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# The PCI, NATO, and the United States

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## THE PCI, NATO, AND THE UNITED STATES<sup>1</sup>

*The North Atlantic Alliance came into being in 1949 to protect its members from an external Communist threat. Italy has always had a large and active Communist Party. However, recent events have raised the real possibility of the Italian Communist being taken into the Government. Professor Thompson discusses the effects of such an eventuality and he suggests possible courses of action.*

by

W. Scott Thompson

During the spring of 1976, prior to the parliamentary elections in Italy, considerable attention in government circles and in the press was focused on the question of what effect Italian Communist Party (PCI) participation in the Italian Government would have on NATO. Although in the ensuing election the PCI increased its percentage of the electorate's vote, it obtained neither a plurality nor a sufficiently decisive gain to force the question of its explicit participation now, thereby giving Western strategists a respite, however brief, and dampening Western interest generally.<sup>2</sup>

Yet the *compromesso storico* has in effect already occurred: For the functional lines between participation and nonparticipation, between support and acquiescence, are fine, more so than has heretofore been appreciated. PCI

chairmanship of parliamentary committees, greatly increased *de facto* PCI involvement in government and abstention on the organization of the government are what make continued Christian Democratic (DC) governance possible. There are no signs readily visible that the DC is capable of the reform and rejuvenation necessary to reverse the seemingly inexorable electoral trend that has worked against it for nearly 30 years.

So it is appropriate to reconsider the question of the effect the PCI has, and will continue to have, on Italy's relationship to the alliance and to her American partner, either in a continuation of the present situation, or in a formal *compromesso storico*, or in a PCI-dominant coalition that might result from the next election, if the PCI further increased its electoral standing.

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The PCI leadership's assurances of its desire to uphold Italy's NATO membership also are worth consideration. And finally, we will examine the manner in which the alliance—and the United States in particular—might take out insurance against the possibility either that the PCI turns out to be a Trojan horse (at one unlikely extreme) or, more likely, would be driven by events to take a position hostile to the alliance as presently constituted.

**The Military Stakes.** First, it is worth looking at what is at issue, for there can be no doubting Italy's importance to NATO. Italy has three NATO roles: as a manpower reserve for NATO as a whole, as a nuclear base and, most importantly, as the fundamental heartland of the Mediterranean for NATO. Italy's Mediterranean role, by much the most important, must be seen not only in terms of the specific bases and functions, but even more importantly in terms of the role geography gives Italy; that is, the implications of Italy's geographic relationship to other countries.

(1) **Manpower reserves.** A first Italian NATO role relates to the central front. Some American military experts have argued that, in the event of a Soviet attack on the central front, Italy, either as a front or as support, must be written off. Instead, all reinforcements and efforts should be concentrated on the North German plain to repel or at least delay the onslaught. But many European strategists have by and large ignored that particular recommendation generally considering Italy's main-front NATO role to be as important as that of any other European member, save of course the Federal Republic. For in support of a defense of Central Europe, air, ground and naval units, with both conventional and nuclear capabilities are stationed on Italian territory; logistics depots and reception facilities for external reinforcements are there as well.

Most of Italy's more than 200,000-man Army is committed to NATO. Forces in northeastern Italy can help block a potential Soviet land invasion route to Southern Europe, particularly if the situation in Yugoslavia should alter.

Italy thus gives depth to the central front, and is one of the principal pipelines to, and logistic backups of, SACEUR. Italy and the United States are continually modernizing and extending contingency plans. At this time they are, for example, working out the details of plans for joint marine landing exercises.

It is also pertinent to put Italy's economic problems in perspective. Despite their enormity Italy remains the world's seventh largest industrial power, producing much of its own high-technology weaponry, and is one of the major arms exporters in the world. In defense spending, Italy ranks fourth among European NATO allies, behind the Federal Republic, France and the United Kingdom, and is committed to increasing its army size back to earlier levels. Unlike Britain, Italy has been moving forward with a 10-year equipment modernization program for each of its services (600 Leopard II tanks are to be bought this next year, for example).

(2) **Nuclear reserve.** Thirteen tactical nuclear bases are in northern industrial Italy—as at Livorno, Vicenza, and Aviano, the great majority of whose several hundred warheads are for support of Italian forces. But here again Italy has a role in relation to overall NATO strategy. To the north of Italy is a belt made up of the two neutral states, Austria and Switzerland; to the west is France, about whose actual engagement in a European war one cannot be wholly certain. Italy thus not only gives depth to the central front for tactical air. Its bases are a reserve for the tactical nuclear weapons that might become necessary in the event of a Soviet attack

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on the central front. True, the Nike-Hercules sites might well be phased out given the lack of a threat of massed aircraft in this region. A program of modernization, increased security, and substantial consolidation of bases would give the appearance of "progress" by phasing out substantial numbers of outmoded weapons; but any cutback in operational capability would have large implications for general European security.

(3) **The bases.** The Naples-Gaeta complex is headquarters for the Allied Forces Southern Command, with over 3,000 American naval personnel and over 10,000 American civilians and dependents in the area. It is the home port of the U.S. Sixth Fleet. When asked where the Sixth Fleet would go if this base were to be closed, a senior American official responded that there would not be a Sixth Fleet. Aside from its primary geographic implication, the point is that this enormous complex could not be duplicated elsewhere. Neither Greece nor Turkey in the present circumstances can be seen as potential alternatives; nor can Spain, which is outside the alliance; nor France, outside the integrated alliance structure.

Signonella, an Antisubmarine Warfare base in Sicily, makes coverage of the entire Mediterranean possible with maritime patrol aircraft. P-3 Orions fly out of Rota in Spain, too far west to cover the eastern third of the Mediterranean. After 1979, Spanish restrictions on Rota on the use of nuclear weapons and nuclear-capable aircraft will take effect in any event. The only other existing base that conceivably could substitute for Signonella is Souda Bay in Crete. But Greece has lessened its commitment to NATO and its present domestic difficulties, along with the bargaining tactics of the Greek Government with Washington in working out terms of a military assistance agreement, plainly put Souda Bay out of the running.

La Maddalena in Sardinia is an important anchorage, with a submarine tender. The tender now supports four to five attack submarines in the Mediterranean. Before 1971 three and a half submarines had been the rule, but Admiral Zumwalt sought to increase NATO effectiveness in the Mediterranean. La Maddalena is a popular target in Italy, thanks to the issue of nuclear waste. The U.S. Navy considers the accusation a canard, given the lack of any evidence of nuclear discharges since the beginning of its use. Still, La Maddalena is an easy scapegoat for PCI propagandists, though party spokesmen are quick to point out that other parties of the left join them in attacking it.

Italy's military infrastructure attendant to the bases and to NATO's role in the Mediterranean also is impressive. Communications, command and control throughout Italy are good and are constantly being improved. Elaborate Italian-American treaties, under NATO's article 3 (which provides for the bilateral agreements necessary to make the alliance effective) exist to support the lines of communication and logistics flow. The NATO Air Defense Ground Environment (NADGE) depends on Italy for much of its coverage, and the Sixth Fleet has its communications center in the Naples-Gaeta complex. Although precise costs have apparently not been determined, or even rough ones estimated, plainly it would be prohibitively expensive either to duplicate or to replace any of these systems in Spain, France, or any other country in different political circumstances, given congressional sensitivity to costs alone.

(4) **Geography.** If all the Italian bases could be duplicated elsewhere—or at least their operational functions replicated (and it is not evident how this could be done even without reference to cost)—the most important function would not only not be fulfilled; its

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absence would be underlined. The Italian peninsula nearly bisects the Mediterranean. The sea is less than 100 miles wide between Sicily and the Tunisian coast. NATO thus has an extremely important capability to monitor the flow of all traffic, surface and submarine, from one end of the Mediterranean to the other. This capability and the possibility for sea control that Italy's geography affords, bolsters the argument of American officials that NATO could not really have a Mediterranean role without Italy, or with reduced or compromised Italian participation.

Conditions in this part of the world can change swiftly. In 1975, prior to the June municipal Italian elections in which the PCI made such dramatic gains, it was common for NATO planners to pin all hopes on Italy for the survival of NATO's southern flank. In the Western Mediterranean, the Portuguese situation had deteriorated apace, with Spain providing a continuing question mark as Franco's health worsened. The situation for NATO and for the United States in the Eastern Mediterranean was no better. As a result of the 1974 Cyprus crisis both Greece and Turkey altered their relationship to the alliance quite basically. Greece withdrew from the military organization of the alliance, and though it subsequently has tried to minimize the effects of its precipitate action, it is still haggling with Washington over terms of a new military pact, and could easily lower the level of its NATO involvement.<sup>3</sup>

Turkey, even more damagingly, almost totally ended bilateral cooperation with the United States for a time. Because of peculiar geologic factors—the faults underlying both Turkey and the Soviet Union—the Turkish action had a literally devastating effect, which was largely unappreciated by the public and Congress in the United States, on the American ability to monitor sensitive developments within the Soviet Union. Ankara and Washington have ended the

impasse by negotiating a new military pact, though it remains unratified, thus leaving open the possibility of more haggling if the Greek-American pact looks too generous from Ankara's point of view. In the meantime, Turkey in 1976 became the recipient of more Soviet aid than any other state. Ankara has, at least for now, accepted the Soviet characterization of its new Kiev-class carrier as a cruiser, thus permitting it to transit the Turkish straits, a substantial bending of the 1936 Montreux Convention.<sup>4</sup> Were the Italian role in NATO to come under a shadow, Turkish reactions might well be to shift the balance of its ties further away from the West, and to open more new lines to Moscow.

A final point about Italy's relation to NATO and the United States is that the Italian government and civil service since the end of World War II have been extremely adaptive in sorting out problems of allied relationships. During the Cyprus crisis, the question arose of what to do about nuclear stocks in Greece in the event of a worsening of the crisis. Italy was prepared to allow a transfer of them to its own bases, thus playing an important role as a strategic NATO backdrop (though in fact it proved unnecessary). When the American Congress placed an embargo on Turkey, Italy moved swiftly to help fill Turkey's military needs. A bond of shared aspirations between Italian and Western leaders has resulted in an unstated ability to work in the most sensitive areas when it counts. Intelligence ties are excellent, thanks to the similarity of outlook between the services. It is this sort of tie that American military leaders fear would be lost first with the PCI formally in the government. It is particularly worrisome, because there would be nothing that could be said publicly about such losses.

The Central Question. Many students of the Italian problem argue that the

case for the military importance of Italy to NATO begs the question. The PCI leadership, at least that part led by and responsive to Enrico Berlinguer, has repeatedly asserted in recent years its belief that NATO is necessary. While Henry Kissinger warned of the perils of PCI ascendance and issued dire admonitions to Italian voters prior to the election, American political scientists and many analysts in the U.S. Government and elsewhere questioned the appropriateness of the debate and disagreed most strenuously with Kissinger over the implications of a PCI government or of a *compromesso storico*.

The most superficial review of PCI history from Gramsci forward reveals why students of Italy are so often persuaded of the genuineness of PCI adherence to Western traditions of parliamentary democracy and, to a lesser extent, to continued Western European membership in NATO. Although the party still practices democratic centralism, it is of a more flexible sort than any ruling Communist Party, and its membership criteria are loose enough to irritate and even shock orthodox Communists from bloc countries. Recently reported conflicts in the Central Committee underline how different the PCI is from the CPSU. In practice, the PCI's ability to work with the other Socialists and Christian Democrats in recent years would tend to underline the contention that, in power, however much more radical its policies would be than those of the other Italian parties (save the more doctrinaire PSI), its practices and behavior would be parliamentary. Since 1969 the party leadership has come out with increasing openness to a position supportive of Italian membership of NATO. Proponents of this line of argument emphasize that the PCI position is not tactical in any important sense, but is a fundamental commitment derived from its own definition of self-interest, which

requires above all that it maintain independence from Moscow.

On the other hand, even if we discard the hypothesis that the PCI is simply a Soviet Trojan horse, we must ask what would be the effect on NATO of a growing PCI role, given the party's recent assertion that it would be "unthinkable that Italian Communists . . . should accept the Atlantic Pact as it is . . . in particular as one of the basic instruments of American interference" in Italian life.<sup>5</sup> Surely then the possibly massive alteration of NATO that would be the price of adjusting the alliance to PCI demands bears examination.

There is the additional point that the PCI is, and has chosen to remain, throughout these years of disagreement with the Soviets, within the broad movement of Communist Parties that are led by Moscow. Unlike the ruling parties of China, Yugoslavia or Albania, or several small nonruling Communist Parties around the globe, the PCI has not opted to leave Moscow's gravitational field.

If the PCI has moved in its foreign policy principles to a slogan of "equidistance between the U.S. and U.S.S.R.," that is a long way from the present situation of a governing Italian Party that identifies with and closely collaborates with the United States. How genuine can one in fact take the PCI's democratic protestations to be, even if one does not doubt the sincerity of PCI Secretary General Enrico Berlinguer? For by the most optimistic estimates (from a Western vantage point), perhaps a fourth of the PCI—mostly those of the older generation—are potential CPSU supporters of one sort or another. That means several hundred thousand cadre are at least residually loyal to Moscow. Who can guarantee that Armando Cossutta, the hard-line pro-Soviet leader, will not stage a comeback and reverse the gains made by moderate and centrist Communists in the last 2 years, particularly at and since

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the 1974 PCI congress?<sup>6</sup> If the PCI claims to oppose Soviet attempts to develop a position of hegemony in Western Europe (and in Yugoslavia), it largely supports its initiatives elsewhere in the world. The PCI explicitly or implicitly opposes American policy nearly everywhere, particularly in third-world conflicts of recent years, Indochina, Angola, and the Middle East for example, and has fundamentally different conceptions of how the North-South dialogue should be carried on. Indeed, the PCI's opposition to America and American policy is insistent, often shrill, while no corresponding threat from the East is admitted, and Soviet policy and society often are praised. Thus dissidents in the Soviet Union always are referred to as 'Dissidents' in inverted commas. When President Sadat of Egypt visited Rome in the spring of 1976, the PCI press, for example, admonished Egypt against becoming entrapped by American imperialism, rather than congratulating him on freeing himself from Soviet clutches, for which, in fact, it criticized him.

It may be, however, that neither of these points of view is as pertinent as is the actual dynamics that will come into play if the PCI role in the Italian Government continues to increase. For assuming that PCI adherence to parliamentary democracy is genuine and that its commitment to NATO is honored, the very nature of the PCI world view will have a great effect on NATO. There will be at least a decade during which the PCI (on the optimistic assumption) completes its purported evolution to a position akin, say, to that of the German SPD—an evolution which it is argued is irreversible and already well along the way. And during this decade they would presumably have made a number of demands on NATO which might change its character basically. The first relates to their view of the United States, the second to their view of NATO strategy.

Note first how relatively important Italy's bilateral ties with the United States are, compared with other European bilateral ties with the United States. In Portugal, for example, American influence has always been marginal, and was especially so after the Armed Forces Movement came to power, particularly given the high-level American distrust even of such center-left leaders as Soares. It was thus largely up to other NATO Allies to help Portugal's democratic forces combat the radical dictatorship towards which Portugal was heading during 1974-75. But for Italy, the American presence looms much larger than NATO's, as such, and indeed it is that American presence, especially as in the multinational enterprises, which plays so large a part in PCI ideology and hagiography (if not in practice, as some would insist).

The real question is, given the centrality in PCI ideology of the notion of a Socialist Europe freed from the domination of *both* superpowers, how readily would the party be able to continue the cooperation that the Italian Government has had for so long with the United States, particularly in sensitive areas? Some American analysts believe that it could continue, that a piecemeal policy of testing the PCI, and building cooperation step-by-step could work; that a two-track policy of anti-Communist rhetoric on our side combined with practical cooperation *sotto voce* with the PCI (and the same *mutatis mutandis* obtaining for the PCI) would work.

But more importantly, of what would such a two-track policy be in support? The real question is whether Italy's NATO partners *should* appear to encourage the PCI with such a two-track policy. If PCI *ideology* seeks a Europe without America (despite whatever is said of a short-term and tactical nature), then one might expect that, in due course, the party's internal dynamics would drive it towards that position,

given the underlying, deep and frequently vented hostility to and suspicion of America and its military and economic European missions. What skeptics are asking is whether it is credible to suppose that a Marxist-Leninist Party, however devoted to Italian independence, would really want to sustain enough of the present military infrastructure to keep the Italian-NATO and Italian-American alliances strong. If Gaullists were willing to throw the American-dominated NATO infrastructure out, would the PCI find it all that difficult to do the same? The argument often used to counter this line of reasoning is that the PCI leaders have again and again told visiting Americans that such would not be so, that it is in their interest to keep NATO strong (without specifying who defines that), which they also state to an Italian electorate not wholly without fears of Communist governance. Even those most generous interpreters of PCI intent concede that La Maddalena could well be an early victim of an explicit PCI role in government policy formation, without however realizing the gravity of the military stakes involved with denying an anchorage so far forward (relative to the ultimate supply and support base in Norfolk).

The other point is doctrinal and theoretical. The PCI predictably calls for a refashioning of NATO doctrine, away from the progress that has proceeded in the past decade. "First use" of nuclear weaponry is condemned, nuclear-free zones are urged; foreign bases (that is, those of the United States abroad) are condemned. The logic of these positions, with the Soviet Union located where it is, is precisely to reinforce Soviet advantage and weaken NATO. Given Soviet preponderance on the continent, the problem could be great. These positions to be sure are positions of Communist Parties most everywhere, which only underlines the point of who benefits. In effect PCI

ideology would have NATO become passive in strategy at a time when the Soviet Union continues a massive build-up on Western Europe's eastern border (the implications of which are flatly denied by the PCI).

The problem for NATO becomes apparent when one asks what would happen were the PCI to begin making demands of the alliance which proceeded either from naivete or disingenuousness, which would most certainly happen prior to the claimed total transformation of the party. For example, using individual precedents from other NATO countries, the PCI could demand that nuclear storage cease, that home porting end, that bilateral American rights be sharply curtailed. Would NATO's refusal to grant such concessions lead to an action-reaction syndrome of self-fulfilling prophecies, much as in the economic arena of other countries, where the refusal for loans after capital flights is often used as justification for radicalizing politics and economies? The burden of proof would appear to be on those arguing that, despite PCI ideology and practice, such a normally predictable pattern would not occur.

What is easiest to predict is that NATO would become a "tiered" affair, something long inimical to its spirit and ideals, if not to its practice. The theoretical equality of NATO members has been an important dimension of the alliance, making the argument for membership by the smaller power governments in their domestic arenas more compelling.

Other strong forces would also drive NATO practice: American defense planners, to whom the really important NATO (nuclear) secrets belong, are unlikely to be willing to allow sensitive data to wend their way into PCI hands, no matter how fervid are Communist assurances of good faith. So an executive committee of the Nuclear Planning Group (NPG) could be formed, an



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executive secretariat for channeling sensitive material could be established in Rome; but there would no longer be the important pretense of equality, and this itself would irritate the PCI leadership. The important question of what would happen to NATO, therefore, has little relation to what the PCI says, genuinely or disingenuously, its intentions are toward NATO, but would have to do with what the fundamental forces driving NATO are, with the PCI formally in the Italian Government. The question is not whether NATO could survive PCI participation, but rather, how much of its essence it would have to concede in order to keep the alliance together.

**A NATO Strategy.** Can the United States and Italy's European NATO partners do anything to forestall further PCI gains? This question has two dimensions: First, whether the PCI can be prevented from making further direct electoral gains at future elections; and, second, whether Western policy can be so set as not to harden Italian lines against Western pressure, given the reality of expanded PCI power that already obtains in the government (and which would increase at the next election if the same trend continues).

Western leverage is usually considered to be economic, particularly if capital continues to flow out at the 1976 rate. But no Western government is willing to contemplate actual economic sanctions against Italy. Its economy is enmeshed in the European Common Market and it is difficult to envisage how such leverage could be applied *post facto* without hardening attitudes.

So the primary variable may be political, and here attitudes are sharply divided on what in 1976 was the "Kissinger line." Supporters of it argue that Christian Democratic emissaries urged the United States to continue the pressure and argue that it brought real

results in the June election, thereby forestalling otherwise much greater PCI gains, and forced the PCI to come forward and declare itself on critical alliance issues. Opponents argue that Kissinger was everywhere criticized in Europe for his persistence and lack of delicacy, and see a nationalistic backlash as one result. They would also argue that it was Moscow that inadvertently drew the PCI out in its otherwise successful effort to organize a European Communist Party conference.

One thing that becomes evident from a tactical point of view is that it clearly will be more useful to say less about what the United States and NATO would do if the PCI formed a *compromesso storico* with the DC, since it is not altogether evident what in practice we would do in any event, and the dark hints of the variety Kissinger used might turn out to be a bluff. What NATO allies, presumably working through the SPD and other like-minded parties, can do is to ask the PCI to spell out very precisely what it would propose to do with the NATO military infrastructure; where it proposed to limit American involvement in Italian affairs, and so forth. One would then ask what equivalent limits the PCI would propose for the Soviet Union among her allies, and then proceed to draw the PCI out on many ancillary questions: what would it do to protest the persecution of Soviet Jewry; to follow up on Basket Three in the CPCE? in MBFR negotiations? would it press the Soviet Union in a meaningful way to loosen the strings on its colonial empire in the Baltic and in Central Asia? what are its thoughts on the relevance of parliamentary democracy in third-world countries? One would then watch carefully to see if the PCI press could come to be at least as friendly in its attitude toward its American "ally" as it is toward its alleged adversary in the Soviet Union, whose numerous virtues have been extolled to the Italian people in its press for a generation.

All this might make the PCI look like more and more of a bad thing to Moscow, in the manner of the Dubcek or the Yugoslav Government. It might even split the PCI into an SPD-like open party and a hard-line Marxist-Leninist Party, which would be the most desirable outcome of those which it is possible for Westerners to contemplate. As it is, the PCI is getting something of a free ride, by not having to govern at the national level, and by not having to declare itself publicly without hedging on the really important foreign policy issues. At present, the PCI is able to convince numerous Western observers of its sincerity in wanting a strong NATO (among other things), at the same time that, according to American officials of a different persuasion, PCI leaders are reported to have assured bloc leaders of their adherence to such fundamental Marxist-Leninist tenets as the "leading role" of the CPSU in Communist affairs. All this needs clarification. As it stands, if the PCI began to govern, the West would be in the invidious position of having to regard "good behavior" on the part of the PCI as the most difficult problem of all; and whether the party was stalling or not would not be evident for at least several years, when it might be too late to avert a dangerous outcome.

Meantime, with PCI strength increasing, it is a natural process for those who see PCI ascendance as inevitable to start trimming their sails to what they think Communist policy would be; some of which, reportedly, began happening even before the election.

Comfort has been taken in some circles from the case of Portugal in 1974-75, where the Communist Party was for a time the increasingly dominant, and certainly the most effective, party member of a coalition with the military. NATO had the agonizing problem of dealing with Portuguese delegates to the Brussels headquarters and to all regular meetings in such a fashion as

neither to compromise sensitive material nor, by the manner of its action, to create a self-fulfilling prophecy. The problem was largely solved for NATO on an *ad hoc* basis, because Portuguese NATO delegates tended to sympathize with—and wished to be responsive to—NATO's dilemma, which many did by not insisting on reading material that might well be compromised by their fellow nations. This situation would be unthinkable with the PCI, as they have made clear.

The American Embassy in Lisbon found that the problem of security was real enough. Communist bureaucrats used information as a lever to obtain further information and to put the Americans on the defensive and in as bad a light as possible. A respectable Italian Socialist in the Defense Ministry might find it impossible to resist pressure to share information with a "liberal" PCI member in the Ministry of Agriculture, who might find it moving into the hands of a follower of Cassutta. This sort of thing happened in Portugal, often with direct effect on American, if not NATO, interests.

True, there are considerable differences between the then-fluid Portuguese situation and the one emerging in Italy. In Portugal tactics were of the essence. In Italy the PCI has already adopted its strategy: It will not (it points out) come to power with a dog in the manger attitude nor will it be held down as an embarrassment by parliamentary partners. Since Italy is a founding member of the NPG, the sort of information to which it might have access in power, is cosmic in implication. It is doubtful that the kind of machinery set up in Iceland when Communists were in the coalition there (compartmentalizing sensitive information through special—and safe—hierarchies) would be possible in Italy. High-ranking American military sources have argued that it would be most difficult to keep classified material entirely out of PCI hands at NATO

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bases in Italy with the party in power, even if the nuclear secrets could be kept.

The issues for Western security are very serious, even without thought to the "worst case" outcome. What is curious in so many reactions to the prospect of PCI participation in the Italian Government is the eagerness with which so many Westerners have sought to play down the relationship of Soviet gains to PCI gains. The issue is not whether the PCI would cast its lot in with Moscow; it would not. The question is at what rate PCI ascendance would *impede* the integration and further development of NATO (no one expects the PCI to further it). If Westerners cannot see this, Moscow presumably can, and thus one looks for some solid evidence of the purported disquiet in Moscow over the gains of the PCI about which one hears so much. The PCI, after all, has both an "objective" and a "subjective" role in relation to Soviet-led communism, which is increasingly plural politically but militarily as monolithic as ever.

Envisage a graph: On the vertical axis is utility to NATO/Moscow, on the horizontal axis, time. A red line represents objective utility to Moscow of a PCI-dominated Italian Government, a blue line represents the utility to NATO of such a government. Would a downward blue line intersect an upward red line around 1980? The red line might well be bell-shaped, but the question of where and when it intersects the blue one is important. Possibly by 1985 the PCI will have moved far enough away from Moscow to be a net liability to it: But *meantime* NATO might have been crippled by the concessions required to sustain continued Italian membership.

If the *compromesso* occurs, or if the PCI forms a government, then the line

that President Carter espoused in his quest for the Democratic nomination would no doubt be the operational one: that Italy's NATO partners would continue to deal with it as best they could. What remained of the failed Kissinger line would be relegated to obscurity.

A final comment. The situation in Italy does not exist in a vacuum. Despite the fact that the PCI is the largest Communist Party in a NATO country, there are parallels and lessons elsewhere. PCI strength has risen at much the same time as the left has grown in power in France, and in the same period in which a Communist Party came close to seizing power in Portugal; given the intensity of links between European states, one must assume systemic sources. All this happened during a period of unprecedented failure of Western will; and during a period of unparalleled military buildup on the part of the Soviet Union: factors that always have an effect on voters even if they are not conscious of the specific influence. There is no particular reason why the PCI's strength would not be eroded in a new period of European coherence and economic progress, even if the more basic source of PCI strength has been in DC incompetence and failure.

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### BIOGRAPHIC SUMMARY

Following his graduation from Stanford University, Professor Thompson earned his Ph.D. at Oxford University. He is presently a member of the faculty at The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University. He is a former White House Fellow, having served in the Office of the Secretary of Defense. His most recent book is *The Lessons of Vietnam*, coedited with Col. Donaldson D. Frizzell.

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## NOTES

1. The writer would like to thank the numerous individuals in the State Department, Defense Department, and in the scholarly community whom he interviewed in the preparation of this study, and who offered thoughtful comments on a draft of this article. The views expressed are of course his own.

2. For useful background to the PCI, see Donald L.M. Blackmer, *Unity in Diversity: Italian Communism and the Communist World* (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1968), and Donald L.M. Blacker, "Continuity and Change in Postwar Italian Communism," in Donald L.M. Blacker and Sidney Tarrow, eds., *Communism in Italy and France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975); for general background to Italy's relation to NATO, see Primo Vannicelli, *Italy, NATO, and the European Community: The Interplay of Foreign Policy and Domestic Politics*, Harvard Studies in International Affairs, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 1974; and for a contemporary PCI view of its role, see Sergio Segre, "The 'Communist' Question in Italy," *Foreign Affairs*, July 1976; for a general view of Italy's position in the global setting, see Wynfred Joshua, "The Mediterranean and Italy: Global Context of a Local Problem," *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, Georgetown University, 1976.

3. For a pungent assessment of the effect of Greek wrangling on the status of NATO in the Eastern Mediterranean, see Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, "The Homeless Sixth Fleet," *Washington Post*, 30 June 1976, p. 19.

4. See Barry Buzan, "The Status and Future of the Montreux Convention," *Survival*, November-December 1976, pp. 242-247.

5. Alberto Jacoviello, "Il 'caso Italia' e la Nato", *l'Unita*, 1 March 1976, also cited in *Survival*, July-August 1976, p. 166.

6. Some observers have also argued that, however liberal is the leadership of the PCI, the middle echelon is much harder-lined, as is the rank and file (in considerable contrast to France, where the opposite relationship exists). This would be borne out by the near unanimity with which the Soviet Union was praised after the Czech invasion of 1968.

7. For an incisive examination of the PCI's world view see Giuseppe Are, "Italy's Communists: Foreign and Defense Policies," *Survival*, September-October 1976, pp. 210-216.

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