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REPORT ON PROPOSAL TO CONVENE
17TH ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY CONGRESS

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26 August 1985

WEST EUROPE REPORT

REPORT ON PROPOSAL TO CONVENE 17TH ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY CONGRESS

Milan L'UNITA in Italian 23 July 1985, pp 9-11

[Text]

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At this meeting of the Central Committee and Central Control Commission we have to discuss and decide on the proposal adopted by the Directorate to convene the 17th PCI National Congress by spring 1986, 3 years after the last one in March 1983 and in accordance with the normal procedures laid down in the party regulations.

The need for in-depth deliberations and discussions involving the entire party and culminating in a national assembly was in any case recognized and clearly emphasized at the Central Committee session in May. We believe that the congress option can provide the most suitable and valid answer to this requirement. It is clear, however, that it is recommended and dictated to us by a combination of political reasons and primarily by the changes and innovations--including some very considerable ones--that have come about in recent years or that are occurring in our country's life and in the international field.

For the present a brief and objective mention of the essential factors will suffice.

During this period the people have been consulted four times in Italy, with a rapid succession of varying results.

Since 1983 there has been the experience of a five-party government headed by a socialist. Sharp tensions and a particular atmosphere of conflict within the Left have come about over the government's approaches and conduct in the economic field, while the elements of internal tension which have characterized this phase of the five-party coalition are still in force: A stock-taking of the past 2 years must in any case be carried out.

The recent election of the president unquestionably constituted a positive factor in improving the political climate and political relations,

particularly through the reassertion of a correct and valid line of institutional policy based on the equality and agreement of the democratic and constitutional forces.

Conservative Offensive

This is just one episode--however significant--in the face of the whole range of constructions and distortions that have long burdened our democratic system and in the presence of the requirements for the regeneration and development of Italian democracy.

More fundamentally, there has been an attempt within our society over the years to provide an answer to the crisis of capitalist development, to the need for technological innovation, to the requirements of the competitiveness of our economy in accordance with lines which, however conflicting and vague, aimed to hit workers' incomes, to challenge and reduce fundamental social rights and gains, and to restrict the trade unions' bargaining power and democratic scope. These policies have not produced positive solutions of reform and recovery. We have witnessed an only too evident confirmation of this in the devaluation of the lira. Just as the Val di Fiemme [dam] disaster has yet again revealed profound and intolerable faults and shortcomings in the organization of the economy and the state. The social and political confrontation and conflict over the prospects for the Italian economy and society have grown harsher and remain entirely unresolved.

Furthermore, one cannot fail to observe how, from this viewpoint, our country's vicissitudes are interlinked with those of the countries of the entire capitalist area, which is being assailed by a conservative offensive in the economic, social, and cultural fields. The new and arduous issues with which we have found ourselves grappling in Italy in order to define and establish a blueprint and a line that will guarantee a new kind of social and civil progress are largely the same as those having to be confronted throughout Europe by the forces of the workers' movement and the Left, whether in government or in opposition.

Last, it is necessary to consider the significance and impact of the novelties that have occurred in the international field, in relation to the future of our society and the other West European societies, the beleaguered process of EEC economic and political unity, and more generally the major problems of mankind--from peace to underdevelopment.

It is this combination of factors that determines the need for a critical, open-minded, and thorough examination of our policy; for a more penetrating effort of analysis of the Italian situation and of current European and world trends; for an endeavor to elucidate and develop our strategy and our political and program blueprint, which we consider a duty of the PCI to the entire country.

This is the primary and essential reason behind the proposal to call a congress.

The internal affairs of our party also played an undeniable part in this decision. Certainly it cannot be any surprise that after such a traumatic event as Enrico Berlinguer's sudden death and in view of the great prominence of his work and his political legacy we feel the need to deliberate and to take stock, partly in the light of the results of this past year. It would have been impossible--and in my view mistaken--in June 1984 to go beyond the measure, dictated by necessity, of electing a new secretary general.

There was at that time a universal and profound tide of emotion and a sincere tribute to Enrico Berlinguer's memory. More recently a campaign has begun against this or that aspect or element of his long and complex work with the aim of attacking, in Berlinguer, one of the loftiest examples of the Italian communists' intelligence and moral and political commitment.

As always, we are in favor of the broadest effort of scientific investigation into our history. But this is something quite different from the shameful attempt to ignore or dismiss a great legacy of ideas and work.

We identify completely with the options taken along a path which gave a great deal to Italian democracy, to the workers' movement, and to our party. Above all we accept our own responsibilities.

It is with this attitude, with a very open mind and scrupulous attention to the truth, that we must now discuss not only the approach that we have followed, the political options that we have taken during this phase, and the corrections and innovations that are considered necessary but also the problems of the party, the need for changes in the organization, the structures, or the composition of its leadership bodies.

For these reasons the Directorate was unanimous in its belief that of the various alternatives considered here in May, the most straight-forward and useful is a congress, partly because on the one hand it was impossible to wait until 1987 and on the other it was not advisable to involve the party in 1986--following the regional congresses--in a national assembly (a conference on organization or policy) that would in any case have assumed the character and scope of a congress, and only then, virtually without break, to hold an actual congress in spring 1987.

There is no need to point out that the holding of a congress "at least every 4 years" laid down by party regulations indicates a maximum period and that at our 16th congress we in fact discussed the desirability of changing it, because it seemed--rightly, I believe--that 4 years seemed too long in view of the need for a more prompt development of our policy and change in our leadership forces, just as, for that matter, we had already realized the complexity and inconvenience of two sets of congresses (regional and national).

We left the requirement as it stood, emphasizing, however, that it permitted other decisions, as we are now proposing by bringing forward the national congress and combining it with the regional congresses.

The need for a congress does not stem from this, albeit necessary, appraisal of the most suitable frequency and forms of debate and its significance does not lie in the choice of an earlier date. The decisive issue is the task that we believe we must set ourselves.

We are indeed aware that it is not simply a matter of identifying and overcoming shortcomings or limitations in our political approach and action in recent years, of carrying out a few political and organizational corrections to stimulate and achieve a recovery of positions. This is of course an important and a pressing task for us, but our objective must be more far-reaching and ambitious.

Crucial Phase for Europe

At what is in so many respects a crucial time for Italy and Europe we must try to enhance the strength and persuasiveness--in terms of consistency and specificity--of our political and platform proposal of a democratic development of society, of a process of real change, of an alternative political approach and leadership. And we must pursue this goal not only through an open-minded relationship and dialogue with the stances and ideas of all Italian and European forces of progress and reform, but also by reappraising and proceeding from the strategic options that have formed the foundation of the long and positive path covered by the PCI over the past decade, reasserting and further sharpening our party's image as a genuine socialist force and its government role.

What I mean is that the congress is not being imposed on us by an emergency situation; neither is there any intention of starting again from scratch, as though the policy and events of the more recent and more distant past that made the PCI a fundamental force of the nation and of Italian democracy and a reference point in the democratic and socialist struggle in Europe has been marked by a sequence of erroneous options, inconsistencies, and contradictions. Such a fortunate sequence of errors seems to us frankly incredible. And not only is it a mistake to engage in a self-criticism conceived as a destruction of all the work of formulation done hitherto, but it does not lead to any real result. Precisely in order to carry out a real task of analysis we must combat every kind of mere propagandist agitation on this or that aspect of our history, urging complete sincerity in the expression of opinions but also a scrupulous approach to the analysis of the facts.

We must be fully aware that our congress is not taking place within a political vacuum or amid a complete absence of initiatives on the part of those who have always worked in every way against our party, against what it is and what it stands for in Italian political life in its defense of the most disadvantaged sectors and classes. It is irresponsible to argue as though there no longer existed a systematic campaign that uses every kind of distortion and mystification of our policy and methods so as to create hostile opinions about us and thus to explain that there is objective hostility against us.

We must also be aware that the so-called "rules of the game" are by no means handled in accordance with the dictates of integrity. It is enough to consider--to give just one example--the media and the use of public money. There is nothing new in the attempt to undermine us, though we must realize that the techniques used are to some extent new and more refined. There is only one answer to these attempts: not to close in on ourselves but to open our doors and windows, allowing new air to circulate, that is, by renewing our ideas and our policy. But renewal requires an even more responsible and earnest approach; it demands a reassertion of communists' traditional gifts, which made them great and which are in no way diminished.

We must be open to all kinds of criticisms. But it is not true that there is no perceptible dividing line between criticism and denigration. The discussion of ideas demands, as always, not only tolerance but also complete mutual understanding and the rejection of labels and even more so a struggle against any kind of personal gossip or insinuations.

It is my duty to issue a specific appeal now for correct conduct, which must be all the more correct the greater the responsibilities at stake, and to address an appeal to the entire party not to tolerate defects in or departures from the method and habit of responsibility and scrupulousness, both intellectual and moral, that are a valuable and shared heritage.

It is only with such a method and such an attitude that we will succeed in performing all the major tasks facing us both in taking stock of the ground we have covered and, above all, in promoting a new phase in our party's policy.

To this end we need to begin preparations for the congress right away, without delay, and to have sufficient time available to make the congress a major political initiative, an opportunity for an open-minded exchange of political and cultural opinions among communists and between communists and the other democratic forces of Italian society, culture, and politics so as to give the entire party a chance to discuss and decide on precise and clear lines and proposals.

If we want to impart to the congress these demanding characteristics of an examination, formulation, and genuine discussion of the party's problems, major choices of course, and its political and ideological character, obviously there must be not only a full shouldering of responsibility and a joint determination on the part of the leadership groups, in the broadest sense of the term, and of communist forces as a whole, but also a leadership of the pre-congress phase--from the definition of our policy platform to the holding of the actual congresses--that will ensure the full expression and free exchange of ideas and stances, observance of the democratic method in political decisionmaking, and adherence to the criteria of capability, qualifications, and results achieved at work in the allocation of political responsibilities and leadership posts.

I said at the last Central Committee meeting that there is nothing in our party's regulations that can prevent or hinder a real dialectic of stances,

or clearness and promptness of decisionmaking. We are convinced that to make the congress the opportunity and forum for a real dialogue and for precise and specific choices among differing or alternative stances it is by no means necessary, as certain comrades suggest, to make a preconceived break with the conception and methods of our party.

On the contrary, we believe that our unitary spirit and will, our attitude of honesty and mutual respect in the political struggle, our quest for convergence and unity in political inspiration and on fundamental objectives--which have been a special characteristic of the PCI and have ensured its autonomy and strength--remain preconditions and valid and topical principles for ensuring the broadest freedom of debate and for making unity the outcome of a dialectical process.

In order to provide the surest and most methodical possible basis for this approach to the congress, the Directorate agreed to propose the establishment of a commission of the Central Committee and the Central Control Commission having broader and more substantial responsibilities and tasks than in the case of previous congresses. The proposal is to entrust to this commission all the work connected with organizing and holding the congress--the choice of what kind of policy document to submit to the Central Committee and the Central Control Commission and its formulation; the coordination of the debate in our press (platforms) and in other sectors of the media; the promotion of study initiatives and of debates on specific issues, including with other interlocutors; and the conduct of the actual congress campaign.

At the end of this meeting we will decide--if there is agreement with the proposal--on the composition of this commission and of the bodies within it that will have to organize and direct its activity. We would like now to introduce in this way a substantial and original innovation in the democratic workings of our party, both by involving as much of it as possible in the direction of congress work, within a unitary framework, and by drawing the necessary distinctions between this congress work and the direction of the day-to-day political battle. At this time there is a greater need than ever for the party's initiative, involvement, and struggle. Those who maintain that we will now isolate ourselves in order to discuss our own affairs are mistaken. Our affairs are those of the country and its government. Those who believe that we will remain paralyzed, for who knows how long, by the so-called battle of the hierarchy, are mistaken. We will decide on the most suitable solutions and choices for the structures and appointments at the right time and in accordance with the party's requirements, in complete autonomy and freedom. So we must not allow ourselves to be led away from our method: it is part of the character and very style of our congresses to pledge ourselves to adopting a stance and deciding on the issues at stake, to base our debate--over and above deliberations on the past--on current political processes and on the results of our action in order to ascertain the validity and specificity of a policy line on the basis of the facts.

May Elections and Referendum

Stressing the importance of the referendum does not imply overemphasizing its significance.

An awareness of history--and not just over the past 40 years--suggests to me that it is not advisable to attribute huge significance to every stage, however important, in the life of the nation or in that of one or other of the political forces. Furthermore I have always considered, and still consider, it not only wise but vital for a major ideological and political force to adopt a line of the boldest regeneration--without unjustified eliminations of abandonment of its historical heritage. Nevertheless I believe it is right to acknowledge the extraordinary nature of the test we have to face on account of the responsibilities due to us and as the party that has represented and still represents the fundamental force and hope for change and progress of Italian society.

This realization has certainly grown sharper in us as a result of the poor result in the 12 May elections and the failure of the 9 June referendum battle. There is nothing to be hidden or played down. It may be, as some have observed, that there has been an excessively sharp self-criticism in our assessment of the local election results, and it is certainly correct and advisable to consider the facts of the referendum beyond the obvious acknowledgement of the victory of the "noes" and the defeat of the "yeses." The essential thing for us, however, is to learn from these recent phases in the political struggle, through careful consideration, real and useful lessons and not the lessons that others would like to impose on us for their own benefit.

Thus I do not believe that the referendum result should cause us substantially to alter the assessment which we made here following 12 May. It is true--and we must not underestimate the fact--that on the subject of a specific measure and of the economic policy of the government, support for the coalition, despite the manifold instances of outside help, showed a considerable decrease from the local elections. But we form a responsible assessment of that 54 percent and of the fact that it also represents considerable forces of the labor world, partly on account of the major commitment of sectors and currents of Catholic solidarity. However, it would be a great mistake to underestimate the extent, the importance, and the significance of the "yes" vote cast by 46 percent of the electorate. This is not only because our party had to fight virtually alone, and under conditions made more difficult by the 12 May elections, in this battle in which the issue of the government and the five-party majority was again at stake, and dramatically so. It is more important to state that the people's opposition to the decree extended far beyond the scale of the parliamentary opposition; that the "yes" vote represented not only the defense of the interests and rights of the working class and the world of employed workers, the majority of whom undoubtedly did align with that stance, but that, more generally, it reflected a major deal of social justice, an antiauthoritarian protest, and a substantial critique of the government's approach to economic policy and of its achievements. It is certainly legitimate to discuss--

including within our own ranks--the calling of a referendum, which we decided here. But an in-depth analysis cannot divorce this aspect from the overall events of 1983-84, from the prolonged and paralyzing dispute over the labor costs issue, from the just battle which we communists--both as a party and within the CGIL--waged against the 1984 decree and against the economic policy line and against the conception of social and political relations which that measure reflected and was intended to assert.

No justification or support can be given to arguments that the referendum initiative caused a split in the trade union movement, which in fact already existed, or that it prevented or hindered the government and the majority from doing anything, even from honoring its commitments--with regard to employment or taxation--embodied in the February 1984 accord. But above all it is necessary to deliberate on the substantive and deplorable reality of the facts, and I am referring to the facts that now characterize the economic situation--the level reached by unemployment and redundancy; the redistribution of income to the detriment of employed workers, especially wage-earners; the disarray of the state budget and of our balance of payments; and now the collapse and devaluation of the lira. It is not so much that in a democratic nature it would have been desirable to inform and consult the opposition on a measure of this kind. What has happened--thanks partly to irresponsibility and ignorance and partly to a predetermined maneuver designed to rush things through--implicates the ministry's responsibilities and diminishes its esteem and credibility both in Italy and abroad.

It is all this, relations among the trade unions, and relations between the trade unions and the employers' federation and the government that must prompt us to acknowledge the correctness and well-foundedness of the approach that we have sought to pursue and to establish. Let it be clear that we are well aware that the alignment, however impressive, of the "yes" voters does not constitute an adequate basis for a policy of regeneration or a democratic alternative, not only because it is a minority but because it embodies a clear limitation from the social and political viewpoint that brings us back to the problem of alliances. But, as long as the analysis is not turned to propagandist agitation or to mere polemical manipulation, the referendum results, for both alignments, urge a more realistic assessment of the real balance of social and political forces and an assessment of the complexity and the dynamic of our country's situation that is neither simplistic nor dismissive. The desire to govern in a manner that exacerbates relations with this 46 percent of the Italian people would mean pursuing a line that is not only deplorably class-oriented but harmful to everyone, because it would be bound to exasperate social tension.

Five-Party Coalition's Failures

The essential observation to be made is that following the two electoral tests the strengthening of the five-party coalition seems entirely relative, not only because it still represents a blocked political system with all the typical elements of construction, mutual dictates, and conflict and with the burden of contradictions brought about by the diversity of interests, outlooks, and political attitudes, but above all because--and this is the most

important aspect--all the acute problems over which the conflict and struggle has developed over the years are still unresolved.

If it is true that we have not succeeded in putting forward solutions capable of rallying new majorities together, it is equally true that the responses of the government and the present coalition parties to the major national issues have had no conclusive impact or efficacy and have produced no appreciable result. "It is not a complete disaster..." the DC secretary said in an unguarded moment, but the truth is that so far there has been a failure to take the necessary, indispensable steps to really promote a policy of economic and financial recovery, of democratic development of society and of the state.

But to reassert a severely critical verdict on the approaches of the leadership groups of Italian capitalism and of the government; to be fully aware that we are not the only ones being called to account; and to regard the situation as open does not in the least imply underestimating the scale and the difficulty of the effort we have to make, just as our reference to the international dimension of the crisis and to the straits affecting other European left-wing forces too is not intended to be comforting.

On the contrary, it aids a realization that the stakes are high and that they demand a major capacity for analysis and political innovation and a major commitment to initiative and struggle.

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The congress must make a careful check of our political line. However, I think we should clearly reject the idea that our party has hitherto acted without its own clear view of the country's basic needs. If this was the case our great strength could not be explained in any way. It depends primarily on the essential and decisive contribution which the communists have succeeded in making to the development of democracy, to the nation's cause, and to the promotion of great masses of people to a leading force in society.

The fundamental line which forms the inspiration of the PCI's action corresponds to the view of a development of the nation based on unity on decisive questions of the major sections of the people who, with different inspirations and experiences, form the Italian democratic movement. An essential factor in determining this view which we owe primarily to Togliatti, was the experience of the defeat suffered in face of fascism, the requirements of the antifascist struggle and, subsequently, the requirements of rebuilding the country after the catastrophe of the war.

This line was the foundation of the democratic victory over fascism, the establishment of the republic, the constitutional pact, and resistance to the most dangerous attempts to attack the democratic system. This strategy of democracy unity was a constant factor in the Italian communists' policy and it was also this that gave rise to the "historical compromise" formula which Belinguer used after the Chilean tragedy--a tragedy which has not yet been resolved, let us not forget.

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The unitary view of the Italian democratic process cannot and should not be confused with the idea of reducing to unity a fragmented society, which some currents of thought maintain is necessary--an idea which may lead to a negation of social conflict and, ultimately, to form of dangerous homogeneity.

When we upheld the idea of the constant need for a unitary concept of the democratic process we were referring and wish to refer to a recognition which should be common and binding for all the country's democratic forces. In other words the recognition of the constitutional framework, of the set of principles, values, and pledges of the constitution and, hence, of the search for agreements and understandings beyond political and parliamentary alignment, on the fundamental interests of the nation and of democracy, peace, national independence, the defense of democratic freedoms, and the essential principles of justice.

We have always been completely faithful to this inspiration, as has been shown in recent years in the struggle against terrorism. But the same can certainly not be said for other political forces. Even the recent approach by the DC to arrive at the election of the president of the republic, through agreement among the parties which founded the republic and wrote the constitution, was achieved after this same criterion, which we have always regarded as necessary, had been repudiated for a long time. We are now seeing this presidential election portrayed as one party's victory: It would be more appropriate to say that the DC had to recognize the error of this method of confrontation which it chose on all previous occasions.

The reaffirmation of the policy aimed at seeking the unity of all democratic forces of the nation's fundamental problems can and should be absolutely clear on our part. However, at the same time, it is necessary to make it clear that, even when this gives rise to institutional agreements, it does not mean the choice of what should be called a "corporative democracy" [democrazia consociativa]. This expression is intended to refer to a method of taking decisions, especially in the sphere of parliamentary activity in which the activity of the majority and that of the opposition are not clearly distinguished. This corporative form is portrayed as an undeserved favor granted to the opposition, while the other implication is not only present but prevails, in other words the advantage it has for the majority which, with this practice, tends to conceal its own responsibilities and thus obtain the maximum results. If it was really true that the form of democracy practiced in Italy was essentially the corporative form there could be no doubt whom this has benefited given that there have now been 40 years of DC-dominated government. Indeed even with these electoral systems which tend to favor clear two-party parliaments, parliamentary activity frequently and logically experiences forms of encounter and mediation between the majority and the opposition; and only a fanatical view of the political struggle can conceive of a complete and rigid separation of the forces which have, or should have in common the principles of a constitutional pact. It would be a serious matter if the opposition gave up struggling with all its strength to avoid, or if it is not possible to avoid them, to change the measures which it regards as harmful or inadequate.

This activity too is part of the normal logic of a parliamentary democracy, as is the need for a rapprochement among the constitutional forces on the major institutional issues. But all this has been, and still is, regarded by us as a precondition for achieving the other essential aspect of a normal and healthy democratic life, namely, the building of various alliances of forces in the country's government--the alternative not only within a permanent majority formula but among really different forces in the nation's leadership.

It has happened that in particular situations institutional agreement has also produced a government formula--in the liberation struggle, during the period of the founding of the republic, and later, in a different form and to a different extent, in the more recent democratic solidarity phase. And of course one cannot rule out the possibility of this institutional accord again being reflected in a government solution at moments of emergency for peace, the nation, or democracy.

However, I believe that the idea that a consistent democratic development and substantial economic and social changes must necessarily be based on such broad agreements lacks any valid substance and is at least questionable. The rallying together of a majority for reform must of course contend with its opposing alignment for all the social, political, and ideological areas that can really be involved in a policy of structural regeneration.

At the same time, normal democratic life requires the possibility--for the very sake of integrity in political life--of changes and real alternatives in the administration of public affairs, in policies, platforms, and projects, in view of the requirements constantly being presented by the evolution of society.

This is where the real "ethical issue" lies--in an unresolved confusion between the state and parties that have almost always been in government.

The fact is that during the 40-year history of the republic the political system has been founded basically not on real alternatives but on the principle of coopting from an area always centered on the DC. And with one force--ours--always in opposition, which has unquestionably made itself felt and succeeded in exerting some influence but which was long denied--and is still in principle partly denied--access to government. This has created, and still creates, the need for a democratic alternative policy, because it is apparent that the order that has existed for the past 40 years has reached a critical point. Those who derive from the recent election results the idea of an already attained stabilization of the ruling social and political bloc are mistaken. Not only has the opposition to the present government been confirmed to be very extensive but, with the elections only just over, one can already observe the recurrence of the internal tensions and the conception of power that have caused so many contradictions and so much harm.

It is necessary to overcome the anomalous nature of the Italian political system not only to give democracy a correct and natural functioning but also

for the sake of a more substantial aspect concerning the substance of political action. Italy's systematic lag in many fields and above all the state's permanent inefficiency are partly the result of the fact that by preventing rotation and by preventing the government participation of the Left's strongest party, the result has been to hold back the process of innovation that other European countries have carried out, partly and precisely because the parties of the Left have brought elements of real change into the government experience.

Concerning the conception of the alternative, which the congress must of course examine again, we have frequently asserted a combination of characteristics which, in my opinion, remain entirely valid: the nature of a long-term process; its democratic character, in terms of a breadth of alignment extending beyond the left-wing forces alone; the substance of a strongly innovative national program. So it has been, and still is, a dynamic line which has not been intended to exclude intermediate stages and steps.

This line, however, despite all its vitality and flexibility, remains extremely difficult, on account of the endurance of social and political forms of resistance and rejection, to which we must turn our attention more sharply.

In preparing for our congress we must strive to examine our own responsibilities--either in the distant or in the more recent past--for this rejection of the alternative which has involved even certain democratically and progressively oriented social and political forces.

Obviously we cannot accept explanations so simplistic as to be grotesque. There are those who propose an outright abandonment of the principles behind our history and our presence within society, which would have the obvious consequence that, with the loss of meaning of the PCI, the proposal of an alternative would also lose its meaning.

Transformations in Labor World

Having said this, however, it is essential that we succeed in our debate in reaching the heart of the most important issues concerning the topic of social and political alliances. To acknowledge that the democratic alternative has not proved to be credible at present does not imply shelving it. On the contrary, if we recognize that there is no other serious prospect for Italian democracy, it is necessary to work most resolutely to overcome any shortcomings on our part.

First, we must assess our capacity to rise to the novelties that the diversity of society's makeup present to a policy of alliances of a party that wants to put forward a blueprint for renewal. The world of employed workers is witnessing the growing influence and importance of the role of specialists, blue-collar, and white-collar workers, and although the working class as it is traditionally understood has by no means disappeared and is by no means about to disappear, obviously it is easy neither for the trade union movement nor for us to interpret such a wide range of labor situations. It is

essential, however, that we properly assess the meaning of formulas that we have used and that we cannot use in the same way as we did years ago. A policy of working class alliances must now be viewed with a full awareness that the term "working class" is not confined solely to prevalently manual labor because the complexity and specialization of functions have brought very major progress.

This does not mean that the masses of employed workers involved in the production of goods and services have ceased to be the protagonists of the struggle for new social relations. It has become more difficult, however, to avoid the isolation of the sector most disadvantaged in the distribution of work and of the openly underprivileged sector. I mean their isolation within the world of employed workers as well as in the latter's relations with self-employed workers.

The crucial role of the major enterprises and the hegemonic role of those that have now reached a multinational scale has not prevented and does not prevent vigorous economic activity on a small and medium scale in production and services, and in fact it is becoming increasingly necessary to perceive here an element in the great elasticity of the capitalist system as it has been built up and modified over so many years of historical experience and especially during the present century.

And we must realize that this too is an absolutely essential point in any policy of alliances, though always less easy in a period of economic crisis and transformations--and in the presence of an aggressive policy toward the most unprotected sectors of employed workers.

Catholic Issue

The composition and role of interest groups is not the only problem, however. In the referendum we were able to assess once again the not only considerable but crucial function performed by widespread traditions and attitudes. There is no other explanation for the strong holding power displayed in the strongly Catholic areas [zone blanche] where there was the prevalence of votes which ensured the success of the maintenance of the cut in the wages index.

This raises a number of issues on which our deliberations need to be updated.

I believe that we must point out, including to our friends in the Catholic world, that it was mistaken to argue that after the Vatican Council declared freedom of political options for Catholics there was no longer any need to discuss the issue of Catholicism in politics and that it was only necessary to discuss specific policies and platforms. But this does not mean that the Catholic world is no longer pervaded by substantial tensions concerning the most suitable way to tackle the acute problems of the modern world and modern society. A real turmoil is going on, and we must examine it entirely objectively. We must realize that it will be very difficult to reconcile the aspirations, intentions, and values of believers, including the very youngest, with the dominant values and practices of the society around us.

It is necessary nevertheless to observe that there is a major difference between the kind of relations that existed during the Vatican Council phase and those that it is possible to envisage and that must in any case be sought now, when new and unjustified barriers are apparently being raised--and not by us.

At the same time both inside and outside the DC of invocation of Catholic values and extremist tendencies are exerting pressures and creating contradictions that cannot be resolved solely with a formal attitude of respect toward the hierarchy.

The DC is now enjoying a recovery in its electoral support partly thanks to this renewed rapport--but, as long as we do not cease to exert pressure on it, it will not be easy to provide concrete evidence of its ability to use its recovered support for the sake of a policy that is not as gravely unjust and as morally unsound as that pursued for so many years.

It was not wrong to emphasize the coexistence within that party of differing and even opposing forces and tendencies; but they are also brought together by a skillful use of mediation and power. Therefore in the past we did not share the idea of its inevitable decline; and now we are urging a proper acknowledgement of the contradictory nature and quantitative limits of its recovery. It must be clear that the reconciliation within the DC of the differing and sometimes contrasting tendencies tends to take place by means of a complete restoration of the system of power and in accordance with a line in which the interclass trend consistently weighs against the working classes.

The DC's restored compactness and recovery of positions along a neocentrist-type line has enjoyed the strong protection provided by the socialist premiership, with top-level backing for its most dangerous and worrying decisions.

It is of course true that the offer of the premiership to the secretary of the Socialist Party, traditionally linked to the communists, was a consequence of the DC's electoral losses relative to the influence maintained by the left-wing forces. But it is also true that this offer was made in correlation to a DC proposal to isolate the PCI and an attitude of conflict adopted by the PSI's new course toward the PCI, and on the basis of a platform whose significance can no longer escape anyone.

Within the PSI too there must be, and there has indeed begun, a consideration of the basic failure of the ambitions of a political blueprint that has failed to produce any significant electoral advance or to rally the nonconfessional-socialist area together politically and that has failed in its objective of a breakthrough at the center and on the left--an objective which has dominated the entire governability phase and on which the instrument of the premiership has been powerfully brought to bear. Let us certainly see whether we have been too slow to perceive how far the PSI's new course also reflected real issues. Let us objectively and scrupulously examine the responsibilities for the tensions and the conflict on the left,

which have become exacerbated, though it is difficult to understand how that calculation of a breakthrough--divorced, moreover, from a genuine orientation to reform--and also its inherent negation of any legitimacy on our part could have failed to be opposed and combated by us. But there are two basic observations that can be made. First that, leaving aside an assessment of individual aspects, the Craxi government's policy has not pursued a line of reform--or even, perhaps one should say, the preconditions for such a line. This limitation was inherent in the original stance, in the very nature of the coalition, and if it has manifested itself and is still manifesting itself it is not because of any predetermined hostility or the harshness of the PCI's opposition. The second observation is that a responsible and incisive policy of reforms in the economy, the organization of the state, and the institutions is very difficult to pursue without the contribution and involvement of all the left-wing forces. Conflict, tensions, and the weakening of united relations of cooperation--ranging from the trade unions to local councils--militate against such a prospect, favor the conservative forces, and conflict with the PSI's own historical principles.

Tensions on the Left

The intermediate nonconfessional forces too are strongly marked by their submission to an ideological and political line that has aimed to rule out any alternative. The further blows suffered by the PSDI and PLI have displayed the limitations of political stances which, being entirely subservient to a neocentrist posture, risk losing any meaning. Indeed only the PRI has managed, partly, to hold its own--precisely because, despite its alignment, it has tried to keep open a dialogue, to refer to possible changes, and to assert itself at least on certain points of the competition for pure power within the coalition.

The problem of political alliances unquestionably also demands that attention be turned toward conduct in political relations and the political struggle. There has recently been a harsh conflict on fundamental issues between our party, in opposition, and the ruling parties. It is necessary to remind ourselves of the proper balance between the requirements of criticism, condemnation, struggle, and understanding of all the real motivations of the political forces, so as not to lapse into forms of splittist subordination, just as it is necessary always to avoid defeatist stances. In accordance with our great tradition, at the very time when the determination to isolate our party is growing stronger, we will succeed in strengthening our unitary capacity and in taking every opportunity for convergences and understandings on the Left and among the democratic forces.

But at the same time we must make a fundamental commitment to promoting a shift by the socialist, nonconfessional, and Catholic forces toward a democratic alternative policy. To this end it is essential that we bring pressure to bear on matters of substance, proposals, and prospects, expanding our horizons and our government outlook.

The rallying of the nonconfessional and socialist forces at the center must oblige us to exercise to the full our role as a major force of regeneration.

It is up to us to respond to aspirations to and hopes of change that are not only still alive but that exert pressure as indispensable factors within society, with the aim, in fact, of rousing all the left-wing and democratic forces. Our congress must come to terms with a new qualitative leap forward by our party--a great and renewed party of reform capable of putting forward key ideas and platforms that will facilitate specific solutions and mobilize a real struggle.

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For the party to achieve such a qualitative leap forward of course it will not be necessary to reappraise all the ground we have covered from the viewpoint of its formulation. We have traveled a long and extraordinary path under Togliatti, Longo, and Berlinguer.

We must concentrate our attention on the real innovations, starting with the international situation. The resumption of the U.S.-USSR dialogue, which is politically the most significant factor, has certainly attenuated the previous very acute tension but it now raises some serious questions. There is cause to wonder to what extent the current Geneva negotiations in fact reflect a return to detente or whether instead the forces opposed to this process will succeed in hindering their positive potentials.

The main problem is space weapons. We hope that a decisive step forward will be taken at the scheduled meeting between the leaders of the two superpowers, but this does not affect our duty to form a careful assessment of the issue that has been raised by the idea of the possibility of instruments of defense that can make the nuclear deterrent obsolete. It is an idea that obviously embodies an undeniable attraction, if only it had any scientific credibility and were rigorously based on a bilateral pledge.

However, the U.S. strategic defense initiative was of a different nature and this is why we consider valid the basic criticism that both we and other democratic forces have made--both on account of the elements of violation of the ABM treaty that it implies and on account of the prospect of a new arms race.

The stances adopted by the Socialist International, by prominent groups of FRG and U.S. scientists, by religious bodies, by governments including France's, and by parties including the German and Swedish Social Democrats and the British Labor Party reinforce our convictions and aims to ensure a growing commitment in Italy and internationally--within the variety of specific motivations--to avert another frightening resumption of the arms race and, on our part, to encourage the Italian Government to adopt a clear-cut stance to discourage such an eventuality.

The resumption of the Geneva talks is partly the result of this vast mobilization of awareness and forces over the Euromissiles issue and the breakoff of the Soviet-U.S. disarmament talks. But above all it is a reflection of anxieties and attitudes that have gradually come about even within political alignments and governments very far removed from that movement and primarily on the part of the world's major powers.

USSR and United States--What Is Changing

The most evident sign of innovation has come from the Soviet Union with Gorbachev's election and with the orientations that have become apparent in the international and domestic fields. The concern for security--legitimate in all countries, for that matter--has gone hand in hand with a greater dynamism in connection with the priority of peace and coexistence--both with the unilateral moratorium initiative and with a more open-minded dialogue. In the domestic field too there is emerging an effort of innovation that must be watched very carefully. Unfortunately all this has not closed very distressing wounds--certainly not easy to heal--such as that created by the intervention in Afghanistan, in which regard the facts themselves show the correctness of our criticism and condemnation.

Leaving aside an assessment of this lamentable and distressing factor, it is necessary clearly to reassert the verdict which we issued on the Soviet-type model, both on account of its unacceptability in societies with democratic traditions and on account of its intrinsic characteristics, still unresolved, which have led in the past to familiar tragedies and which are now the cause of the contradictions stemming primarily from the absence of a free democratic dialect.

The positive factor of the accession to a leadership role of a new generation, which contributes a new mentality and attitude, encourages hope; but this hope will be all the more well founded the more a heartfelt assessment is forthcoming from those who--like us--within absolute ideological and political autonomy, have succeeded in avoiding a lapse into any kind of prejudiced hostility, despite the sharpest criticism of events and principles.

In the United States too there are signs--despite the endurance of the approach laid down by the present administration--of a dialectic to some extent different from that of the past. There remains a strong impetus--certainly worrying and dangerous not only for the United States but for the entire world--toward the conquest of absolute supremacy. The idea of a high level of military investment is supported by the influence of a fear of economic decline, of which the first signs are becoming apparent. At the same time, however, the risks deriving from the consequences of the policy hitherto pursued raise serious doubts: The insolvency of many debtor countries, the difficulty facing U.S. exports, the public sector and balance of payments deficits are a cause for alarm.

There is therefore no merit in the forms of fence-sitting too current even on the part of Italian democratic forces. In this connection there is also a parochial and subordinate attitude that must be combated, like all other forms of prejudice or Manicheism, since they imply an evasion of a careful examination of and quest for a policy of benefit to the country.

The uncritical glorification of the major growth that has occurred in the United States in recent years leads not only to an underestimation of the internal contradictions, which are still serious, but also to an inability

to understand what is really happening in the world economy. And yet there are fundamental issues at stake. Of course this is not the place for an analysis but it is necessary to draw attention to the need for the congress to deliberate on the vast phenomena of technological and production restructuring; on the spread of unemployment, inflation, and recession across entire continents; and on the new polarizations of wealth and power and the decline of former areas of prosperity. The overall picture is of a growing internationalization of capital, production, and trade, but also of new tensions between the major developed countries and between North and South.

The advocates of the return to a policy of deregulation tend--either deliberately or through shortsightedness--to overlook contradictions and tragedies which bear witness to the untenability of a line which has shown itself to be incapable of using to the best advantage the resources and extraordinary opportunities provided by science. We are now witnessing the concrete results of the ideological offensive that has been conducted throughout the West for years--the glorification of strength and success and the exacerbation of inequalities to the extent of new forms of racist contempt. This offensive has brought with it on the one hand an attack on wage earners' gains and rights and on the other discrimination against and the reduction of aid to the peoples of the Third World.

There is reason to ask ourselves and others what kind of future such an ideology can bring. The tensions of rearmament, the ever increasing economic disarray and inequalities, and the spreading cult of violence cannot be regarded as phenomena isolated from a general context that has tended to discredit and to combat the ideals of solidarity, fraternity, equality, and peaceful coexistence between countries with differing economic and political structures. Of course terrorism is a phenomenon that must be combated openly and without any leniency--but, in its ethnic-cum-religious framework, this very phenomenon reflects not only conspiracies but alarming situations.

In such a situation there are all the more profound and well-founded reasons for the struggle for peace, for the defense of the peoples' freedom and independence, and for our ideals of international solidarity.

We must consider the reason for a real difficulty on the part of the pacifist movements, despite their achievement of some significant results. It is necessary to ascertain how much influence may have been exerted by the ideological offensive designed to reassert the value of violence and force, by the unfair accusations of waging a struggle in one direction only, but also by a weariness with repetitive forms of mobilization and contradictions within the movement. Of course even if there has been a weakening of the movement in the traditional sense, there is no absence of impetus and commitment--especially on the part of young people and Catholic organizations--to human solidarity. There is one point that must be reasserted as essential and crucial. A major ideological and political force such as ours must never--if it wants to do its duty--weaken in its clear-cut policy of struggling for peaceful coexistence, national independence, and solidarity with the peoples struggling most. This too indicates a fundamental task for the congress.

Tragedies in the Third World

Of course the charity effort made by so many cannot be regarded as unimportant, in view of the risk of a loss of sensitivity in the world's tragedies--but it is not enough in view of the huge problems and the pending threats. I have already mentioned Afghanistan. But sharp anxiety is also prompted by the attitudes adopted by the U.S. administration, which has further stepped up its attack on Nicaragua, which is accused of constituting a terrorist base--Nicaragua which is itself the daily target for the worst terrorist attacks, as was for 20 years the lot of Cuba, another of the countries now indicated by Washington as a target for possible reprisals.

This determines the necessity that our country too exert the most vigorous pressure to ensure that political forces, governments, and international organizations really undertake a negotiated solution of the tragedies assailing the Third World, from the Middle East to Central and Southeast Asia and Latin America.

In Italy too the present trend to a narrowing of horizons must be overcome and there must be a development of the resumption of solidarity with the suffering and rights of the peoples of those nations--we have in mind in particular the racist crimes in South Africa and the noble struggle that has developed over the months, especially in the United States.

It has been correct to stress that coexistence, development, and independence are increasingly interdependent values and that in any case only an overall system of peaceful coexistence can ensure that the revolutions of our time--technological, national, and social--can constitute not factors of disunity but positive elements in the new world balance.

Nevertheless, the assertion of the line of coexistence is so difficult: It demands patience, tenacity, and a recognition of the real situation. Therefore if we do not regard the opposing military blocs as a permanent institution, because it is necessary to work to ensure that the time will come for them to be eliminated, we have learned to recognize them as a reality which cannot be eliminated without a long-term process.

Of course we are moving toward our congress debate, but we stand quite firm on the principles that prompted us Italian Communists to consider our country's NATO membership not only a historical fact but also a necessity for the sake of the very delicate international balance on which the maintenance of peace depends.

This stance on our part does not, however, imply our acceptance of the bloc rationale extending beyond the principles and confines laid down by treaties and must not imply keeping quiet about how our country behaves within the alliance, about how it responds to the orientations which the dominant power tries to impose on it.

There have been some elements of greater dynamism in our country's foreign policy and we have not only acknowledged but also supported them. We are

still a long way, however, from the utilization of all the potential available to a country such as Italy for asserting itself adequately both inside and outside the alliance for the sake of a definite advance toward more relaxed and freer international relations.

This assessment of the government's actions also applies to the crucial aspect of our decisions constituted by the Europeanist option--a pressing and essential issue. True, the recent Milan session of the European Council again showed the discrepancy that exists between justified enthusiasm and the survival of narrow-minded outlooks and substantial objective difficulties.

EC, Unity and Autonomy

But difficulties and obstacles do not imply the impossibility of an evolution, the inevitability of a regressive future. Over so many years a few steps forward have in fact been taken and now it is necessary to see how--realistically but incisively--to approach the issues of supranationality toward which the process must move and which constitute the real substance of the present contest.

There are also profound splits on the Left and between European democratic forces, and we must be fully aware of the problems that will be posed by the building of an autonomous and united Community in the course of time in all fields, including the field of security policy, which is an essential element of any foreign policy and an issue on which--as far as it affects Italy--our party must now complete an analysis and a debate that began some time ago.

There is great food for thought here with a view to reaching informed, albeit necessary and urgent, decisions. We appreciated Mitterrand's Eureka project both because it sets the priority--unlike the U.S. space project--of civilian technological research and because it attempts to pool capital, brainpower, and political will which, if drained by the U.S. project, would ultimately open the way--perhaps irreversibly--to the subordination of a fragmented Europe.

Nevertheless the launching of the Eureka project too raises the crucial issue: The autonomous EEC is a strong ideal if it is viewed and pursued within the context of the struggle for disarmament, detente, and the building of a system of peaceful coexistence, within an outlook that aims at the gradual elimination of the continent's present division.

Only thus can the Community attain the level at which its member countries can meet the challenges of our time by developing economic, cultural, and social exchanges with the CEMA area and by promoting mutual interest in relations with the Third World. At the same time a Community thus conceived can effectively constitute the frame of reference for understanding among the democratic forces and for a convergent struggle of the European left-wing forces.

At the root of the problems and difficulties shared by the left-wing forces as a whole there lies not only the difficulty of ascertaining what should follow the welfare state but also a certain isolation (conflicting with their natural vocation) within the confines of the nation state--confines now increasingly, albeit tacitly, violated by the internationalization of the economy.

Our ambition, even during the congress campaign, must be to develop and raise the level of the debate with the European left-wing forces. It is not a matter of disregarding each other's histories or of raising false issues, as though communists, socialists, and social democrats did not each have to come to terms with their own shortcomings and errors. No communist, socialist, or social democratic force can dismiss the idea--unless it wants to deny itself--of a struggle, however realistic and gradual, for an advance toward a socioeconomic order based on socialist values.

It is precisely by struggling in this direction that profound changes have been brought about even in the capitalist countries, so that they cannot now be compared to those of Marx' or Lenin's time. What is needed now is not for one side to demand from the other absurd and somewhat grotesque abjurations but joint progress with a real investigation--into what capitalist society has become today, into old and new contradictions, into regressions and more or less explicit forms of socialization, into the successes and shortcomings of the traditional ideas of the left, and into the new thematic boundaries and horizons.

This must be our ambition--as it is, from their viewpoint, of the German Social Democrats committed to extricating themselves from a line which put them in a difficult situation of lack of prospects and shortage of innovative motivation.

It is a lofty ambition but we are encouraged by the knowledge that it is necessary, because one cannot believe that the future is confined to the dream or the nightmare of a return not only to before the Russian October but even, as some are now saying, to before the French Revolution.

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But what are the topics facing our congress as regards the present situation of the economy, society, and the state?

We must proceed from our country's extraordinary vitality, since it belongs to us too. This vitality is not the result of capitalism's "animal spirits" but stems from the thrust exerted by our movement--on the political, social, local government, ideological, and cultural planes.

The grave responsibility of the old ruling classes lies precisely in this--in the fact that the vitality of the country, of the workers, of the cultural forces, and of such a large proportion of entrepreneurs is no longer able on its own to prevent a gradual slide, a widening gap with the stronger countries. This is perhaps the most worrying and significant fact.

Many have diagnosed the ailment--structural deficiencies are causing us to import more and more, not only raw materials and agricultural products but also technologies, machinery, and investment commodities. This causes the well known vicious circle: An attempt is made to limit growth in order to defend the lira; stagnation causes more unemployment; the revenue is insufficient; and welfare expenditure rises. To finance its growing bill the state maintains high interest rates, thus increasingly nurturing financial incomes and diverting savings from investment. Of course the dominant fact remains that innovative processes continue all the same. However, if they are concentrated in narrow areas and used essentially to save labor, the result could be the threat of an entirely passive internationalization. Many major factors of alienation from an industrial heritage built up so laboriously act in this direction. But apart from them, and against any kind of empty overconfidence, it must be realized that if unemployment and the north-south gulf increase and if--as a concomitant factor--the productivity of the public administration and services remains very low, the danger of the country's moving toward a subordinate role becomes inevitable. Others will plan and produce new technologies; we will consume them.

The novelty of the contest now taking place lies not only in the ability to bring adequate scientific knowledge to bear but also in the ability to combine a complex series of factors, from widespread culture to modern services and the efficiency of the state. And it is in this light that we must conduct a critical reappraisal of our proposals and tasks.

True, we are the only party that has fought consistently throughout the years to combat the delusion of free trade and to give priority to industrial policies capable of modifying the production structure and budgetary policies capable of combating the deficit, and improving the efficiency of services, education, research, and the public administration. And we have worked harder than anyone else to reduce the huge burden of financial incomes and of government subsidies and thus to provide more scope for employment and actions capable of reducing the food and energy shortages.

This was the point of the agreement on development and employment. It was a correct political initiative which also urged entrepreneurs to question the real costs of their production system. It was also a way of preventing the entire burden of the anti-inflation struggle and of our lags from falling on wages, since we believe not only that this is unjust but that it fails to resolve the existing problems.

There is no contradiction between the intransigent defense of jobs and trade union power and the need to grant leeway and support to enterprises, especially in the south, and to create new conditions for employment not only by increasing the number of producers but also by making the point that it is necessary to produce different things, in a different way. There is reason to wonder what has limited and obscured the sense of our political and propositional discourse. Many causes, probably, including the fact that our proposal seemed very complex, in comparison to the obviousness of a traditional solution such as an attack on wages. But there is also the state of the trade union movement--split and forced onto the defensive. It has been

a duty for a party such as ours--even under such conditions--to display its will to struggle, the fact that it will not surrender when the workers' interests are at stake. But now we must recognize the need to tackle the problem of innovation, its quality and its applications--not in narrow territorial areas but throughout the area of production activities, services--including social services of the major social infrastructure--education, taxation, and the civil service. Because if this argument is taken to its conclusion, there emerges the possibility of a program capable of starting to resolve the unemployment problem. This should be one of the central topics of our congress' critical analysis and debate.

Indeed, our critical analysis and that of the left must not be confined to the aim of an acceptance of the free market revival solution, which has already shown that it does not work. The attack on wages and increased profits has resolved none of the most serious problems. The forecast for Italy is that growth is unlikely to exceed 2 percent this year, which means that the prospects for employment are becoming even gloomier.

But it is not enough to identify others' mistakes, although they must be condemned for what they are. It is essential to bring out in the congress debate the medium- and long-term problems, without reference to which it is impossible to define an alternative government platform. The foremost of these issues is now that of a job for everyone. The policy of full employment has been abandoned and is even considered infeasible by the moderate forces. As we know, this reflects the most serious of the unresolved contradictions of the society in which we live.

In the face of the tragedy of unemployment we know that an economic policy capable of ensuring a higher level of growth is indispensable, but not enough. Sustained levels of growth may not permit the attainment of full employment. A need is emerging to redefine the place of labor in industry, in the services sector, in the production of new intangible assets, in the management of social activities, and within the total lifespan. The issue at stake is not only that of a redistribution of labor but also that of its enhanced esteem as an essential element in a new kind of development and in the giving of meaning to the technological revolution.

The employment struggle involves fundamental issues, and if we want it to be in earnest it must aim to acquire entirely new characteristics. It is necessary now to contemplate a major movement--not only social, but cultural and ideological as well--capable of involving very diverse and now often conflicting sectors of society--from laid-off workers to the young unemployed, the new specialized and professional sectors which now feel the need for a more complete self-fulfillment, the widespread world of enterprise which demands a new environment more favorable for its development, and the mass of people connected with the state via the public and social services.

And we must realize that while the free market revival is no good because it claims an onerous price, the old bureaucratized and wasteful welfare state does not stand up any longer either. It is therefore necessary to conceive and to introduce a model of society equal to the new complexity, mobility, lifestyle, and attitudes of the broad masses.

It is necessary to consider the issue of a social and cultural movement that will not only fight for jobs but also specifically tackle the issue of a new possible management and use of resources and strive to create the conditions for a new kind of development.

The fact is that the resource of labor is not overabundant in itself, but it becomes increasingly so in a structure made rigid by labor relations and by old models of consumption. Labor is not overabundant, however, if it is set in relation to the vast mass of new requirements whose satisfaction demands a utilization of resources that will transform them into a real demand.

The employers' union knows only how to demand the freedom to fire people and even on the Left many people are attracted by this discovery--certainly nothing new. We are not in favor of defending all the old rigidities and are convinced that the labor supply should be made more flexible, by distinguishing between contractual and normative frameworks, reducing the working week through flexible negotiations and other measures that the trade unions are discussing among themselves. But this is the opposite of the restoration of an unregulated labor market deprived of all social protection. Instead of advancing toward a more modern society capable of handling innovation we would move increasingly toward a world in which the strong become stronger and stronger while the rest sink into new ghettos and new kinds of social destitution.

The debate is already under way on the Left: Within the socialist area too there is a growing impatience with an industrial policy within which the fall in the number of jobs caused by uncoordinated restructuring is not matched by a policy of innovation capable of promoting new activities; and there is growing criticism of a welfare system that prefers to waste resources on financing unemployment instead of directing them toward creating new activities, including social ones.

So at the same time the labor issue raises the very major topic of welfare state reform. The effort to eliminate bureaucratization, the combination of reliable and effective forms of protection with private schemes, the new relationship linking public expenditure with services contracted out to private concerns, and the continued activity of voluntary workers are major topics to be pondered. Efficiency must be our watchword, and although it conflicts with bureaucratism it does not conflict with public-mindedness.

Plundering of the Land

In other words, though it is true that the old position of the welfare state is obsolete, in the so-called postindustrial society sectors such as education, culture, health, welfare, and social services are bound to expand more and more. What must be established is the "how" and "why" of this process--that is, whether it should cause the accentuation and extension of forms of welfare taking the place of full employment or whether, on the contrary, it should promote more decent and dignified lifestyles in a society which spreads [generalizza] labor. This dilemma also applies to environmental resources, in which regard the choice is not and cannot be between the

development and the protection of the environment, but between a brutal and shortsighted plundering and the ability to realize that environmental protection, the defense of the land, and the preservation of our cultural heritage imply the proper exploitation of broad resources and the creation of major job and development opportunities. The disaster in the Trentino a few days ago demands not only a condemnation of individual responsibilities of national and local leadership groups. Now we are mourning the dead. Inquiries are being initiated. Justice is being invoked and promised. But we have a duty to point to the faults of deafness, indifference, and lack of response to the warnings of scientists, organizations, and democratic forces of impending breakdowns and dangers due to a senseless territorial policy, the cynical exploitation of natural resources, the absence of proper safeguarding and preventive work for environmental and human protection--from the Vajont to Seveso and Prestadel--to which the latest tragedy has again drawn our attention. It is not only a matter of the inefficiency, confusion, and irresponsibility of the state and public administration, but more fundamentally the major issue of the nature, forms, and objectives of a policy of development.

This whole topic, which is a proper one for every major socialist party and innovative force to consider, deeply concerns and involves the trade unions too. The split in the trade union movement, over and above the separate accord [on labor costs by only two of the three main unions with the employers' federation], is the outcome--as the CGIL has already pointed out--of a serious lag with respect to new problems raised first by the crisis and later by the restructurings. The trade union movement and the CGIL now face the problem of how to bring a particular phase to a close with a reappraisal--which will certainly be difficult--of pay policies. We well understand the trade union movement's need not to confine itself to a restructuring of pay but to attack the issue of jobs more incisively, to reconsider the issue of bargaining, and to regain the power to exert its influence in the processes of change both inside and outside enterprises.

Trade Union Problems

We want neither to interfere in, nor to take the place of, trade union activity--but it would be absurd to expect the opposition not to involve itself, if the government involves itself in this, as in other fields.

We perceive in some entirely unfounded attacks on our party in this regard a definitely worrying element of prejudice. The PCI is a force that politically represents a very large proportion of the labor world. We must perform our proper duty, as other parties do what they regard as their job. The debate must be on the substance of the issues at stake, not on preconceptions. And obviously topics such as taxation, income levels, and the distribution of wealth are subjects for common debate. The communists have always been supporters of trade union unity and of the trade unions' complete autonomy from the employers, the government, and the parties and they have always acted consistently with this line. The experience of the past decade and more shows that the forms of unity need to be thoroughly reappraised and that without confidence of democratic procedures unity declines too.

The problems now facing the trade union movement are manifold. It is becoming a matter of urgency to tackle long-neglected issues such as economic supervision, participation, and democracy, and indeed the CGIL intends at its own congress to come to terms with these very issues and to regenerate itself so as to resume the representation of a profoundly changed labor world, and to reflect the new requirements of a changing society. This is a debate that involves us profoundly and that we are sure will also aid our work on clearly identifying--beyond a detailed list of measures to be adopted--what in fact the driving motivation behind a new socioeconomic platform should be: the key importance of work and of its prestige; the reorganization of the welfare state; and an economic planning policy that will link development to the new requirements created by higher standards of education and awareness.

The other major area of issues on which the congress must conduct deliberations concerns the state and the current trends as regards democratic life.

There is no doubt that once again in recent years there have been substantial displays of the soundness and vitality of Italy's democracy. We consider it a very positive achievement, for which our party claims the credit, to have transformed into a democratic movement and struggle the popular protest against an unjust and arbitrary measure such as the February 1984 decree. But at the same time we have had considerable successes, due not only to the pressure of public opinion but also to the loyal efforts of major sectors of the public apparatus, in the struggle against organized crime.

However, this democratic vigor must not conceal from us the fact that we are passing through a difficult and even risky stage. The attempts to restore old forms of domination in the economic field are accompanied not only by theories openly hostile to the idea of an expansion of democracy but even political stances and efforts recommending a constriction of essential democratic gains.

Regeneration of the Institutions

Indeed it must be realized that the ever faster changes in technologies are posing new and huge problems in all fields: It is enough to consider the characteristics being acquired by decisionmaking in the military field and the huge and all-pervading power acquired by the mass media.

The fact is that there is a tendency to use these processes in such a way as to progressively reduce the centers of decisionmaking and to make them increasingly difficult to monitor. This is how the powers and institutions of popular sovereignty and forms of public supervision are being challenged. In fact decisions of great concern and importance to the public are being made more and more in separate and improper forums.

Within the context of these trends we have witnessed worrying policies and attitudes designed to strike at representative democracy, with a thrust toward centralistic and elitist forms.

For some time we have been among the most resolute advocates of the need for institutional reform, a reform of the state, but clearly for us the orientation and the aim must be a strengthening of the democratic bonds and thus an extension of the citizens' real involvement in the reaching of decisions. This need poses some complex problems, as confirmed by the nevertheless significant experience of the hitherto tested forms of grassroots democracy. It is essential to understand that by raising anew the issue of the defense of representative democracy and of the expansion of the people's participation one is raising not a 19th century issue but a genuine and fundamental issue of modern society that must not be viewed in terms of a return to forms of mass passivity and subordination, which are indeed pre-modern.

But to provide convincing and effective answers it is necessary that a major effort of specificity be made in our congress debate, in our analysis of real conditions. In a modern state one cannot elude such an essential aspect of democracy as the democratic accountability of the apparatus.

No party other than ours has put forward serious and constructive proposals for reform in the institutional field. Nevertheless a further effort is needed to deal with the phenomena of decline in the life of the national and local institutions; It is enough to consider the present fate of the local councils.

But in our congress debate we must form an increasingly clear picture of the outlook. We have never used ideas or words purely for the sake of propagandist agitation. For us the socialist ideal has never implied postponing things until some vague time in the future or the assumption of historically predetermined conclusions. It has implied a stimulus to the quest for solutions equal to the problems which history has presented to us during the course of time. And so it must be for us today: The topicality of our movement's own ideological values is tested precisely by the developments of contemporary society. It is the very transformations in the production world that demand more and more forms of forecasting, planning, and social management. This has been and must continue to be the direction of our deliberations on the present significance of socialist aspirations and the actions of a movement which invokes them.

5

Our congress debate is beginning at a time when the issue of the government is again open. Whatever the outcome of this umpteenth stocktaking, we believe that a correct assessment of the 2 years' activity of the present cabinet must proceed from an analysis of the results. We have experienced no inhibitions in supporting government initiatives and actions which we considered useful but our negative assessment of its work as a whole is corroborated by the fact that the stocktaking itself has to proceed from the acknowledgement that basically the problems have remained unresolved.

We have never made accusations on the basis of assumptions. We have stressed--and I have just reasserted--that it was a mistake to believe that the cut in the wages index could result in a recovery of development and

employment. The facts have proved us right: In fact the policy attempted for economic recovery has basically failed, and the slight fall in inflation cannot alter this assessment. The past few days' discussions are entirely similar to those 2 years ago or last year.

Although a government's stability cannot be considered irrelevant, it is certainly not a sufficient compensation, partly because this factor has not altered the political substance of a coalition that has lasted almost 20 years--a substance consisting of conflicts, contradictions, and a policy characterized by a conservative stance. The cabinet has survived but the results are the familiar ones and furthermore this survival depended on distortions which it was correct to describe as dangerous.

Apart from its usual all-embracing character, the program that has now been put forward again embodies a reminder of all the unresolved issues of the Italian crisis and not only reveals again the absence of a precise and incisive orientation toward reform but makes the restriction of workers' wages and of social expenditure the real nub of its economic policy. The few innovative elements of the proposals regarding taxation which were closer to what we proposed have been rejected because of protests within the majority, while intentions have been expressed to introduce some very worrying measures such as replacing the national Social Security Institute's present management with a provisional administrator or, with regard to southern Italy, a return to the kind of practices current under the Fund for Southern Italy, by means of a system of provisional administration.

The real aim, as has in any case been clearly stated, is survival.

And the real subject of discussion, of course, has been and is yet again the distribution of power within the government area.

As regards the media, matters have reached a paradoxical and untenable situation. The rivalry, particularly between the DC and the PSI, over the sharing out of publicity resources paralyzes and undermines the workings and administration of public services and continues to hinder the much needed general solution, exacerbating the situation of confusion, illegality, and uncontrolled struggles which has for some time posed a threat to the freedom, pluralism, and accuracy of information.

In the regions, provinces, and cities attention has been paid in the formation of the new administration to ensuring the prevalence of a pure rationale of centralized alignment and bargaining. The DC has acted in accordance with its arrogant desire to secure--as during the initial phase of the Center-Left government--local councils' conformity to central government, in contravention of the very principles of the regulations governing local authorities and with an exacerbation of the shameful practice of horse trading. But it is lamentable that both the PSI and the other government allies have failed to criticize or reject such a practice and have in fact complied with it.

It is not just an attempt on the DC's part to extend its own positions of power; it is a policy designed fully to absorb the PSI into a centrist

policy, in an attempt to sever its ties with the Left and to bind it increasingly to a neocentrist-type policy.

It seems to us that the prevalence within the PSI of this approach of giving priority to and of making a transition toward the five-party coalition or of dissociating itself--even in those places where the experience of left-wing democratic councils has been positive and backed by the people's support--constitutes a further serious element of disruption in the already difficult relations on the left.

More generally, the imposition of the alignment rationale in local government is stiffening the confrontation beyond all normal democratic limits, with inevitable repercussions on the country's political climate.

We have always argued the need for correct relations between the majority and the constitutional opposition. This does not imply any confusion of roles, since the opposition's duty is to be scrupulous, and such will ours continue to be.

However, there is a point of principle which we must clearly emphasize, concerning observance of the democratic opposition's rights. The principle of the majority which governs and the opposition which provides stimulus and supervision (and thus prepares to take on the duties of government) must not be confined to parliament, when in a modern state public involvement has extended so far as to create a large number of actual centers of leadership and expenditure.

This requirement of correctness and normality in relations between majority and opposition is also essential to a positive tackling of the process of institutional reform. To this end it is important to reassert support for the contribution of all the constitutional forces, but it must also be clearly realized that one cannot then follow criteria that violate basic rights in actual political practice.

Our opposition is not motivated by a desire to bring down the government at all costs. But we must also say that we feel no opposite compulsion. Indeed, we believe that the downfall of this government and also of this kind of coalition need not imply the end of the legislative term.

Our task and our duty are to involve ourselves consistently and vigorously in the dialogue and the struggle on the workers' and all citizens' most pressing issues.

At the time when, in our pre-congress phase, we turn our gaze further ahead, we are certainly not short of proposals and policies for the immediate future.

On economic matters in particular we have advocated and will continue to advocate a specific line based on specific points--in accordance with the platform that we published a few days ago--covering industrial policies, the composition of expenditure and the monitoring of its efficacy and

quality, the creation of a more balanced fiscal system, and all the social problems, starting with the most urgent.

It must be clear that we will not conduct good congress discussions or have a good congress if in the months ahead our initiative and struggle are not equal to what promise to be demanding and important dates on the calendar.

6

I believe we are all aware of the need for a new phase of regeneration of our party--a phase of major democratic development of its internal life, of strong links with its already broad base of social support and with new sectors, and of modernization of its working mechanisms.

I am talking about regenerating an image and an identity--not erasing it. Every political force, every party presents itself, asserts its own identity first and foremost. How would it be possible to talk in terms of a "unitary policy" without an acknowledgement of and respect for different identities? Of course there are no permanently established traits. What we have is our history, experiences, roots, a process of modification, of transformation.

"To cut off our roots," Berlinguer wrote in RINASCITA in 1981, quoting Francois Mitterrand verbatim, "in the belief that it will enable us to flourish better would be the suicidal action of a madman." But throughout history Italian Communists have clearly understood that it was not enough and would never have been enough simply to remain clinging to those roots and that there was a need for major and sometimes extraordinary innovations, such as that of the "new party," to recall the moment when we laid new foundations and carried out a thorough reform of the party.

In recent congresses we have had a clear perception of the need for new steps forward, for a new rate of change and regeneration. I believe that it is now necessary to achieve more specific and visible results.

Of course, no results can be achieved on the basis of a distortion of the PCI's nature.

The PCI is and wants to be a modern democratic party of reform and a genuinely socialist force indissolubly bound to Italy's future, to the life and future of the European left, and connected with all the major forces of liberation, emancipation, and progress throughout the world. Our party's image and basic characteristics are defined primarily by the key ideas which motivate it, without their being its exclusive heritage--ideas of freedom and liberation, justice and equality, and solidarity. And also the idea that the production relations determined by capitalist structures do not constitute a fulfillment of human history and an application of natural laws, as a new and naive--or perhaps all too astute--body of apologetics would have us believe.

Quest for New Paths and Ideas

It is many years now since we believed that capitalist societies, which vary from one to another, are permanently on the brink of disaster. Indeed, we recognize their wealth and vigor, and the very forces--major ones--which we represent are among its most vigorous and dynamic. But we oppose all processes of impoverishment of democracy, or restoration of rationales of pure force over those of solidarity and justice.

It is true, as I have already stressed, that many ideas--both of ours and of the European Left--have grown old. But we believe, with the rest of the European Left, that the answer to difficulties is a quest for new ideas of social change.

The PCI's diversity does not lie in any exclusive genetic assets; any kind of obsession with being "outside the system"; any presumption and pride taken to the extreme of partisan arrogance. It does not lie in a blind stubbornness whereby others demand the minimum and the possible whereas we always demand the maximum and the impossible.

On the contrary, the PCI's distinguishing characteristics, as the offspring of the history of the Italian workers movement, were forged by the events of the fight against fascism, the resistance, the liberation struggle, and the history of the republic. So much for being outsiders: We are--and feel ourselves to be--an essential part of our country's society, political life, culture, and civilization.

Our distinguishing and inalienable characteristics lie in our reference to a framework of values that are neither absolutely immutable nor changeable at will in accordance with conditions and convenience; they lie in the conception of politics not purely in terms of technique or in terms of the exercise of power or domination, but in terms of human activity guided by ideas (which are separate from and in fact the contrary of abstract and preconceived ideologies!).

A "confessional" party: "Nonconfessional" is not a term in opposition to "idealistic" or "religious." It is a term in opposition to "ideological" and "confessional." And you can be "nonconfessional" or "confessional" irrespective of your religion or ideology.

The document approved by our last congress stated as follows: "The complete elimination of any extremist or exclusive view of the party, the complete assertion of the idea of the party as a 'part' of society and of the state and of its nonconfessional nature outline and require an open and dialectical relationship with the complex and diversified fabric of organizations, associations, and the most varied expressions of society."

We are firm in this stance. I propose that we be guided by it in our internal debate and in our preparations for and conduct of the congress.

The goal which we aim thus to pursue is that of achieving the kind of overall proposal best suited to the workers' and the country's needs, in accordance with our own values and ideals, seeking the broadest contribution of ideas and proposals by means of an open-minded, free, and unprejudiced comparison of stances. So it is legitimate for the Central Committee to seek the most correct viewpoint and to strive to define a unitary political stance by means of the broadest possible range of contributions. "The broadest possible" implies not only involving the party and its structures at all levels but also recourse to specialized skills and knowledge and to professional expertise.

Democratic Centralism

Does dividing an organization into currents help us in this aim? What about their subsequent stabilization and crystallization?

Let it be clear that there are no bans on or hindrances to the emergence of different or alternative stances or to the reaching of a decision on them by means of a vote. Of course, this also applies--all the more so--to the congress. In fact, let it be clear that the predetermined aim must not be to achieve a division. But if different stances do emerge that cannot be reasonably reconciled, it is correct and necessary to present them clearly and to submit them to the comrades' verdict, as has already been done.

The effort--which I have urged and continue to urge--to seek the most effective kinds of synthesis reflects an awareness not only of the party's interests but of our duties to society. But none of us is afraid of fighting all out, if that is really indispensable, for stances which we consider valid.

What I want to say, however, is that sometimes very old patterns of political activity, organization, and struggle appear under the guise of modernity.

In fact the entire individual and profoundly free version of democratic centralism which we Italian Communists introduced is extremely modern. It has enabled our party to attain major and positive achievements.

I have heard criticisms of the method of coopting. It must not be confused with other deplorable practices. In the tradition of our party it is necessary to have an excellent record, and no decisions are made or can be made without a thorough consensus: When this has not been the case, there have been distortions and the errors have quickly come to light.

In fact the method that we have pursued has made it possible to train, promote, and renew leadership personnel with a sharp awareness of the requirements of balance and of the struggle as a whole--leadership personnel who have displayed their worth in so many difficult situations, past and present.

But in this regard too the time has come to move forward.

The congress will decide, but I believe that there are real steps that can be taken to achieve a qualitative leap forward in the party's democratic life too.

The real issues of a genuine modernity and democracy must relate to a real decisionmaking capacity on the part of all comrades and all party bodies. The real issues are no different from those generally proposed for the sake of complete democracy--the guarantee of access to information and its maximum internal circulation; a continuous dialectic among the various political leadership and specialized bodies, in both directions; lucidity, when they disagree, on what options are possible at any given time; the broadest involvement in decisionmaking at all levels of the party; certainty regarding the implementation of such decisions; and a thorough modernization of the means of internal communication and consultation.

This is not easy, and it is certainly not all, either. But it is thus that disagreements and conflicts of ideas, which provide the stimulus for the development of thought, can be presented from turning into the constrictive cage of cliques and can instead become the real motive force behind a constant development of political formulation, partly through the formation and breakup of different majorities on different issues.

And it is thus that unity, democracy, the commitment to fundamental values, and the party's modernity can advance together.

Analysis of Party's Structures

It is unnecessary now to stress the essential importance of our analysis of the party's structures with a view to modernizing them boldly in accordance with the changes in our society.

What I am keen to say, however, is that in the new phase that we want to open up for the party there are two further substantial issues to which we must return--the distinction between the party and the institutions, and the communists' presence within society's organizations. On both these issues we believe we have accumulated experiences and deliberations that can enable us to work to reverse the trends toward an impoverishment of the concept of the party. A party which becomes a mere bolster for institutional activity and which is unable to ensure its representation within society is in danger of becoming an exclusively electoral organization.

More than for the sake of its doctrinal analyses, the congress must serve to highlight the specific and manifold experiences of our sections, of comrades working at the grassroots in trade unions, cooperatives, professional and occupational organizations, cultural organizations, and the innumerable activities in which communists are involved. We must heed the voice of our women comrades involved in the party, in the institutions, and in the women's movement. We must give a chance to speak to the younger comrades both in the party and in the Italian Communist Youth Federation.

A proper conception of democracy does not see it solely in terms of a dialectical relationship among leaders--however important this is--or as a method for educating simpletons. Quite the contrary: Democracy is the ability to heed the grassroots and to follow their suggestions.

The party must unquestionably also perform the function of conveying a heritage of knowledge and experiences. But its prime and essential duty--first and foremost in the congress phase--is to ensure that the comrades speak out and then to indicate to them the path that must be pursued, with their commitment and their self-sacrifice.

We believe that we face a very arduous task, but I am sure that all of us together will once again find a way of fulfilling this part of our duty as well.

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END