goal of Social-Democracy is not to change the existing situation but to provide the capitalist régime with a mass basis, making the working class the ally and the support of big capital: this is becoming increasingly obvious from the way social democracy is developing in the countries where it is most integrated into the existing societies. In contrast, a socialist policy has never yet been tried out in any advanced capitalist country. However, in the discussion of a new policy, the Italian Left, while it may be lagging behind events, is still in the vanguard compared with the other left-wing movements in Western Europe.

It is significant that the discussion on unifying all the forces of the Left should be centred on a new strategy for attacking capitalism. This is still in the planning stage, but it is something which is already present in the minds of the more able leaders and militants of the Left. And the fact that this discussion should also be going on over party boundaries, between members of the P.C.I. the P.S.U.I.P. and the Left of the P.S.I. is another sign that the awareness of the need for unity has taken great strides forward.

What are the main topics in this discussion? The Centre-Left is obviously the main point, even though it goes back some years now; this is an experience which has involved the whole of the Italian Left in one way or another: the P.S.I. actually took part in it, the P.S.I.U.P. was created as a result of refusing to take part in it, the P.C.I. supported it, and placed great hopes on it. We know that the consciousness of the masses is not based on 'theoretical analyses but on their own experience: only mass action and mass experience can produce mass consciousness. The Centre-Left has illuminated the two possible paths in front of the working class: subordinate integration or class autonomy.

It is particularly important that this should have occurred in Italy, after the experience of working class integration into capitalist society via Social-Democracy in so many other countries. On this score, the backwardness of Italian capitalism may be an advantage; it allows the Left to forecast the way capitalism is going to develop, to assess the consequences and prepare an answer, provided class consciousness remains strong and vigilant. This heightens the responsibility of the leaders of the Left; they are in a position to find new ways to fight for Socialism: they cannot afford to lag behind events and be caught unprepared again. This constant lag in the past made the enemy's task easier and made life extremely difficult for all the left-wing parties, including the P.C.I. The P.C.I.'s "theses" themselves say that "the old 'activist' methods clearly became inadequate when Italian society and the domestic and international political situ-

ation changed, necessarily entailing a thorough change in party action." Earlier, the party's "feeble organized presence" in the factories and the fragmentary nature of "the party's ideological and political influence in the factory" had been pointed out and criticized in Luciano Barca's report to the Third National Conference of Communist Factory Workers at Genoa in May 1965. This same weakening of ideological and moral Plan in the party and, particularly, the weakening of political discipline, came in for explicit comment from the top party leaders at the October meeting of the Central Committee.

But behind the political features which have been stressed here, there are also other, deeper, factors pertaining to the nature of modern capitalism—its greater dynamism, its ability to overcome traditional contradictions, to organize its own expansion, to absorb and conciliate differences. The Centre-Left is not a mere episode; it is the beginning of a long-term process allying organized capitalism with the Social-Democratic sector of the working class. Though the Centre-Left has not achieved the reforms it promised, it has attained its essential goals and can serve Italian capitalism as the springboard for a new aggressive leap after the current recession is over. A further result of this is that an alliance with the Christian Democratic Party, which is the party of Italian capitalism, cannot possibly be the way to reach socialism, not even the way to obtain structural reforms: it is only the way to the integration of the workers. The purpose of the Left cannot be to fight for a better Centre-Left or some kind of new alliance with the Christian Democrats, which would only lead to the same results, but to fight to defeat the Christian Democrats, to try and break Catholic unity on the basis of an aggressive strategy encompassing all the centres of capitalist power, mobilizing the masses for political goals and for options antagonistic to those of capitalism.

However, many people still believe in the possibility of a reformed Centre-Left, with a reinforced left-wing acting to counter-balance the influence of right-wing Christian Democrats. The way to achieve this, they think, is to bring the P.C.I. into a new coalition, still led by the Christian Democratic Party, but with its left-wing in the ascendancy.

This is one of the major subjects under discussion at present on the Left; it is a subject which embraces a large number of issues: the nature of modern capitalism, the nature of the state, an analysis of the political forces, etc. Those who support the interpretation of the Centre-Left as the expression of a dynamic, expansive trend in Italian capitalism do not believe that it can be transcended merely with new political formulas; they know that Parliament has lost much of its importance as an instrument of democracy and that today it is mainly a means of institutionalizing conflicts and integrating the working class. They also know that socialism cannot be reached by forming a parliamentary alliance or a Government coalition with the Christian Democrats, but only by attacking capitalist power at its roots, in the

whole of society, from the factory floor upwards. It is not enough merely to bank on an aggregate of discontent; what is required is a clear understanding of the fundamental difference between the nature and meaning of a capitalist and a socialist society, and a positive commitment to socialist goals and values. For this, our analysis of capitalist society needs constantly to be reviewed and renewed. Capitalist society is not static; at any particular moment, we must be able to seize on its weak points and its sharpest contradictions, to discover the most fragile links in the chain, to know the forces which can be mobilized, the means of pressure which can be turned to advantage, the anti-capitalist reforms which may be of advantage—and in all this we must never lose sight of our final goal, to which must be related all short-term demands and day-to-day struggles.

The discussion on the unity of the working class movement must also be related to this question of the ultimate goal. What sort of unity is meant? For those with a traditional outlook on the problem, unity is conceived essentially in terms of the creation of a big Labour Party-style organization which could set itself up as an alternative to the Christian Democratic Party and which could confront it on an equal footing. Such a party would operate within the framework of the capitalist system rather than against it. If, however, one envisages a new kind of struggle, which would shift the axis of power in terms of social power as well as in seats in Parliament, then one must also recognize the need for a party which expresses strong class consciousness and is capable of mobilizing the masses on this basis. If the revolutionary process is understood neither in terms of parliamentary majorities, nor in terms of an armed struggle suddenly breaking out in a highly organized and integrated society, but as a process developing day by day, causing a series of structural changes in a society in the grip of enormous contradictions, then the policy this party expresses must enable it to push forward a comprehensive programme for the transformation of society. While this may not exclude tactical alliances, it does however require that these tactical alliances should never be made at the expense of the global strategy, which must always be anti-capitalist.

The key question is: are the Italian masses capable of carrying through such a policy? There are a number of leaders who are afraid that by going in search of new, still ill-defined strategies, the parties may lose touch with the masses, who are involved in the problems of day-to-day struggle; this would certainly happen if the parties tried to impose abstract schemes for revolution divorced from the immediate demands and objectives of the masses. But the task of a revolutionary party is not to separate the final goal from the day-to-day struggle; it is to link the future to the present, socialist alternatives to capitalist ways, and the overall aim to the particular struggle.

There are other problems being discussed inside the Italian Left,

which are no less important: internal problems and the international unity of the workers' movement, relations between the liberation struggles in the colonial and ex-colonial countries and the class struggle in the developed capitalist countries; and the question of internal party democracy is also much under discussion at present. In a manner of speaking, everything is on the move and there is therefore a good chance that the present crisis in the Left will produce a really new strategy for a new party. These objectives are indissolubly linked: a new party without a new strategy would be doomed to failure, since it would inevitably end up, like the P.S.I., in a Centre-Left type of solution; while a new strategy which failed to demolish the present party boundaries and lay the groundwork for a new party of the Italian working class would be ineffectual. It is precisely because everything is on the move, and because old dogmas are being challenged and abandoned, that there is real hope for a thorough overhaul. Given sufficient will, tenacity and ideas, the conditions are ripe for a new start.