

The 'Revolution From Below': the Italian Communist

Party, the State and Regional Devolution (1944-1970)

Martin J. Bull .

Volume One

Submitted with a view to obtaining the doctorate of the
European University Institute, April 1987

LIB
329
.945
BUL

European University Library



3 0001 0011 0720 2

① I
ROSSO

The 'Revolution From Below': the Italian Communist
Party, the State and Regional Devolution (1944-1970)

Martin J. Bull



329
945

BUL

Submitted with a view to obtaining the doctorate of the
European University Institute, April 1987

329945

Martin John Bull, 1987

All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise without the prior permission of the author.

To my Mother and Father

Contents

Acknowledgements

Introduction

'Continuity-in-Change'

Terminological and Conceptual Problems.....	p.16
Historical Perspective and National Environment.....	p.23
Monolithism and 'Interaction'.....	p.43
'Continuity-in-Change'.....	p.63

PART ONE

THE ROAD FROM CENTRALISM TO REGIONALISM (1944-1956)

Chapter One

Togliatti's Institutional Compromise

The <u>Svolta di Salerno</u>	p.70
Evaluating the 'Institutional Compromise'.....	p.77
'Progressive Democracy and the Representative State.....	p.80
An 'Institutional Vacuum'.....	p.88

Chapter Two

Communism, Regionalism and the Historical Struggle for Power (1921-1944)

The Fragmented Society: Regionalism and Political Power.....	p.94
Italian Communism and the Geographic Distribution of Power, 1921-1935: 'Proletarian Centralism'.....	p.102
The Resistance Movement and the Committees of National Liberation: a 'Revolution from Below'.....	p.118
'Regional Administrative Autonomy': a Non-Ideological Approach.....	p.126

Chapter Three'Progressive Democratic' Centralism:
'Constitutional Jacobinism' or 'Gramscian
Hegemony'? (July 1946 - March 1947)

Regional Legislative Autonomy: a Consensus in Principle.....	p.144
Regional Legislative Autonomy: National Unity Put to the Test.....	p.148
Attempting to Break the Devolutionary Impetus.....	p.169
The Origins of the Centralised State in the Communist Analysis.....	p.173

Chapter FourForging the 'Unitary-Decentralised' State:
a Communist 'Svolta'? (May - June 1947)

The Debate on Regional Legislative Autonomy in the Constituent Assembly.....	p.199
The Myth of the Communist Contribution to the Founding of the 'Unitary-Decentralised' State.....	p.232
From Government to Opposition, from Centralisers into Devolutionists: the 'Rapid Transition'.....	p.246

Chapter Five'In Mezzo al Guado': the Tactical and
Strategic Strains of 'Moderate Regionalism'
(1947-1955)

Abandoning the Constitution.....	p.257
Christian Democracy instead of 'Progressive Democracy'.....	p.271
The PCI: Marginalised and Divided....	p.282
The Return to the Constitution.....	p.290
Regional Devolution and 'Progressive Democracy': a Re-evaluation.....	p.298
'Moderate Regionalism': a New Heritage.....	p.305

Chapter SixThe Re-interpretation of Gramsci's
'Revolution From Below': Towards an
Explanation

The Origins of the Transition.....	p.315
The Incomplete Transition.....	p.330

PART TWOREGIONALISM, DEMOCRACY AND SOCIALISM
(1956-1970)Chapter SevenRegionalism and Socialism: Theoretically
Compatible? Relaunching the 'Via Italiana'
(1956-1960)

The 'Italian Road to Socialism':
Relaunched and Reformulated.....p.339
Developing the Orthodox Legacy: the
Modification of the Marxist Theory
of the State.....p.350
Theoretically Grounding the 'Via
Italiana'.....p.362
Ideology and Regional Devolution.....p.369
Institutional Reform: Strategic and
Theoretical 'Lag'.....p.390

Chapter EightRegionalising the State to Transform the
System: the Challenge of the Ingrao Left
(1960-1966)

The 'Via Italiana' Reaffirmed:
Amendola and Togliatti.....p.405
Radicalising the 'Via Italiana': the
Ingrao Left.....p.413
The 'Via Italiana' and the
'Alternative Model' Put to the Test:
the Development of the Centre-Left...p.444
Democratic or Socialist Goals and
Alliances: the Party Divided.....p.454
The Constitution, Institutional
Reform and the Implementation of the
Regional System: the Party United....p.459

Chapter NineThe Ambiguities of 'La Riforma dello Stato'
(1966-1968)

Institutional Reform: a Debate Long
in the Offing.....p.478
Regionalism and the Centre-Left:
Panacea or Pandora's Box?.....p.486
The 'Reform of the State': the
Origins of the Crisis.....p.493
What Reforms?: the 'New State'.....p.509
How to Achieve the Reforms: the New
'Constituent Phase'.....p.515

Regionalism and the PCI: Reforming
the State or Splitting the Centre-
Left...or Both?.....p.523

Chapter Ten

The Debate on the Regional Electoral Bill:
a Regionalist Challenge, a Tactical
Manoeuvre or a Lesson for Italian
Democracy? (July 1967 - February 1968)

The Parliamentary Debate on the
Regional Electoral Bill.....p.535
The Lessons for Italian Democracy....p.553
The Limits of the Reform and of the
PCI's Strategy.....p.560
Explaining the Communist Vote.....p.566

Chapter Eleven

Brandishing Gramsci's Legacy: the Manifesto
Group's 'Revolution From Below'

The Challenge of the Italian Crisis
and its International Undertones.....p.575
The Manifesto Group's Analysis.....p.589
The Theoretical Guidelines for a
New Strategy.....p.594
'Institutions': the Key to
Explaining the Errors of the Past....p.599
The 'War of Manoeuvre'.....p.612
An Irrevocable Clarification.....p.621
Losing Both Legacies.....p.629

Conclusion

The 'Revolution From Below'

West European Communist Parties: the
Italian Case.....p.642
Italian Politics.....p.666
Italian Regionalism.....p.678

PART THREE

FOOTNOTES, BIBLIOGRAPHY AND APPENDICES

Footnotes

Introduction.....p.685
Chapter One.....p.694
Chapter Two.....p.701
Chapter Three.....p.721

Chapter Four.....	p.734
Chapter Five.....	p.746
Chapter Six.....	p.761
Chapter Seven.....	p.763
Chapter Eight.....	p.777
Chapter Nine.....	p.792
Chapter Ten.....	p.804
Chapter Eleven.....	p.812
Conclusion.....	p.819

Bibliography

1) Official Publications.....	p.823
2) Published Primary Sources: PCI....	p.825
3) Published Primary Sources: Other..	p.849
4) Newspapers.....	p.852
5) Secondary Sources.....	p.853

Appendices

1) Article 5 and Title V of the Italian Constitution.....	p.873
2) Chronology.....	p.885
3) Abbreviations used in the Text....	p.890
4) Map of the Italian Regions.....	p.892

* * * * *

Acknowledgements

A friend recently remarked that it would be a pity when I had completed this thesis because a small 'cottage industry' of 'helpers' had grown up around it. This is not to absolve myself from responsibility for the text that follows. The responsibility is mine alone. However, I am indebted to a great number of people for helping it towards completion, and, for this reason, I apologise if I inadvertently overlook somebody.

First of all, I would like to thank my two supervisors, Vincent Wright and Stefano Bartolini. Having one good supervisor is considered by many researchers as a luxury. I have had the good fortune of having two, and they may be considered better than 'good'. They are both of a similar 'breed' in that neither is hesitant to 'spill red ink' on a text where he sees fit. Their meticulous and constructive criticism and advice, and their willingness to give up their time to read and discuss my work over a number of years, has provided me with the sort of academic guidance essential to completing a work of this sort. It has also considerably influenced my intellectual development. I am indebted to them both for any merits this thesis may possess. I am also grateful to Yves Mény and Robert Leonardi for reading and commenting on an earlier paper which contained my preliminary

ideas for this thesis. Peter Morris first stimulated my interest in West European politics. Rudolf Wildenmann impressed upon me the importance of pursuing certain general studies in political science in the early period of doctoral research. And the late Philip Williams acted as a constant guide and source of inspiration to my work.

The logistics of trying to complete a large thesis often require the administrative help of others. My case is no exception. First and foremost I would like to thank Constance Meldrum, whose role, in fact, was far more than administrative. She read and edited the entire text, and one that was, at times, jargon-ridden and obscure in style. If the text still suffers from these faults it is due to my obstinacy rather than her editing. Bobbie Longinotti has been a great help over the years in typing up (often at very short notice) different parts of the thesis. Lieven De Winter performed the painstaking task of completing the editing to the final draft. Julie Bull commendably put together the bibliography, which was subsequently typed by Herbert Reiter. A number of others have helped type various parts of earlier drafts. I would rather thank than list these people for fear of forgetting one of them. Robert Danziger and all the staff of the Centro di Calcolo have been unfailing in their help for, and patience with, someone whose knowledge about word-processing should be much better in view of the hours he has spent in front of the

screen. The secretaries of the Politics and Law Departments of the European University Institute have been of great assistance in overcoming various problems during my period at the EUI.

The financial provision for writing the thesis came from two sources: a United Kingdom grant to study at the European University Institute, and a special grant from the EUI itself which allowed me to complete my studies there, and for which I am grateful to the Principal, Werner Maihofer. The EUI provides an excellent cross-national community of scholars which enables researchers to exchange their ideas and broaden their horizons rapidly. I hope that the successful completion of doctoral research which the EUI promotes enhances further the institution's reputation within the European academic community.

The research was conducted in various institutions. I would like to thank the staffs of the Biblioteca Nazionale in Florence; the Istituto Gramsci in Rome; the Royal Institute of International Affairs in London; and, most importantly, the library of the European University Institute, and particularly the senior librarians and Marcello Scocci, whose 'mole-like' activities in Italian libraries saved me much time in locating material.

The writing of almost all of the text was done in Florence, with a few parts being completed in Hull and Oxford.

People's preferred 'writing environments' vary considerably. My own experience suggests that a study in a villa overlooking the River Arno in Tuscany is a perfect environment for academic writing. I would like to thank the owners of La Lama, Walter and Claudia Benoliel, and all the villa's residents, for providing me with such an environment.

Finally, on a personal level, I would like to thank Victoria Paton and Lorraine Benson for their encouragement and support over the years. And, most important of all, I would like to thank my parents. Their patience, support, constant encouragement and faith in my abilities allowed me to draw on previously unknown reserves of energy when, at times, my own faith faltered. My parents have been the major source of inspiration to the completion of this thesis, and it is for this reason that I dedicate it to them.

Martin J. Bull,
Florence, April 1987

* * * * *

The 'Revolution From Below': the Italian Communist
Party, the State and Regional Devolution (1944-1970)



"Si pone il problema storico-politico: una tale situazione ... /in cui i bisogni più immediati economici non possono trovare soddisfazione regolare permanentemente/ ... può essere superata coi metodi dell'accentramento statale ... che tenda a livellare la vita secondo un tipo nazionale? cioè con un'azione che scenda dall'alto ...?... la nuova costruzione non può che sorgere da basso, in quanto tutto uno strato nazionale, il più basso economicamente e culturalmente, partecipi ad un fatto storico radicale che investa tutta la vita del popolo e ponga ognuno, brutalmente, dinanzi alle proprie responsabilità inderogabili."

(Antonio Gramsci, Passato e Presente (Roma, Editori Riuniti, 1975), p.28).

Introduction

In the early 1970s a new approach to the study of West European Communist parties began to emerge, as a result of what were seen as deficiencies in the 'internationalist', 'revisionist' and 'integrationist' approaches which had dominated the area until then. These approaches were based on the view that the behaviour of these parties was determined or characterised chiefly by, respectively, their links with the Soviet Union; the gradual revision of their international ideology by their leading members; their gradual 'integration' into the West as a result of the waning of ideologies and class conflict in modern capitalist society. The new approach, which might be described as that of 'continuity-in-change', found its most forceful expression in the publication, in 1975, of Communism in Italy and France, edited by Donald Blackmer and Sidney Tarrow.(1) The authors' critique of existing attempts to explain the behaviour of non-ruling Communist parties focused on four weaknesses: first, a tendency towards generalisation which overlooked the impact of national environments on party behaviour; second, an

inadequate historical perspective, thus overlooking the degree of continuity in behaviour over time of each party; third, a tendency to treat 'the party' as a monolithic structure, which overlooked local and regional differences; finally, a failure to analyse "the interactions among such critical sectors of party activity as political strategy, international relationships, organisational styles and constraints, ideologies and belief systems." (2) The volume was an attempt to highlight the complexity of the study of West European Communist parties and to begin to overcome the above deficiencies. The new approach was characterised by a questioning of the value of studying West European Communist parties in terms of 'changing goals'. Emphasis was placed instead on certain 'permanent interests' which should provide the focus for evaluating the changing behaviour of these parties. The value of this new approach is evidenced in the degree to which it has since influenced the study of West European Communist parties. (3)

Ten years on, however, it could be argued that the 'continuity-in-change' approach has not been completely successful in responding to the deficiencies of earlier approaches. Indeed, it might be argued that it has bred certain weaknesses (to be subsequently outlined) which have undermined a successful response in the above context, at least with respect to the Italian Communist Party (PCI). (4)

This thesis embodies an attempt partially to respond to these deficiencies and weaknesses, and thus further the understanding of West European Communist parties, through a case-study of the PCI's changing approach to a decisive paradigm of Western democratic government: the distribution of power between centre and periphery, with specific reference to the regional level. The rationale for the choice of 'regionalism' is two-fold: firstly, it may be viewed as exemplary of both the deficiencies of earlier approaches to the study of West European Communism and the weaknesses in studies since the mid-1970s; secondly, and linked to the first, it could be said that insufficient attention has been paid to the PCI's tackling of this concept compared with issues which appear of much greater theoretical significance such as the link with the Soviet Union or the relationship with the United States. This thesis contends, however, that a proper understanding of the functioning of the PCI is not possible without taking into consideration issues which may appear, prima facie, of little theoretical importance.

The Introduction which follows justifies and outlines the thesis and its broad concerns and goals in the following way. Firstly, since the thesis seeks to identify and explain the changing nature of a party's position in the centralisation/decentralisation debate, terminological and conceptual problems are analysed. The two parts of the thesis

are then introduced by reference to the deficiencies of earlier approaches to the study of West European Communism and attempts to rectify these since the mid-1970s. The first two deficiencies identified by Blackmer and Tarrow (historical perspective and national environment) provide the background for Part One of the thesis which is then outlined chapter by chapter. The nature of the questions which the last chapter of Part One attempts to answer opens fresh problems which are related to the second two deficiencies identified by Blackmer and Tarrow (monolithism and 'interaction'). These provide the background to Part Two of the thesis which is subsequently outlined chapter by chapter. The final section of the Introduction summarises the broad concerns of the thesis and its goals in relation to the study of West European Communist parties which, as already noted, provides the main framework of the study. It also indicates two other areas to which the Conclusion will return in an attempt to broaden the lessons that may be drawn from this type of study.

Terminological and Conceptual Problems

As several authors have noted, there are considerable problems involved in locating and explaining a political party's exact position with respect to the concept of decentralisation.(5) Abstract theory provides many 'boxes' against which to judge party positions or ideologies, but

their value is undermined for several reasons. While the concept's opposite - centralisation - is, according to Mény, the single expression which "paraît revêtir une signification à peu près unanimement admise", decentralist ideology is characterised by a confusion of terms, concepts and motivations which, in practice, overrun abstract theory and create "la zone imprécise de la semi-décentralisation."(6) 'Regionalism' - as a 'decentralist' product - is a typical case. In Tarrow's words:

"Le stesse ideologie alla base del regionalismo sono vaghe, mutevoli e contraddittorie, e appartengono per di più a livelli diversi di globalità."(7)

As a result, party positions or ideologies with respect to decentralisation often either do not fit into the boxes provided by abstract theory; or they are masked tactically or strategically to achieve that effect; or, finally, the positions or ideologies themselves are subject to considerable internal party debate. There is the further problem of a party fitting its position neatly into a box of abstract theory in principle, but not meeting that definition in practice. This is because certain aspects of decentralisation may remain simple affirmations of principle unless certain other conditions are not also affirmed. These conditions, which may relate to subjects such as legislative and financial powers,

central controls and geographical boundaries, are of such a nature that their very affirmation requires a certain specificity. In the event of the drafting of a constitutional system of government, a party's apparent 'principles' may undergo considerable change when the party is forced to make concrete decisions. It is under these circumstances that other more immediate factors (such as the nature of the political struggle at the centre, political parties' immediate needs or the social and economic conditions of the country concerned) may have much influence over the presentation of a party's position. Of considerable importance, then, is the time at which crucial decisions are made.(8)

While these problems do not necessarily argue against defining and analysing a party's beliefs against an abstract framework, it does reveal the difficulty in evaluating the origins and intentions behind a party's proposals in that area. These kind of problems are compounded when the analysis involves a Marxist party which originates and is inserted in a national community and a capitalist system, for reasons which will be expounded in the second and third parts of this Introduction: briefly, that the 'peculiar' conditions under which these parties operate - resulting from their declared goals with respect to the capitalist system - result in the cultivation of a 'dual language' by which 'legalistic' themes may become part of their ideological 'patrimony'.

With these caveats in mind it is useful to draw up a conceptual and terminological framework against which different parties' declarations and the explanations of these in this thesis may be evaluated. Cornford's distinction between the motivations for decentralisation and the methods by which it can be implemented give rise to four poles which provide the possible bases of decentralisation - efficiency and democracy (motivations), on the one hand, and territorialism and functionalism (methods), on the other(9):

DECENTRALISATION

Territorialism

Devolution

Deconcentration

Democracy
(pol.)

Efficiency
(admin.)

Interest
Group Rep.

'Hiving Off'

Functionalism

Decentralisation on a territorial and efficiency basis results in deconcentration, and on a functional and efficiency basis, in a 'hiving off' of bodies from the centre. Decentralisation on a territorial and democratic basis results

in devolution, and on a functional and democratic basis in some form of interest group representation. Regionalism involves specifically decentralisation on a regional basis (i.e. as opposed to some other territorial basis) and can be, therefore, a form of deconcentration or devolution, or even a disguised means of 'hiving off' from the centre: hence the term 'functional regionalism'.(10) In short, to describe oneself as 'regionalist' is not a very illuminating statement.

This thesis is concerned with regional deconcentration and regional devolution. The former would involve the creation of regional bodies or units of government, exercising purely administrative duties of the State (i.e. it is a form of administrative decentralisation). The latter would involve the creation of politically-autonomous units of government through the activation of the type of conditions mentioned earlier: freely elected officials, financial autonomy, legislative autonomy in significant policy areas, an absence of central controls, and jurisdiction over a certain geographical area.(11)

Naturally, from what was said earlier, there exist possible variations which can tend to blur the distinction between devolution and deconcentration. For example, the units of government carrying out purely administrative duties of the State might be managed by freely-elected officials (with the aim, say, of ensuring non-corrupt personnel), but this would

not amount to a devolution of power unless the other conditions (and most particularly those relating to legislative and financial autonomy) were also met. Devolution should, furthermore, be distinguished from federalism. For Leonardi and others:

".../The/... conception ... /of a unitary-decentralised State based on regional governments at the sub-national level/ ... /i.e. as in Italy/ ... is to be differentiated from the federated nation-State (e.g. the U.S., Germany etc.) where sub-national governmental units are completely autonomous in specific areas of policies. In a unitary-decentralised State political powers are delegated from the national to the regional levels, thus maintaining the unitary nature of the State but operating in a decentralised setting."(12)

While this is an accurate enough distinction, it also should be noted that it introduces a final possible distinction within the area of devolution, concerning the source of the delegation of powers. There is, for example, a difference between sub-national governments whose powers are constitutionally enshrined (i.e. their powers are drafted into the Constitution, as with Italy's regional governments), and sub-national governments whose powers are decided upon by successive national governments (as with Italy's provinces and comunes). The former clearly have greater 'entrenched rights'. Indeed, it might be even questioned whether the powers they

receive amount to devolution at all. If devolution involves a delegation of power 'from the State' a case could be made for arguing that sub-national governments with constitutionally drafted powers are of the State, and concern a constitutional distribution, rather than devolution, of power. Gordon Smith thus distinguishes between an 'original' and a 'devolved' allocation of powers:

"Devolution of power may be no less far-reaching in its effect than an original allocation, but the cardinal difference is that it is a grant of power by the national political authorities and as such its continuance finally depends on its acceptability to these authorities, central government and national assembly; the area has no entrenched rights."(13)

This introduces the idea of devolution as a 'political' - instead of just a legal or administrative - process, which has been stressed by several authors: the autonomous unit's 'autonomy' may depend as much on its own mobilisation of political resources and public support as on the policies of the national government.(14) While it is important to make the above distinction it should also be pointed out that even this can become blurred when constitutionally enshrined powers themselves become dependent upon the whims of successive national governments, meaning that those institutions with 'entrenched rights' are constrained into exploiting the same

political and public resources as their institutional 'inferiors'. Moreover, the dependence of constitutional powers on national governments may extend to the point of concerning the existence of the sub-national institutions themselves. This can be the result, as with the Italian case, of the power struggle at the centre and decisive changes in position on the part of the political parties engaged in that struggle; and this, as will be seen, is one of the central concerns of this thesis. (15)

Historical Perspective and National Environment

Attempts to tackle the first two deficiencies of the earlier approaches to the study of West European Communism - an underestimation of the impact of national environments and an inadequate historical perspective - have been closely linked. It could be argued that since the publication of Communism in Italy and France attempts to assess the impact of the national (Italian) environment have been characterised by a somewhat schematic approach towards the PCI's historical perspective. If the major theme of the new approach was the degree of continuity in the PCI's post-war strategy, the focus of research should have been directed towards the period between 1944 and 1948, or, more specifically, towards the differences in the national environment in this period compared with the period after 1948 and, more particularly,

after 1956. Yet, perhaps because of the emphasis of the 'continuity-in-change' approach on the importance of the decisions taken in the early period on the future development of party strategy(16), there has been a tendency towards assessing the PCI's strategy from 1944 onwards tout court, with the disclaimer that the principles supporting it became 'submerged' in the period 1948-1956. Much academic work on the PCI stresses that, despite several ambiguities, the party's strategy in the post-war period has been 'consistent'. This argument is difficult to refute because of the extremely general nature of the principles used to demonstrate that consistency: the commitment to parliamentary democracy; the search for political and social allies; the expansion of the 'new party'; the tie to the socialist motherland. The identification of these 'permanent interests' have, correctly, justified the claim that to study West European Communist parties in terms of changing goals may be regarded as a fruitless task.(17) Nevertheless, if taken too far, the position runs the risk of becoming over-simplistic. Peter Lange, for example, having defined the principles which have governed the PCI's strategy since the war, then states that:

"The strategy thus far delineated was premised on the PCI's acceptance of a series of 'stabilities' of Italian economic, social and political life."(18)

Yet, at the same time, it is accepted that the 'stabilities' of Italian life, in the perception of the PCI, drastically changed between 1944 and 1948. The acceptance of both arguments has led to a degree of contradiction amongst some authors. Di Palma, for example, writing in 1978, argues that the "essential elements" of the PCI's post-war strategy "were already present in the early 1940s, when democracy was re-instated, and they have been confirmed as democratic syncretism endures."(19) Yet, a year later, in explaining the PCI's evident 're-interpretation' of the Constitution after 1948, he argues that:

"Having abandoned constitutional Jacobinism under the constraints of the national and international situation, the party was progressively seeking recognition through a new rooting strategy of social presence, institutional penetration and political exchange designed at the same time to open and infiltrate the majority."(20) (my emphasis)

In short, valid as the 'continuity-in-change' approach may be, insufficient attention has been paid to the extent to which the PCI's strategy - as an alleged 'national variant' of Marx's strategy for socialism - may or may not have changed in the post-war period, and to the reasons for this change. These deficiencies are particularly marked with respect to the

subject that this thesis deals with (in relation to the PCI): regionalism.

The Italian Communist Party and Regional Devolution

It is generally recognised that the geographic or territorial dispersion of power is an important dimension of the distribution of power in liberal democracies.(21) In Italy, as has often been noted, this dimension has proved, historically, to be of particular importance largely because of the lateness of Unification. This had two effects. Firstly, it led to the persistence of sub-national 'loyalties' to groups or institutions which did not symbolise or represent the nascent Nation-State. Secondly (and linked to the first effect), it led to an intertwining of territorial identities with Italy's developing sub-cultures. The way in which this shaped the struggle for political power is developed in Chapter Two of this thesis.(22) Suffice to say at this point that 'regionalism' and 'localism' have been recurring themes in Italian history, the former finally finding its institutional expression in the Constitution of 1948, which provided for the creation of a system of directly elected regional governments endowed with autonomous legislative and financial powers.(23)

Despite the recognised importance of the territorial dimension of power in Italy, however, it should be noted that

the study of Italian regionalism has tended to be dominated by lawyers and legal historians (although this has begun to change in the last fifteen years since the implementation of the regional system).(24) This is all the more surprising in view of the fact that one of the issues which has dominated the politics of Italy's most recent historical period (from 1944) has been the policy reversal of the two major political parties (the PCI and the Christian Democratic Party (DC)) towards Title V of the Constitution, which provided for the creation of the autonomous regional system referred to above. The DC, having battled for the creation of such a system during the Constitutional debates (1944-1947), altered its position about the system's value after winning an absolute majority in the elections of 1948. In an atmosphere of Cold War tension, successive governments, all dominated by the DC, failed to bring forward the legislation necessary for the implementation of the regional system. They feared the creation of Communist strongholds in Tuscany, Emilia-Romagna and Umbria. This resulted in a delay of twenty-two years in the implementation of Title V of the Constitution. The regional system was finally introduced only in 1970.

Meanwhile, the PCI, having been originally opposed to the creation of a system of legislatively and financially-autonomous regional governments, shifted its position, at some stage after its exclusion from the national government in May

1947 and the onset of the Cold War, to one that favoured the creation of such a system. The party, moreover, gradually became the strongest proponent of regional devolution and, by the early 1970s, regarded the implementation of the regional system as the greatest reform of the Italian State since the founding of the Republic itself.(25)

Significantly, while the effects of the DC's 'u-turn' (svolta) have been much more visible (because they relate to the non-implementation of a fundamental part of the Constitution over a twenty year period) it is the PCI's 'u-turn' which has received greater attention over the years precisely for the type of reasons which the 'continuity-in-change' approach to the study of West European Communism aimed at overcoming. The 'u-turn' on regional devolution has provided a convenient support for two conflicting views: firstly, that the PCI is different to other parties i.e. that it is a traditional Leninist revolutionary party which has a tactical, instrumental approach to representative institutions, governed by the goal of building strength until the propitious moment arrives to seize and destroy the bourgeois State; secondly, that the PCI is, in fact, no different from other parties i.e. that despite its declared goal of building a socialist society, its aims, in practice,

have been reduced to those characteristic of liberal-democratic parties: the maximisation of electoral potential and the protection of practical political interests.

Tentative attempts by some authors - respecting the 'continuity-in-change' approach - to break with this 'two-headed' approach have led to the type of contradiction referred to earlier: it may be possible to present the change in position on the issue of regional devolution as being exemplary of the activation of a 'new rooting strategy', but it nonetheless calls into question the acclaimed consistency of the PCI's strategy since Togliatti's return to Italy from Moscow in 1944. Such attempts have not been fully developed. Nor have they been supported by any serious academic research. On the contrary, the academic research that has been conducted on the 'u-turn' preceded the publication of the Blackmer and Tarrow volume, and its results tended to negate the value of adopting a new approach to the question. The findings of this research are of such significance that they should be briefly summarised.

The use of the 'u-turn' to buttress the argument that the PCI is (or was) a traditional Leninist party bent on destroying the capitalist system has tended to serve the interests of the right-wing of Italian politics. In contrast to this, the use of the 'u-turn' to support the view that the PCI has been, since the war, essentially 'non-ideological' or

'revisionist' has been largely the preserve of academics. This was particularly so after the research conducted on the Constitutional debates in the 1960s by the legal historian, Ettore Rotelli, whose book, L'Avvento delle Regione In Italia (published in 1967), and subsequent works, have become the standard texts for those studying the approach of the various political parties towards regional devolution in the immediate post-war period.(26) His crucial 'finding' - and one which politicians of the Right have not been averse to using to underpin their own 'ideological' case - was the apparent rapidity of the PCI's transition from a centralist to a devolutionist stance. Indeed, a further reason for the greater interest in the PCI's (as opposed to the DC's) 'u-turn' is that, as a result of Rotelli's research, Italian historiography has assigned to the 'u-turn' far greater repercussions for the Italian political system than to the 'u-turn' of the DC. Rotelli's argument is that the PCI changed position on the issue of regional devolution at a crucial moment during the Constitutional debates and that this change in position was essential to the inclusion of legislatively autonomous regional governments in the Constitution. The argument, in other words, is that without the PCI's 'u-turn' the Italian Republic would have remained a constitutionally centralised State instead of the 'unitary-decentralised' State which has been such a prominent political issue since.

In essence, Rotelli's thesis is that in the Constituent Assembly the PCI found itself in a position from which, with the support of the Socialists and the parties of the Right, it could have imposed its own form of 'moderate regionalism' (which amounted to little more than administrative decentralisation) rather than accepting the more 'extreme' proposals of the DC, the Republican Party (PRI) and the Actionist Party (Pd'A) (these proposals amounting to the creation of a system of legislatively and financially autonomous regional governments). Yet, at the eleventh hour, the PCI (with the PSI) shifted position as a direct result of the party's exclusion from office in May 1947 after the collapse of the government of national unity and the onset of the Cold War. The shift, he claims, was registered in a crucial vote on 12 June in the Assembly when the party voted against the Right's attempt to abolish Title V from the Constitutional project, and declared its acceptance of a regional system endowed with legislatively autonomous powers. It subsequently acted on this declaration, he concludes, when the relevant votes arose on the issue of legislative autonomy. (27)

Rotelli's argument has, for the most part, remained uncontested, and it has served as a vital reference point for other authors to demonstrate the PCI's essentially tactical or

electoral attitude towards institutions in the immediate post-war period.(28) Moreover, the attitude of the Communist Party itself has tended to confirm the validity of his argument. After a long period of vagueness and ambiguity in accounting for its behaviour during the Constitutional debates (with the aim of claiming that the party had always supported the concept of regional devolution), the party (or at least an influential part of it), has, in recent years, come round to accepting the thrust of Rotelli's account (i.e. that the PCI shifted its position during the Constitutional debates and thus determined its outcome). It has, however, rejected his reasoning for the shift; namely that it was due to the sudden development in the political situation (i.e. the exclusion of the party from the new government). Yet, the inadequacy of reasons proffered in exchange (such as the degree of 'internal debate' on the question and the sudden awareness of the significance of Gramsci's 'regionalism') has tended to act as a confirmation of Rotelli's argument on when and why the shift occurred.(29) In short, any attempt to challenge the predominant interpretation of the PCI's 'u-turn' (i.e. that it was demonstrative of the PCI's 'tactical approach' to institutions in the immediate post-war period) is immediately confronted with the difficulty of accounting for the 'fact' that the 'u-turn' was enacted so rapidly that it could hardly have been anything but the result of tatticismo.

The first part of this thesis embodies precisely such an attempt (i.e. to challenge Rotelli's argument on the role played by the PCI in the founding of Italy's unitary-decentralised State). It attempts to show that Rotelli's argument misinterprets the role played by the PCI for two reasons: firstly, because of the considerably complex nature of the debate surrounding the drafting of Title V of the Constitution; and secondly, because his ideas continue to be governed by the pre-'continuity-in-change' approach to the study of West European Communist parties. Part One of the thesis unravels, therefore, two closely interrelated arguments. Firstly, it shows that the PCI's change in position on the issue of regional devolution did not, in fact, take place during the main constitutional debate on the drafting of the regional project in the Constituent Assembly and that, consequently, the PCI was not responsible for the founding of Italy's 'unitary-decentralised' State. Secondly, and as a consequence of the first, it argues that the reasons for the PCI's change in position are not necessarily as clearcut as Rotelli and other writers (and politicians) have maintained.

At the first level, then, the thesis might be described as being concerned with 're-writing history', in that it challenges the predominant interpretation of the behaviour of a political party at a crucial moment in a country's history. To those familiar with the existing interpretation of the

PCI's behaviour this might appear to be a rather fruitless endeavour. Rotelli's account appears to be based on a meticulous reading of the Constitutional debates. Moreover, the point might be made that what has been stated and recorded, coupled with the votes taken, must be sufficiently clearcut as to preclude a discussion over a party's action during a parliamentary debate. Marx had an answer to this when he distinguished between three levels of human behaviour in studying history: what is 'said', what is 'thought' and what is 'done'. It is the contention of this thesis that Rotelli's account rarely leaves Marx's first level. He reaches a conclusion about what the PCI was 'thinking' and what it 'did' firstly, on the basis of what it was 'saying' and secondly, on the basis of certain assumptions of what political parties 'do' in a given situation. Part One of the thesis attempts to show that what the political actors were 'saying' in this important period of Italian history was far more ambiguous than Rotelli and others have maintained and was rarely a clear indicator of what they were 'thinking' nor what they were prepared to 'do'. And in doing this, it is shown that the assumptions the writers have used of what a political party will 'do' in a given situation are, in this case, incorrect. Such an attempt at 're-writing history' necessitates a close attention to chronological detail, particularly with respect

to those points on which the predominant interpretation most heavily depends.

The above argument, however - and the argument of the 'continuity-in-change' approach in general - implies that a tackling of the issue purely on the basis of a re-interpretation of certain events in the chamber of the Constituent Assembly is insufficient. Doing so would be to remain confined within the framework of the approach already criticised, overlooking the importance of historical perspective and the impact of the national environment. If, as already claimed above, the constitutional debates are complex then challenging the predominant interpretation is also a complex task. And if the reader remains torn between the two interpretations he or she is likely to favour that which appears to reflect the most likely behaviour of the PCI in that situation. A successful re-interpretation necessitates, therefore, calling into question the assumptions Rotelli and others have used in developing their analysis, and this, of course, is essential to fulfilling the second aim of Part One of the thesis, referred to above: re-assessing the reasons for the PCI's change in position on the issue of regional devolution.

In short, a sufficient interpretation and explanation of the events surrounding the PCI's 'u-turn' requires not only a careful analysis of the events themselves but the placing of

those events in an historical and national context to corroborate the analysis of them. Specifically, this involves analysing the events within a number of contexts: firstly, the PCI's approach to the concept of representative democracy (i.e. the possible use of representative institutions in a socialist strategy in Italy); secondly, the party's views on the distribution of power between centre and periphery in socialist and bourgeois democracy; thirdly, the party's post-war strategy in general; and fourthly, the particular national environment which prevailed in the aftermath of the collapse of the Fascist regime, which, to some extent, the nature of the first three factors reflected. In this way, the thesis attempts to place the PCI's approach to the concept of regional devolution in an historical perspective that assesses the changing impact of the national environment on its position. From here, a re-assessment is made of when the party shifted position on the issue of regional devolution and of the possible reasons why this shift occurred.

Part One: the Structure of the Argument

The structure of the argument of Part One is as follows. Chapter One analyses what is described as Togliatti's 'institutional compromise' in the immediate post-war period: the acceptance of representative democracy as the institutional form of the new State. It is argued that the

three approaches which have been adopted to evaluate this decision (including the PCI's own approach) have a common thread: Togliatti's decision amounted to an acceptance tout court of the representative State, an acceptance which impeded a comprehensive assessment of the various institutional alternatives embodied in the notion of representative democracy. The 'institutional compromise' was an 'institutional vacuum' when applied to different paradigms of bourgeois democracy: one of these paradigms was the distribution of power between centre and periphery. Chapter One thus raises the question of what factors were likely to influence the PCI in formulating its proposals with respect to the distribution of power between centre and periphery in the new Italian State.

Chapter Two, having outlined the importance of the territorial dimension of power in Italy, identifies two conflicting pressures which were likely to influence the PCI's institutional proposals with respect to the centre/periphery dimension of power. The first pressure was the party's own 'centrist' ideology, which was based on the Soviet model, Italy's 'peculiar' territorial divisions and, most importantly, Gramsci's theory of revolution as an industrial (as opposed to territorial) struggle for power 'from below' through a mass movement based around the factory council. The second pressure was the particular nature and influence of the

Resistance Movement and the Committees of National Liberation in the light of the PCI's decision in 1935 to insert a democratic phase in the socialist struggle: the overthrow of the Fascist regime was achieved 'from below' but on a territorial - and specifically local and regional - basis.

In an early period (until the end of 1944) the latter pressure seemed clearly to prevail and, from various declarations of party members, Gramsci's 'Revolution from Below' seemed on the verge of being re-interpreted (from an industrial to a territorial - and specifically 'devolutionary' - context). However, the party's proposals were characterised by a form of 'calculated ambiguity'. The party refused to take an a priori view on representative institutions in general or regional devolution in particular, because, it was claimed, their value could be evaluated only in relation to the tasks to be performed at a particular moment in a country's history. This apparent 'instrumental' approach seemed to reflect the PCI's intention of leaving its options open until definitive constitutional decisions had to be made. It is suggested, nonetheless, that the ambiguity may have been little more than a rhetorical response to the political and social environment of the post-Fascist period, and that 'proletartian centralism' was undergoing a rapid transformation into a 'progressive democratic' form of centralism. This view is corroborated in Chapter Three.

What is the value of referring to the 'decentralising' themes of the Resistance and post-Fascist environment if the Chapter also argues that their effect on the PCI's proposals was purely rhetorical? Firstly, as already noted, they are essential to explaining the ambiguity of the PCI's position in the period preceding the convening of the Constituent Assembly. Secondly, and more importantly, it is precisely these type of themes to which the PCI will return at a much later date to re-evaluate and 'embrace' the concept of regional devolution. Chapter Two thus outlines the 'ingredients' which will provide the basis of the PCI's later re-interpretation of Gramsci's 'Revolution from Below'.

Chapter Three examines the drafting of the regional project in the Constitutional commissions from July 1946 to March 1947. This period is important for two reasons. Firstly, it is important because it was the first time that the PCI was called upon to present its constitutional proposals for voting and to vote on other parties' proposals. This meant that the party could no longer retain its ambiguous position vis-à-vis the concept of regional devolution. The result was a full exposure of the PCI's aspiration for a highly centralised representative State. The second, and more important, reason is the significance that should be attributed to this unequivocally centralist position. The Chapter argues that despite the PCI's declared 'instrumental' approach to

institutional questions, the party's decisions with respect to the Constitution should nonetheless be viewed as a long-term choice related to the party's underlying strategy for power. In other words, it is contended that it is insufficient to regard - as some authors have done - the PCI's institutional choices as purely 'tactical' (and, therefore, liable to sudden change) once the drafting of the constitutional project had begun. This being so, it is important to examine the conditions under which the party made these choices (these being largely consistent until May 1947) as a prerequisite to evaluating the possible effects of a change in conditions on these choices, such a change taking place in May 1947, which is the concern of Chapter Four.

Chapter Four, therefore, deals with the period between May and July 1947 which is central to the argument of the 'overnight transition' theorists. It is during this period that the Communists and Socialists were excluded from the government and the crucial decisions concerning regional legislative autonomy were made in the chamber of the Constituent Assembly. Through a close analysis of the debate, the Chapter shows that no change occurred in the PCI's long-term position on regional devolution. It also shows how Rotelli and others have misinterpreted the debate. These arguments are supported by an analysis of the reasons, or assumptions, underlying Rotelli's argument. These, it is

argued, are open to question when placed in the context of the party's unchanged long-term strategy for power and the conditions under which this strategy had been formulated. The conclusion drawn is that the PCI's 'u-turn' on regional devolution did not occur until after the crucial votes concerning regional legislative autonomy had taken place. This raises the question, which Chapter Five attempts to answer, of the exact timing of the change in position and the precise nature of the change.

Chapter Five identifies the first sign of a change in the PCI's position on regional devolution as the result of a modification in the party's overall strategy in the period after September 1947. Two phases of strategic change are identified: the first from September 1947 to the elections of April 1948, when the progressive democratic strategy, based on the Constitution, was effectively abandoned but not replaced with another strategy to gain power; and the second from the elections of April 1948 to the end of 1955 when the progressive democratic strategy was 're-born' in a new guise. The first sign of a change in the party's position on regional devolution occurred during the first phase. It seemed to be largely tactically motivated because of the 'strategic vacuum' in which the party was drifting. Nevertheless, the new position had strategic implications which became apparent after the elections of April 1948. The new position, however,

as developed by 1955, was equivocal, leaving the party in mezzo al guado: a form of 'moderate regionalism' was proposed which, while representing a clear retreat from the party's erstwhile 'centralism', remained theoretically ungrounded in relation to a democratic strategy for socialism in Italy. The Chapter concludes, therefore, by arguing that while a 're-thinking' on the issue of regional devolution had evidently taken place, the PCI seemed either unwilling or unable to draw all the conclusions that this involved.

This leaves the final chapter of Part One to answer two questions: first, why had there been a change in the PCI's position on regional devolution?; and second, why had this not been carried through to its logical conclusion by 1955? Responding to the first question concludes Part One of the thesis. A comprehensive attempt is made to evaluate tactical, strategic and theoretical motivations governing the PCI's change in position. Emphasis is placed on the limitations of interpretations which argue that the shift in position was purely tactical and unrelated to the party's 'strategy for socialism'. It is argued that the shift in position may be seen as originating in the needs of the party which arose from the new political and social situation and the new importance of the Constitution to party strategy.

Responding to the second question, however, indicates the interrelatedness of the two questions: any response to the

first cannot be completely satisfactory because of the fresh problems that it introduces. Indeed, in attempting to tackle the second problem, there arises the second two deficiencies (referred to at the beginning of this Introduction) that the 'continuity-in-change' approach aimed to overcome: on the one hand, viewing 'the party' as a monolithic structure, and, on the other, failing to assess the interactions between the different levels of strategy, ideology and organisational constraints. These deficiencies, as with the previous two, are closely linked. In this way, the second part of Chapter Six acts as a form of introduction to Part Two of the thesis.

Monolithism and 'Interaction'

Since the mid-1970s great emphasis has been placed on the study of the behaviour of the PCI at the local and regional levels as a means of demonstrating the diversity of the party and its 'pluralistic' nature. Indeed, the PCI 'in the provinces' has received increasing attention because of the view that this level has not only been neglected but is of crucial importance to an understanding of the behaviour of the party. The importance of these studies is not to be denied.(30) However, it should be noted that less attention has been paid to the way in which, at the national level, particular aspects of party strategy, in motivating the interaction between different academic and organisational

party activities, may call into question its apparently monolithic structure.(31) This becomes all the more important when the aspect involves a decisive change in the party's position. Again, the tackling, to date, of the subject of this thesis is illustrative of this.

The PCI's change of position on regional devolution has been largely assumed as a 'given', whether for tactical or strategic reasons. Yet, although the 'peculiar' nature of Western European Communist parties has been often noted, there has been little consideration of the possible problems involved for the PCI, as 'a party', of assuming a new position in relation to a decisive paradigm of Western democratic government: the distribution of power between centre and periphery. What type of action is required by the leadership, in relation to its membership, to institute and promote the new position? How do the tactical, strategic and theoretical levels interact in the grounding of the new position? What influences the intellectual debate on the issue which ensues inside the party? How does the strategic value of the new concept change, and at what point can it be said that the new position is a genuine part of the party's strategic armoury and theoretical 'patrimony'? In short, until this process is complete, is it possible to speak of a strategic change as having taken place?

Providing some sort of framework against which to respond to such questions requires a cursory glance at the important internal role played by ideology in Communist parties, and the perception of this by the leadership of the PCI itself from the 1950s onwards.

Ideology and the Italian Communist Party

The role of ideology in political parties has been well-documented and is crucial to an understanding of the nature and development of Communist parties. It is a source of solidarity, communication, organisation, expression and, perhaps most importantly, of mobilisation: ideology incites people to action and involves, therefore, collective effort.(32) In this context, it is important to stress the internal effects and the further requirements that result from the need for a correct functioning of ideology in Communist - as opposed to liberal-democratic - parties. The importance of the role of strategic and theoretical language or argument to the internal 'drive' and success of 'revolutionary' parties has been referred to by several authors. Donald Sassoon, for example, notes that,

"Communist parties tend to be more conscious than others of the need to connect their strategies to a set of political-theoretical principles."
(33)

Peter Mair argues that the 'anti-systemness' of the revolutionary party is not simply an ideological feature but extends also to "its organisational structure and to the relationship which it seeks to develop between itself and the working-class constituency which it strives to mobilise."(34) This originates in the party's Leninist doctrine which views the working class as being incapable of spontaneously acquiring the revolutionary theory necessary to overcome a corporate awareness of its position, or to take its demands beyond immediate needs which can be satisfied within the prevailing order:

"Thus the role of the party is to politicise the experience of the working class, articulating and situating that experience within a framework of socialist theory which, in turn, identifies the source of proletarian grievance within the structural features of the State and civil society. The party must effect the translation of within-system opposition to anti-system opposition"(35)

In this way the party cultivates and maintains a convincing 'belief system' which is hostile to the prevailing political and socio-economic order. In recent years, some authors have implied that Western Communist parties have utilised this Marxist-Leninist principle but for reverse purposes. Luciano Pellicani, for example, compares the PCI's strategy to that of a 'hermit crab': the party has installed

itself in another shell (that of social democracy) whilst maintaining itself completely unchanged inside the shell. In other words, the PCI's strategy is that of a social democratic party but, inside the party, the leadership cultivates, or maintains, a theoretical 'illusion' for the activists, who believe that their everyday action is concomitant with that of a revolutionary party. The party, therefore, has an 'internal policy' (directed towards the membership), and an 'external policy' (directed towards the electorate). The former gives the members a 'conviction' and is the basis of their activism, while the latter gives the party electoral support from different constituencies of the electorate. It is thus the 'moral ideal' moving the PCI's intermediary corps which gives the party its strength and enables it be located both 'inside' and 'outside' the system at the same time.(36) This gives 'ideology' an internal importance which is not necessarily, in the strict sense of the word, 'ideological'. As Rose and Urwin point out:

"Once a party has formally adopted an ideological programme, there is a pragmatic inducement for party leaders to maintain the ideology, for efforts to reduce ideological commitments in seeking an expanded electoral appeal are likely to be resisted in a disruptive fashion by existing supporters."(37)

The result, as Mény and Barjonet note, is the cultivation of a 'double language' by Western Communist parties which allows for the 're-evaluation' of their ideological plans in such a way that 'legalistic' themes may become part of the party's heritage.(38)

If the common idea in the above arguments is the creation and maintenance of a 'belief system' between the leadership and its activists or supporters (or both), it could be argued that the perceptions of the PCI's leadership from the 1950s onwards have been broadly in keeping with this idea. For the party leadership, the internal 'government' of the party is structured according to one fundamental criterion: the implementation of the strategy upon which has been decided. From this priority arise two potentially conflicting needs: firstly, that once the strategy has been decided there is no further discussion of its validity in public, since this facilitates the 'enemy's' aim of exploiting differences inside the party; secondly, that once the strategy has been decided upon there must be a constant campaign to implement it. This requires a mobilisation of activists which is 'qualitative' as well as 'quantitative': the nature and content of the day-to-day struggles should correspond to the theoretical and strategic lines laid down by the national congress. As Togliatti stated at the PCI's Eighth Congress in 1956,

"... il criterio della adesione a una linea politica non sono le parole, è il lavoro per attuarlo."(39)

One of the preoccupations of the party leadership is that the democratic centralist structure becomes what the party describes as 'monolithic': members of the party, through their perception of the urgency of the first need, accept the line laid down by the leadership but only on a formal basis. This can lead to the phenomenon defined by Communists as doppiezza ('duplicity'): an acceptance of the party line or aspects of the party line purely at a tactical level, and the resulting failure properly to activate party strategy. This form of 'distorted reception' at the base can be channeled into what are defined as 'revisionist' and 'sectarian' tendencies. The leadership's attempts to resolve the problem of doppiezza have taken two forms. The first has been an effort to develop comprehensively the links between the party's ideology, its strategy and everyday action. Doppiezza has been viewed as originating in weaknesses in the party's ideological justificatory system.(40) Hence, the constant calls, in the PCI's history, for greater research in all areas, particularly with respect to the link provided by Gramsci's work to Marxism-Leninism and to Italian political and social realities.

The second attempt to resolve the problem of doppiezza has been the promotion of greater debate inside the party. The leadership has viewed the creation, or maintenance, of an effective 'belief system' as not being solely the result of party intellectuals refining and adapting the party's theoretical framework. This is, again, because of the dangers of a purely formal acceptance by the membership of this framework. The very process of mobilising the party's strategic and ideological framework calls for - indeed, inevitably leads to - a certain 'strain' being placed on democratic centralism's first guiding principle, the preclusion of debate on the validity of the party line. The active implementation of the party line requires unity on its validity. Yet, genuine unity on that line (and thus an effective implementation of the strategy) can be achieved only through widespread debate on its various aspects. Debate, therefore, has been encouraged. As Rossana Rossanda, a party member expelled in the late 1960s, notes,

"It .../the PCI/... is a party which goes in for discussion, because it knows that discussion can be a factor of powerful cohesion. It is a party which seeks to incorporate within itself the reasons for every divergence, in order to retain overall control. This method requires a real capacity for synthesis, and it functions, naturally, as long as that synthesis is possible." (41)

The intellectual debate that ensues may be influenced by a set of changing and often conflicting factors or 'needs'. These relate to the national and international conjuncture, the party's overall strategy, its Marxist ideology and its historical reference points, and the degree of division over these matters within the party leadership. It might be argued that the above quotations could reasonably be applied to all political parties. The difference, however, resides in the need, noted earlier, for the Communist party constantly to square its position with its doctrinal principles. This is best illustrated by raising the important question of the point at which the debate may become 'dangerous' in the sense that the capacity for achieving synthesis is lost and democratic centralism's first principle may be strained to breaking point. Galli and Mancini's comments are noteworthy in this respect:

"... the Communist leadership manages to keep its syncretism /of the 'Italian road' ideology and Leninism/ and to chastise any attempt at subjecting it to critical analysis when the PCI operates as a closed system, as a monistic sub-society within the pluralistic Italian society. But when the PCI fails to escape the pressures from the outer world or when it tries to establish a closer relation with it by encouraging dialogues and common struggles, critical analysis can no longer be bridled and the leaders' syncretism is shattered: for, in this wider context, they lack the implements to exorcise gradualism in

the name of Lenin and Leninism in the name of Togliatti."(42)

At this point, then, the fabric of consensus normally governing internal debate may be broken with the emergence of a specific challenge by a 'faction' to the main party line. Such clarifications may either retard the process of absorbing a new concept into the party's heritage or may result in irrevocable clarifications of the party's strategy and its theoretical underpinning.

What emerges from the above analysis is that the development and re-orientation of the strategy (or an aspect of the strategy) of a Communist party involves two intimately linked processes: first, the reformulation or development of the position by the leadership; and second, the mobilisation of the mass membership genuinely behind the new position. This latter process involves mobilising the party's strategic and theoretical justificatory frameworks and stimulating debate within the party, thus 'absorbing' the position into its strategic armoury and theoretical 'patrimony'. It might be argued that as long as the membership interprets, and acts upon, the new position in a purely tactical manner, a strategic change has not taken place. Moreover, because of the length of the process, the projected milieu within which the party is working changes, with the result that the strategic reasoning which dictated the original shift in position may be

superseded, causing further change in the leadership's perception of the value of the new position. In this way, the original shift in position can be seen only as the initiation of a change which increasingly effects the structure of debate within the party. Finally, this debate, while being essential to the process, at the same time constantly threatens the internal harmony of the party.

The above discussion identifies an important factor in explaining the slowness in development of Western Communist conceptions of how State and society are to be transformed from within and of the end product of such a process. It also reveals that it is insufficient to identify when and why the PCI changed position on a fundamental aspect of its strategy unless this is related both to how the Party changed position - by transferring the new aspect from the tactical to the strategic and theoretical level - and to the characteristics and consequences of this process. It is against this background that the PCI's shift in position on regional devolution should be viewed, and it is with these ideas that Part Two of this thesis is concerned.

Part Two of the thesis thus proceeds on the claim that Communist parties have a greater need than other parties, strategically, theoretically and historically to 'ground' their everyday behaviour. This need is particularly acute when a decisive change in the party's position is involved. Part

Two aims, therefore, to highlight the following: firstly, the Communist leadership's attempt, strategically, theoretically and historically to justify regional devolution; secondly, the changing use of 'regionalism' by the party as a tactical, strategic and theoretical tool; thirdly, the nature of the internal debate among the party leadership that results from the development of the first two factors; fourthly, the point at which the fabric of consensus governing internal debate may be broken, and the consequences of this for the party's everyday action and its theoretical heritage.

At the first level, then, Part Two involves an analysis of what - returning to Marx's dictum - is being 'said' by the leadership about regional devolution as a means of cultivating what might be an 'illusion' for activists who will 'think' that what they are 'doing' is for socialism. The things being 'said' have to be 'mobilised' or developed to ensure that the gap between 'doing' and 'saying' is continually bridged, even if - moving to the second level - the concept is being used for a different purpose altogether. The value of analysing such behaviour arises at the third level, when what is being 'said' in the party becomes open to dispute. This indicates that some members are unhappy about what is being 'done' and want to change this. These members use the same method to attempt to change what is being done - strategic and theoretical debate - and the leadership is forced to meet

this challenge, endangering both the party's apparent 'monolithic' nature and the maintenance of the 'illusion'. The debate, in other words, threatens to expose a gap existing between the party's ideas and its action. This introduces the fourth level, which is to identify at what point the fabric of consensus governing internal debate may actually be broken, and whether this breakdown at the level of ideas automatically has consequences for the party's action and its theoretical heritage.

The period analysed is from 1956 (where Part One finishes) to 1970. The reason for the latter date is that until then the debate over regional devolution is 'academic' in the sense that the regional system remains unimplemented. Its 'value' to the PCI remains open to speculation. Studying the PCI's approach to regional devolution in the period after 1970 would introduce new dimensions - arising from the institutionalisation of the regional governments in the political system, the growth of Communist regional elites and the entry of the PCI into government at the regional level - which would call for a qualitatively different approach to the work. It should also be noted that debates over other aspects of party strategy are analysed only when they impinge on the regionalist debate.

Part Two: the Structure of the Argument

The structure of the argument for Part Two is as follows. Chapter Seven analyses the period from 1956 to 1960, when the PCI officially relaunched the progressive democratic strategy as the via italiana, the strategy's fundamental new characteristic being a devolution of power from the central to the regional level. The Chapter evaluates the leadership's attempt to win over the membership to the new aspect of the strategy. This quickly led to 'regionalism' becoming inserted into the much wider context of the Marxist theory of the State. The party's use of Gramsci's writings, the centre/periphery paradigm of power and, ultimately, an historical reference point (the Constitution) to justify an 'original' strategy for socialism in Italy tended to confirm that the PCI's Gramscian heritage from the Ordine Nuovo period was being replaced by a new heritage centred on the 'gains' of the Resistance. Indeed, Gramsci's idea of a 'Revolution from Below', on an industrial basis, was being re-interpreted - in a territorial context - to justify the validity of a strategy based on a wide-ranging devolution of power to the regional level. The Chapter argues, however, that the issue of regional devolution, in the perception of the leadership, still sat awkwardly in the party. One of the main reasons for this was that the justification of the via italiana was developed in an analytical 'vacuum' which was divorced from the current

political and socio-economic upheaval in Italy. This vacuum was filled by an historical claim relating to the Constitution, which, when applied to the issue of regional devolution, was false.

The unease with which the concept was understood in the party was reflected in the degree to which the issue became absorbed into the more general debate over party strategy between the Left and the Right. The most significant development in this debate was the beginnings of a 'New Left' which argued that regionalism should be part of a comprehensive scheme (as yet undefined) rooted in the current situation and aimed at making genuine 'socialist gains' within the framework of capitalist society. This scheme would be developed in the period after 1960. The Chapter concludes that the problem of regionalism for the PCI during this period was part of a more general problem relating to strategic and theoretical 'lag' with respect to the PCI's declarations on the question of the State, and one of which the nascent 'New Left' was not unaware. The party, it is argued, had theoretically 'institutionalised' the revolutionary process but it had not followed this up with an open recognition of the importance of the State's organisational structures. Nor had it developed a comprehensive programme of institutional reform, and the means to carry through such a reform.

Chapter Eight analyses the PCI's attempts to reform the State and obtain the implementation of the regional system in the period 1960-1966, and the consequences this had for party unity. The party split into two camps which had different conceptions of regional devolution and different views on how the concept - and institutional reform in general - could be achieved in Italy. The Centre and Right (represented by Amendola) viewed regional devolution in fundamentally democratic terms. They believed that a governing coalition which excluded the PCI (i.e. the Centre-Left) could introduce the reform in such a way as to shift the political spectrum further to the left with the eventual entry of the PCI into government. The Left, on the other hand (represented by Ingrao), called for a direct struggle for socialism in which regional devolution formed an integral part. The Ingrao Left argued, therefore, that the Centre-Left would carry through regional reform only if it were made conducive to neo-capitalist planning, the aims of which were to 'rationalise' or stabilise Italian capitalism. Only forces which were genuinely committed to socialism could implement the regional system in such a way that would increase the power of the Left.

The Ingrao Left's 'Alternative Model' developed earlier ideas regarding Gramsci's writings and the centre-periphery paradigm of power, while applying them to the existing

political, social and economic situation (as opposed to justifying them through a dubious historical claim). This seemed to resolve the dilemma of having theoretically to root regionalism in the party's heritage. But it carried with it strategic implications which the Centre and Right of the party were not prepared to accept. As a result, the presentation of an alternative strategy by the Ingrao Left, in conjunction with the development of the Centre-Left, forced certain theoretical and strategic choices on the party with respect to the issue of institutions. Such choices had been avoided until then, and seemed to confirm the divisions existing over the other two dimensions of party strategy, the goals and alliances to be sought.

Nevertheless, despite the seriousness of the Amendola-Ingrao dispute, a semblance of unity was able to be maintained on the party line. The reason for this, the Chapter argues, was that while the party was clearly divided on the nature of the goals and alliances to be sought and on the strategic and theoretical role of institutions, it was nonetheless united on the issue of institutions. This unity could be perceived at three levels: first, at the tactical level, this being epitomised in the agreement existing on the constitutional arrangements for power; second, at the level of the perception of the primacy of a reform of the Italian State, first and foremost through the implementation of the regional system;

and third, at the level of having failed to forge an effective strategy to obtain a reform of the State. Both the via italiana and the Ingrao Left's 'Alternative Model' were 'blueprints for socialism', dependent upon a particular State organisational structure. Yet, the means to achieve such a structure was not clear in either strategy. It is concluded, therefore, that, at its deepest, the PCI's unity stemmed from a strategic impasse, the resolution of which would allow the party strategically to advance with a united front.

Chapters Nine and Ten evaluate the PCI's attempt to resolve this problem and unite the party during an important - and, the thesis claims, often overlooked - period in the history of the PCI, between January 1966 (the defeat of the Ingrao Left at the Eleventh Congress) and May 1968 (the explosion of social, political and worker militancy). Chapter Nine shows how the development of the political situation in Italy during this period allowed the PCI to re-orient its strategy precisely towards the area on which most internal consensus had existed at the close of the Amendola-Ingrao dispute: institutional reform. It is shown how the introduction of the regional system became the major element of a strategy of institutional reform which was based, the party claimed, on a thorough analysis of the origins of the crisis of the Italian State. The strategy embodied not only a blueprint of the 'New State', as with earlier strategies, but

also indicated the means by which this State could begin to be forged in the existing situation. This appeared to resolve a long-term dilemma which had divided the party until then: how to find a majority to reform the State.

The Chapter argues, however, that the 'Reform of the State' strategy was as much rooted in an attempt to resolve the PCI's problems in the short-term as it was in a thorough analysis of Italy's systemic dysfunctionism. Introducing the regional system carried with it short-term, tactical gains which were not necessarily compatible with the 'Reform of the State's strategic 'ideal'. Moreover, it is argued that if the short-term gains were to prevail over the party's claimed strategic 'ideal', there were long-term implications in such a choice which exposed the hybrid nature of the 'Reform of the State' strategy: it can be seen as marking a strategic shift 'rightwards' as a result of the Centre and Rights' attempt to consolidate its victory over the Ingrao Left. This involved an increased emphasis on activity at the political as opposed to the social level, with the aim of entering the governing majority irrespective of the structural reform of the State. Regional deconcentration would serve such a strategy to the same effect as regional devolution.

Chapter Ten confirms the above argument by analysing the behaviour of the PCI in the debate on the regional electoral bill between 1967 and 1968. The passing of the bill

confirmed, the party claimed, the validity of its re-oriented strategy and seemed to hold greater prospects for the party's political future. The Communist vote, however, for a bill which would bring nearer the introduction of the regional system without guaranteeing the system's autonomy from the central government tended to confirm the shift rightwards in party strategy. The shift, moreover, was in precisely the opposite direction to that in which civil society was moving in these years. This harboured dangerous consequences for the party's unity and the prospects of the via italiana itself. This is the focus of the final Chapter.

Chapter Eleven analyses the effects on the PCI of the rise of political, social and worker militancy in Italy and its accompanying international developments. The Chapter argues that the developments of the late 1960s not only called into question the validity of the via italiana. It also exposed a contradiction in the 'Alternative Model of Development' which caused the Ingrao Left to split. Some members of the Ingrao Left remained faithful to the party line while others (who formed the Manifesto Group) developed to the full the premises on which the 'Alternative Model' had been based and radicalised the strategy accordingly. This resulted in a challenge to the party line precisely on the issue behind which the leadership had attempted to mobilise the party in the previous two years: the value of representative democracy

to a socialist strategy in Italy and the need for institutional reform, and in particular regional devolution. The Chapter concludes that the underlying significance of the Manifesto Group's platform was that it challenged the PCI's re-interpretation - in a territorial context - of Gramsci's 'Revolution from Below' by forcefully re-introducing Gramsci's original ('industrial') conception of such a revolution as a strategic alternative for the party to pursue. This brought party thinking on the centre-periphery paradigm of power 'full circle', presenting the PCI leadership with an apparent irrevocable choice of abandoning either the legacy of Gramsci's Ordine Nuovo or that of the Resistance. This 'circularity' in party thinking occurred at the same time as the final achievement of the implementation of the regional system. The combination forced a 'double-clarification' on the PCI which, it is concluded, resulted in the loss of one legacy and the failure to establish, or consolidate, the other.

'Continuity-in-Change'

To summarise, the main paradigms of this thesis emerge from a particular approach to the study of West European Communism. This approach emphasises what would appear to be a 'false dichotomy': the maintenance of 'continuity' in the process of 'change' in these parties' strategic and ideological positions. As has been made apparent, one's

acceptance of the validity of such a proposition may depend upon one's own ideological predilections or on one's position in the academic discipline of political science (or, for that matter, other disciplines). Those, for example, who decry the urge to find 'method in the party madness' are not constrained in their evaluation of these parties' behaviour by the party leadership's claim that it is grappling with the problem of the transition to socialism. At the other extreme, those who are prepared to be open to these parties' histories 'on their own terms' run the risk of developing an historical evaluation which is largely the party's own.

The 'continuity-in-change' approach, it might be said, represents a form of compromise between the two, an attempt to 'sit on the fence'. This thesis is based on such a compromise although, it should be noted, the 'fence' appears to 'lean' in both directions at different times. This is for two reasons. Firstly, it is because the thesis is dealing, in Part One, with an issue which the 'revisionist school' has long used to underpin its case and on which it has never been challenged. The reasons why it has never been challenged are firstly, the apparent unequivocal nature of historical evidence and secondly, the PCI's own acceptance of a major part of this evidence because, the thesis contends, it has been precisely in the PCI's interest. In other words, as champions of regional devolution, what could be better for the PCI's

heritage than academe's claim that the party was responsible for Italy's regionalised State structure? For these reasons the historical 'archive' has appeared to be complete and, therefore, closed.

The second reason for the study appearing to 'lean' in one or more direction is that in Part Two the thesis merges two aspects of 'functionalism' in the study of political parties, as a result of responding to two questions. The first question is: what motivates a change of the PCI's position on the geographical distribution of power in Italy? This introduces the problem of the relationship of the party to its 'external environment'. The second question is: what are the constraints on the degree of change? This introduces the problem of the relationship of the party to its 'internal environment'. Party strategy may be constrained into changing as a result of the former, but there may be constraints on the degree of change possible due to the latter. In short, to the functional role of the PCI vis-à-vis its external environment is added the functional 'role' performed by the party internally.

Evidently, the conclusions which may be drawn from answering such questions relate chiefly to the Italian Communist Party. The thesis does not attempt, for example, to draw cross-national comparisons. Rather, it is hoped that it may provide a source from which such comparisons may be made.

However, because political parties in liberal-democracies do not operate in isolation of each other the study of a particular party may allow certain conclusions to be drawn about the political system of the country in which it is operating. Furthermore, even if 'regionalism' is being used in this thesis only as a 'yardstick' to measure the behaviour of the PCI, such instrumental use has the potential of providing insights into the concept itself and its significance to the country being studied. It is these three subjects, therefore, - the Italian Communist Party, the Italian political system and regionalism in Italy - to which the Conclusion will return.

* * * * *

PART ONE

THE ROAD FROM CENTRALISM TO REGIONALISM (1944-1956)

"From a socialist perspective decentralization is likely to be discussed in relation to the nature of the State and economy in which it operates."

(B.C.Smith, Decentralization. The Territorial Dimension of the State (London, Allen & Unwin, 1985), p.5).

Chapter One

Togliatti's Institutional Compromise

"L'esame dell'atteggiamento di Togliatti nel periodo 1943-1947 nei confronti dei temi istituzionali non può che essere la ricostruzione e valutazione dell'accettazione da parte del suo partito, dell'"congelamento istituzionale" nel 1943 e della continuità dello Stato parlamentare borghese in sede di elaborazione della nuova Costituzione." (Antonio Bevere)(1)

"Gli obiettivi togliattiani a livello istituzionale si condensano da un lato nella Repubblica, dall'altro nella Costituzione." (Giuliano Amato/Fulco Lanchester)(2)

One of the most significant and debated characteristics of the PCI's policy in the post-Fascist period was its compromise with respect to the institutional structure of the future State i.e. the party's rapid limitation of its institutional alternatives to the reconstruction of 'the representative State'. The crucial moment in the limitation of the party's alternatives beyond the representative State is usually identified as being Togliatti's svolta di Salerno of March 1944. This chapter analyses the nature of the 'u-turn' of Salerno and its impact both on the political and economic situation of Italy and on the debate taking place within the PCI with respect to the institutional structures of the new State. Three broad approaches to Togliatti's 'institutional compromise' are then outlined, the last of which (the PCI's own approach) will receive detailed analysis. It is concluded that all three approaches have a common 'thread': that the 'institutional compromise' amounted to an acceptance tout court of the notion of the Representative State which prevented a comprehensive tackling of important aspects of institutional forms. This introduces the question (to be dealt

with in Chapter Two) of what influences were likely to prevail in the Communist proposals for the distribution of power between centre and periphery in the new State.

The Svolta di Salerno

The 'u-turn' of Salerno broke a political deadlock in two complementary ways, firstly, with respect to the political and economic reconstruction of the country, and secondly, with respect to the debate taking place within the party itself. The various political forces which had begun to re-surface from clandestinity after the fall of Mussolini were struggling with an economy ravaged by war: there was considerable damage to national territory, disruption of internal communications, shortages of food, fuel and other supplies, and a desperate agricultural situation.(3)

Yet it was the political turmoil in which the country found itself that was impeding an effective tackling of these problems. The government under Marshal Badoglio who was appointed by the King in July 1943, after the fall of Mussolini, had lasted only until the Armistice (8th September). During this period the various anti-Fascist political parties which had been banned in 1926 began to emerge, forming Committees of National Liberation. After the Armistice Italy's 'unitary State' collapsed with the German occupation of the non-liberated part of the country and the

creation of two governments, one under German military authority and the other supported by allied military authority. The latter was a non-party government (under Badoglio again), the Communists, Socialists (PSIUP) and the Action Party (Pd'A) refusing to collaborate, since this involved taking an oath to the monarchy, while their own condition of collaboration was the guarantee that the monarchy be abolished. This produced a political situation that had reached deadlock by March 1944, a deadlock broken by the return to Italy of Togliatti, who proposed postponement of the question of the monarchy and collaboration with Badoglio. He laid down three conditions for the creation of a democratic government of national unity: the retention and reinforcement of the unity of the anti-Fascist forces; the postponement of all decisions regarding the future of the Italian State until a Constituent Assembly was freely and directly elected and, finally, a clear governmental programme to resolve the effects of the war on the Italian people. If these conditions were adhered to, he declared, the Communists were prepared to postpone all other problems.(4) This action met with a positive response on the part of the Socialist and Actionist parties thus providing the basis for the creation of a six-party anti-Fascist government and the continued participation of the left-wing parties in government until their exclusion in May 1947.(5)

Thus, for Togliatti, the pre-condition for the renovation of the economy was the reconstruction of the State, and this latter objective was all the more desperate since the form of the new State had still to be decided upon. This would involve a referendum on the monarchy, the election of a Constituent Assembly and the writing of a Constitution. At the same time Togliatti indicated what the PCI envisaged for the form of the new State:

"L'obiettivo che noi proporrremo al popolo italiano di realizzare, finita la guerra, sarà quello di creare in Italia un regime democratico e progressivo". (6)

While it was made clear that this regime was to be based on a representative State structure, the exact form of this structure was to be left to a freely elected Constituent Assembly, the convocation of which became the PCI's first priority.(7)

The 'u-turn' of Salerno, at the same time, decisively influenced the debate which had been raging in the party since the previous year over possible alternatives to the re-establishment of the pre-Fascist State. These alternatives were vested in the spontaneous growth of the Committees of National Liberation (CLNs) and other grass roots organisations such as factory councils and committees for land. Even before Togliatti returned to Italy, then, there was considerable

division within the party both on the nature of the insurrection which was to take place and on the role of the CLNs in this process. The dispute was largely between the party group based in Milan and that based in Rome.(8) The Rome group supported the official party policy of 'national unity': the final partisan rising would be a national one on the basis of the unity of all anti-Fascist parties working within the CLNs. These would provide the bases of popular mobilisation and their role would be to reinforce the traditional organs of the State, until the convocation of a Constituent Assembly. In the North, on the other hand, where the CLNs had sprung up before the Liberation on territory which was still occupied by enemy forces, and where they had consequently played a far more active role than the Southern CLNs, the party leaders (represented by men such as Secchia, Longo and Li Causi) believed that the insurrection that was to take place would be a revolutionary one, not necessarily linked to the other anti-Fascist forces and from which the building of a socialist State would commence. The CLNs, in this perspective, were seen as instruments of class rather than national struggle and also as the institutions of direct democracy of the future socialist State (or 'popular democracy'). They were thus perceived more as committees of social agitation than of

political collaboration and as forms of popular self-government which were essentially antagonistic to the traditional State structure and destined to substitute it.

The svolta di Salerno influenced the debate in favour of the Rome group and Togliatti spent much of his energy from April 1944 making clear that a socialist revolution was not on the agenda and that the CLNs' task was one of providing national unity up until the convening of a Constituent Assembly.(9) At the same time his outline of 'progressive democracy', while not necessarily precluding a role for the CLNs in the future State, evidently reduced any such role to one of compatibility with the representative State structure. Despite, for example, Amendola's claim that the CLNs were evidence that "si può realizzare in Italia una combinazione originale tra alcune forme democratiche tradizionali e nuovi istituti creati nel corso della lotta", there was no attempt to define exactly how this might arise.(10) As Sbarberi notes, the early predominance of the representative form of democracy in Togliatti's conception had immediate consequences:

"Il recupero della democrazia rappresentativa ha determinato anzitutto nel pensiero di Togliatti una sostanziale subordinazione degli istituti della democrazia diretta agli organi centrali dello stato parlamentare.(11)

Significantly, in this respect, the PCI did not raise objections to the reduction of the CLNs to consultative bodies (dependent on the central government for their authority) which was proposed by the DC and the PLI in November 1944, and the party remained in the government which was formed that month despite the refusal of the PSIUP and the Pd'A to enter because of the government's policy toward the CLNs.(12) The Consultative Assembly was regarded with indifference, an equal share of the nominated membership not being demanded and a proposal by the Pd'A that the Assembly be given legislative powers being rejected. For the PCI, the CLNs role was largely limited to the goal of liberation. As Spriano later wrote, the PCI did not focus its attention,

"sui temi del dopo, quelli concernenti il futuro assetto dell'Italia, n| sugli scottanti problemi del governo centrale, sulla scottante questione delle istituzioni nuove. Insiste invece sull'urgenza di potenziare i CLN periferici per farne organi di mobilitazione delle masse nella lotta di liberazione."(13)

This is not to say that the debate within the party completely ceased. But it was irrevocably effected by the experience of the Parri government (June-December 1945) which marked the turning point in the struggle between those groups which wished to retain the status quo (the Allies, the Monarchy, the Vatican, the large industrial groups and the

existing State personnel who were represented chiefly by the DC and the PLI) and those groups which wished to enact a social and political revolution on the basis of the Resistance (the forces which had been excluded under the Fascist and pre-Fascist State represented by the PCI, the PSIUP and the Pd'A). Marking the culmination of the insurrection in Northern Italy and the success of the CLN government, the appointment of Parri as Prime Minister was the signal for radical change, and Togliatti himself for a brief period seemed to shift position to the Milan group's view that the CLNs should have a central role in the new State. (14) However, the failure of the Parri government, due to the opposition of the Right, to enact radical measures (particularly with respect to inflation and the purge of Fascist personnel), coupled with the emergence of L'Uomo Qualunque and other right wing groups, determined the party's tacit acceptance of the government's downfall at the hands of the Right, the abandonment of the Left's attempt to enact any radical reforms before the new Constitution was drawn up and the re-emergence of the forces of the status quo under De Gasperi. That the unsettled 'transition period' was over quickly became apparent with the government's acceptance, without reserve, of the Liberal Party's political programme:

"This programme in effect swept away both the CLN government and the function which the CLN had carried out commendably since the height of the struggle against the Nazis and Fascists". (15)

The PCI, meanwhile, did not oppose the accession of De Gasperi nor many of the subsequent measures which saw the consolidation of the more conservative forces' position: it acceded to the PLI's demand that the future of the monarchy should be decided by referendum (instead of the already agreed procedure of the Constituent Assembly), it accepted the postponement of the currency change, and acceded to De Gasperi's proposals for limiting the Constituent Assembly's task to the drafting of the new Constitution (i.e. it was not to have any legislative powers as such). The political 'purge' meanwhile was brought to a halt. To the PCI, however,

"no immediate sacrifice appeared too great if it preserved the government alliance and hastened the first popular consultation for over twenty years". (16)

Evaluating the 'Institutional Compromise'

Broadly speaking, there have been three approaches, not mutually exclusive, to the evaluation of Togliatti's 'institutional compromise'. The first of these, which has served as a critique from the Left, has emphasised the alternatives which existed to the representative State and the support for these alternatives which existed within the party, the 'u-turn' of Salerno being regarded as a révolution manquée. The reasons for this have generally focused on historical precedents (the transposition of a fundamentally

defensive Popular Front strategy to a strategy for socialism) and a 'definition of the situation' which was not only misguided but revisionist i.e. there was a failure to see that the post-Fascist period was an uncertain transition period characterised by a power struggle between the forces of revolution and the forces of reaction. (17)

The second approach has emphasised that the PCI had little alternative but to accept the re-establishment of a parliamentary republic because of the national and international situation. This was characterised by the following factors: the division of Europe into zones of influence; the presence of allied troops on Italian soil and their evident hostility to the long-term participation of the Communists in government (particularly after the appointment of De Gasperi as Prime Minister); the weakness of the partisan movement (numerically and in its nature as a 'revolutionary' force); the control of the South by the old State bureaucracy and its progressive extension to the Northern regions as they were liberated; the largely untouched economic power of the large industrial and financial groups; and the widespread influence and activity of the Church. These factors were linked to the fact that the defeat of Fascism had been due to military defeat rather than to a spontaneous rebellion, and the fact that the svolta di Salerno was to some extent determined by Soviet diplomacy: the Soviet Union had

recognised the Badoglio government and was behind Togliatti's Salerno policy. Consequently, the Resistance line of Longo and Secchia is recognised as not having represented a real alternative, and the accusation that Togliatti killed at birth the partisan revolution is rejected as "il mito della rivoluzione mancata".(18)

The third general approach has been that which has arisen largely from the party itself, through its strategy as enunciated during the years 1944-47 and its subsequent reaffirmation of the validity of the broad principles of that strategy. Essentially, it consists in the claim that the conception of progressive democracy did represent an alternative in that it was an original strategy designed to meet a particular historical situation. This was not to deny that the party's room for manoeuvre was indeed restricted by the national and international relations of forces.(19) Nevertheless, rather than being a tactical response to these conditions or the implementation of a defensive popular front strategy supported by the Comintern, the PCI has claimed that its approach was consistent with the strategy of national unity which had been pursued since the mid-1930s and which had originated in Togliatti's analysis of the nature of Fascism, his reading of the Spanish revolution and, finally, his understanding of Gramsci.(20) Thus, the proposal of a

democratic republic was, it is claimed, a strategic choice and not a 'passive acceptance'.

Nevertheless, while rejecting that it overlooked possible alternatives to the representative State the party has confessed that the essential weakness of the strategy was its failure to see the importance of a certain juridical framework to the achievement of the goals of the strategy or, more specifically, to consider the possible alternatives within the representative State.(21) This can be clearly seen in the conception of 'progressive democracy' as enunciated in the period after 1944.

'Progressive Democracy' and the Representative State

The Strategy's Broad Principles

For Togliatti, the distinguishing characteristic of Fascism was its mass base and inter-class appeal and it was this that had kept the parties of the Left isolated. Thus, in Italy a transformation to Socialism could take place only after the destruction of the social roots of Fascism and this could not be achieved through a Soviet-style seizure of power, but rather within the fabric of Italian democratic life and the struggle for objectives that concerned the whole of society. This meant that the working class had to extend its alliance system to include the petty bourgeoisie, peasants and

all other progressive forces in society. The political and social 'bloc' which would result from this policy of anti-Fascist unity would not be, therefore, simply defensive in origin: the eradication of the roots of Fascism could not be achieved without aiming at the very structures of capitalist society, isolating the more reactionary bourgeois groups, overturning their political power and destroying their economic dominance. This would be the nuovo corso of the progressive democratic period. It would be characterised by the leadership of the new political and social 'bloc' by the working class (represented by the Communist Party) and, while not being yet a socialist State would neither simply be a restoration of the pre-Fascist parliamentary regime which had betrayed the nation. Rather it would be a form of transition period which would create the pre-conditions necessary to a transformation to Socialism within and through democratic institutions. Finally, the PCI, as the main agent in this process, had to adapt itself to these new tasks by developing and maintaining a national mass character and becoming a potential party of government. This was to be the partito nuovo. (22)

If these were the basic principles of the strategy, part of its originality was that it was to be rooted in the Constitution. This was largely a result of Togliatti's awareness of the continued presence and strength of the forces

of the Right (as represented by the high percentage of votes for the Monarchy). Thus, the prevention of the re-emergence of the forces of the Right would be through the drafting of a progressive democratic Constitution, and it would be through the framework of this Constitution that policies of reform could be based. Hence, as already noted, the convocation of a Constituent Assembly (which had been mooted as early as 1939) became the PCI's main objective in the immediate post-war period. The Communist conception of the Constitution was the fundamental aspect of the progressive democratic strategy, yet it simply begged the question of what was to be original about the Constitution. How were normative provisions to achieve the goals of progressive democracy?

The Communist Conception of the Constitution

The PCI's strategic goals led the party to criticise other parties' constitutional proposals because they were based either on abstract schemes, juridical ideals, particular ideologies, philosophies and party beliefs or on the constitutions of other countries.(23) These were wrong simply because they did not apply to the current Italian situation. The constitution to be drawn up was, Togliatti claimed, "evidente: quella di cui l'Italia, in questo momento particolare, determinato, concreto, della propria storia, ha bisogno". This was linked to another more profound question:

"Perché facciamo noi una Costituzione nuova?". The criteria, he argued, had to be formulated in an historical context, "cioè tirando le somme di un processo storico e politico che si è concluso con una catastrofe nazionale". Because the national catastrophe was not inevitable but rather the result of the pursuance of selfish interests by the old ruling class, the question which had to govern the entire constitutional debate was that of the responsibility of a regime and its ruling class. Thus, beyond the purge of Fascist personnel,

"rimane aperto il problema dell'avvento di una nuova classe dirigente alla testa di tutta la vita nazionale. La nuova Costituzione deve essere tale che per lo meno apra la via alla soluzione di questo problema".

This was of singular importance because no matter what norms were included in the constitution to prevent the re-emergence of a force such as Fascism,

"la sola garanzia reale, seria, di questi, è che alla testa dello Stato avanzino e si affermino forze nuove, le quali siano democratiche e rinnovatrici per la loro stessa natura. Tali sono ... le forze del lavoro".

This was "la sola impostazione concreta possibile che si possa dare al problema della nostra Costituzione". (24) It was this conception, Togliatti contended, which left ideology apart, or rather called for the convergence of ideological

currents in the aim of carrying out a single programme. And it was this 'situation' that dictated the Communist decision not to campaign for a Socialist constitution: all constitutional questions had to be considered in the perspective of providing for the emergence of a 'new ruling class'. (25)

The constitutional norms had, therefore, to provide for the fulfilment of the basic needs on which the development of a new ruling class was deemed to be dependent: these were identified as being liberty and popular sovereignty, moral and political unity, and social and economic progress. Liberty and popular sovereignty were declared to be dependent upon firstly, the formulation of a list of political rights of the citizen and secondly, on the organization of the State which would guarantee those rights and through which popular sovereignty would be exercised. Social and economic reconstruction and progress were dependent on the formulation of a list of 'social rights' or 'positive freedoms' of the citizen (such as the right to work, to private and social assistance, to insurance, to rest-time, to a fair wage, to strike, etc.) and a degree of constitutional programmatic commitment to social and economic progress.(26) Finally, moral and political unity was dependent on unity between organised religion and the State and the unity of political forces and political structures in undertaking the tasks facing the State.

While the formal arrangement for the exercise of popular sovereignty was important to the Constitution it was not this which elevated the Constitution beyond the Western conception. Rather, this was to be through the actions taken by the new personnel who would manage the State, these actions being enshrined in the Constitution in two inter-linked ways. Firstly, they were enshrined in the Constitution's nature as a unitary pact:

"Una confluenza di due grandi correnti: da parte nostra un solidarismo ... umano et sociale; dall'altra parte un solidarismo di ispirazione ideologica e di origine diversa." (27)

Secondly, they were enshrined in the fact that the pact was to be based on the Constitution's nature as 'a programme for the future'. Togliatti argued that Stalin's dictum that a Constitution should not be confused with a programme (because it reflected what existed and not what was to happen) applied only to those countries which had undergone a revolution which had laid the bases for a new order. In countries such as Italy where there existed amongst the people strong demands for social and economic reform it was important that there was some form of constitutional guarantee that such a transformation would take place.(28)

It was thus the Constitution's nature as a pact forged between diverse progressive forces around a programme of

economic, political and social reform which elevated it beyond the Western democratic conception of a Constitution.(29) The Constitution would represent a 'transition period' towards Socialism, with programmatic commitments and economic and social rights having equal weight to institutional formulas and political rights, because the latter were not, by themselves, a strong enough guarantee of that transition taking place.(30) Part of the strategy's originality, therefore, lay in its rejection of the value of institutions per se. Indeed, the party still recognised the limitations of "una democrazia conservatrice, solo preoccupata di ottenere, con un voto popolare, la formale sanzione ai privilegi della classe dominante".(31) At the same time, the highest form of popular sovereignty remained that of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The Communists were fully aware, Curiel stated, that the limits posed to progressive democracy by the continued existence of the principle of capitalist ownership,

"non possono essere spezzati che dalla dittatura del proletariato, che realizza il tipo superiore della democrazia, la democrazia operaia, di cui l'Unione Sovietica offre al mondo il modello." (32)

However, the conditions necessary to the dictatorship of the proletariat did not exist in Italy at that time. The dictatorship of the proletariat involved 'the union of the people', under the leadership of the working class, with the

task of abolishing all forms of exploitation and constructing a Communist society. Such unity, it was claimed, did not exist in Italy at that moment.(33) The acceptance of the representative State was thus theoretically underpinned only to the extent that it was a tactical or strategical exigency in a 'peculiar' historical situation and was perceived as leading to the same goal of socialism as epitomised in the Soviet Union. As Salvadori points out of this period:

"La 'democrazia progressiva' è una strategia che mentre persegue il passaggio al socialismo per vie diverse da quella dell'URSS, considera d'altra parte l'URSS come un modello e un punto d'arrivo necessario, poichè la società sovietica e le sue istituzioni sono considerate la realizzazione del socialismo: una realizzazione a cui occorre da ultimo congiungersi." (34)

Thus, if the PCI's progressive democratic strategy embodied a 'positive choice' between a democratic republic and other extra-parliamentary forms of struggle, such a choice was nonetheless grounded in a view that saw the former as being a part of the bourgeois conception of democracy, but nonetheless was regarded as an adequate institutional form in the existing situation. From an analysis of the aspirations of Italian society, the nature of the unity on which such aspirations focused and the consequent programme to be carried through, the representative State was seen to be capable of allowing

for the emergence of a new ruling class at all levels of society, and it was the action of this new class on the basis of its constitutional programme which would elevate the old parliamentary regime into a democracy of a 'new type'. There was not any intrinsic value in parliamentary institutions themselves but the (bourgeois) values they upheld could be 'accepted' and 'respected' without impeding the development towards socialism and their ultimate disappearance:

"Attraverso la democrazia, cioè accettando e rispettando il principio della maggioranza liberamente espressa, noi ci sforziamo di realizzare quelle modifiche della nostra struttura sociale che sono mature sia nella realtà delle cose che nella coscienza della nostre lavoratrici." (35)

An 'Institutional Vacuum'

If there is a similarity that can be identified in the three approaches to the evaluation of Togliatti's institutional compromise, it is that there was a tendency on the part of the PCI towards an acceptance tout court of the notion of a representative State. Both the view that the PCI failed to investigate alternative institutional forms and the view that the relations of forces precluded any alternatives come together on this point as does the PCI's own view. Even if, as the party claimed, 'progressive democracy' amounted to a 'positive alternative' there was a marked failure to explore

the various potential paradigms of representative government in the West, simply because 'progressive democracy' amounted to a 'method' rather than a 'form'. As a consequence, while the PCI claimed that it did not undervalue the organisational aspect of the future State on which it had "idee molto chiare" it expressly refused to specify,

"la soluzione di dettagli, che soltanto nel corso dei lavori dell'Assemblea potranno assumere forma precisa e rivelare il loro effettivo significato nella logica del sistema."(36)

Thus, there was an almost total absence of a programme of institutional reform in the years leading up to the convening of the Constituent Assembly. The party's aim was essentially a democratic republic in lieu of the monarchy, and then the convocation of a Constituent Assembly to forge the new State. Indeed, many of its views seemed to be formulated largely as a result of responses to other parties' proposals. This became (as will be seen in later chapters) a major source of autocritica in the 1960s. In short, although the PCI has rejected the Left's critique that there had been a failure fully to investigate alternative institutional forms to that of the representative State and denied that the relations of forces precluded any alternatives, the party has nonetheless accepted that its major flaw was the failure fully to explore the alternative paradigms within the representative State.

'Progressive democracy' was grounded in an 'institutional vacuum'. On what, therefore, was the PCI likely to draw in formulating its proposals for the various aspects of the organisation of the State? One of the most important aspects to be decided upon was the distribution of power between centre and periphery in the new State and this proved especially pertinent because of the particular political and social climate existing in the post-Fascist period.

* * * * *

Chapter Two

Communism, Regionalism and the Historical Struggle for Power (1921-1944)

"La parole d'ordine dei 'partiti regionali' è la stessa dei fascisti, dei popolari, dei socialdemocratici, dei borghese: far rientrare le masse nei quadri dello Stato. Il regionalismo è la loro demagogia; il patteggiare con il governo è la loro tattica nazionale." (Palmiro Togliatti)(1)

"... tutti i partiti comprendono ed affermano che non si potrà ricostruire l'Italia se non sulla base di un regime di autonomie regionali ..." (Palmiro Togliatti)(2)



Sidney Tarrow notes that there are two basic ways of approaching the reform of the structure of power between centre and periphery in a decentralist direction:

"1) by consolidating or disposing of old local units and erecting newer and usually larger ones in their places; 2) by leaving these older structures untouched and interposing additional institutions at the regional level between centre and periphery." (3)

The post-war debate in Italy on the structure of the State concerned, at the outset, the constitutional distribution of power between centre and periphery and that debate encompassed outright federalist proposals to those of maintaining the centralised State. Nevertheless, the focus quickly narrowed as the area on which there seemed to be most consensus emerged, namely the second of Tarrow's approaches: that of maintaining the old structures of local government (the *comunes* and, possibly, the provinces) while introducing, at the regional level, new institutions with constitutionally enshrined powers. In this way the new Republic would be able to function in a decentralised manner while maintaining its

unitary nature. As the chairman of the Second Subcommittee, responsible for drafting the part of the Constitution relating to local autonomy, stated:

"il problema dell'autonomia è oggi in Italia sentito essenzialmente come il problema della regione."(4)

This chapter looks firstly, at the reasons for the emergence of regionalism as a dominant issue in the post-Fascist debate. The emphasis is placed on the historical development of regionalism as a theme of those excluded from power at the central level of government, and how the Resistance Movement exemplified this tendency and influenced the debate on the type of State structure which should replace the Fascist one. An attempt is then made to evaluate the type of pressures prevailing on the PCI's 'institutional vacuum' (see Chapter One). Two types of pressure are identified: firstly, the party's own centrist ideology - based on Gramsci's theory of revolution as an industrial struggle for power ('from below'), the Soviet model and Italy's 'peculiar' territorial divisions - which governed a direct struggle for a socialist revolution. Secondly, the particular influence of the Resistance Movement and the Committees of National Liberation on the PCI in view of the latter's decision in 1935 to insert a democratic phase in the socialist struggle: the overthrow of the Fascist regime was 'from below' but on a

territorial (and specifically local and regional) basis. The effects of this 'dual pressure' on the PCI's proposals (before the convening of the Constituent Assembly in 1946) regarding centre-periphery relations in the new State is then analysed. It is suggested that the ambiguity of the proposals was probably little more than a rhetorical response to the political and social environment of the post-Fascist period and that 'proletarian centralism' was undergoing a rapid transformation into a 'progressive democratic' form of centralism (which Chapter Three will corroborate). Nevertheless, this is not to deny the importance of the 'decentralising' themes of the post-Fascist period, for it is precisely these themes to which the PCI will return to re-interpret and justify the value of regional devolution at a much later date.

The Fragmented Society: Regionalism and Political Power

Regionalism, as Rotelli notes, has been a long tradition in Italy:

"...lungo il corso della storia italiana unitaria è rimasta aperta, in termini più o meno espliciti, una questione regionale, un'esigenza di articolazione dello Stato su base regionale e, quindi una discussione politica, oltre che culturale e tecnico-giuridica, sul fondamento, la validità e le conseguenze dell'esigenza stessa."(5)

This 'regional question' had its origins in the lateness of Italian unification, since regional and local territorial loyalties had become deeply entrenched by that date (1861), leaving a diverse and fragmented society. This became the source of both centralist and decentralist arguments with respect to the structure of the State at the time of unification. Indeed, one of the main intellectual debates in the late nineteenth century was whether to make Italy a federal or centralised State. For people such as Cattaneo, Italy's fragmented socio-economic and political culture lent itself naturally to a federal State structure. Such a structure was considered essential to achieving genuine unity in a diversified society while avoiding a French-style authoritarian solution, whose origins were seen to be in the concentration of political power in one assembly. Ferrari, on the other hand, saw federalism as the means by which unity could be achieved through a social revolution which would overturn the traditional clerical and aristocratic bases of power. Finally, for Gioberti and the neo-Guelph school, federalism was seen as a way of preserving the power of the Church in the face of the development of the nation-State.

For the centralists, it was precisely the fragmented nature of Italian society which should preclude any territorial dispersion of power within the State. Anything other than a strong unitary-centralised State would pose a

threat to national unity, the riots of 1848-1849 being seen as proof of this danger. The force of this essentially political argument was sufficient to prevent any serious challenge to the new State being decentralised in any form: the argument was used to oppose even Minghetti's scheme for a measure of regional self-government which he presented after the northern States were unified under the Piedmontese centralised prefectoral system, and when the addition of the southern States seemed imminent. For Minghetti, a centralised prefectoral system was considered inappropriate in a country with such strong regional identities, and his scheme, therefore, aimed at providing a more sensitive adaptation of the Piedmontese scheme of government to other regions (particularly those of the South), and a more rationalised and efficient administrative system.

Historians such as Ruffilli have argued that the main effect of the rejection of federalism and Minghetti's regionalist scheme (and the consequent forging of a centralised State) was the accentuation, rather than attenuation, of local and regional identities and the support of measures of regional devolution by those excluded from power at the centre.(6) While the extent of this development should not be overstated, it is probably true to say that it became most prominent with the development of 'mass politics', especially during the First World War. As Farneti has pointed

out, territorial differences became of primary importance in the political history of the country because of the way in which territorial identities became linked to Italy's developing sub-cultures.(7) Generally, then, it has been argued that in both the 'liberal democratic regime' and the Fascist regime (if not in the 'moderate regime' which preceded these two), the fragmented nature of Italian society tended to generate a centralised response from those in the 'ruling area' and a decentralised response from those outside the 'ruling area', the latter attempting to exploit Italy's deep-rooted regional and local identities to gain influence within the respective regimes. The rise and fall of the Fascist party was a classic example of this.(8)

The tradition of regionalism as a theme of 'marginalised classes' gave the concept its essential characteristics up to the fall of Fascism. (9) Firstly, it became intimately connected with the dualistic nature of Italian society. The possibility of overcoming the backwardness of the South (the Mezzogiorno) was increasingly seen in terms of the need for regional self-government to break the centralised model of imbalanced development imposed by the North.(10) Secondly, the issue became subject to the tactical exigencies of different political forces, rather than to ideological motivations:

"Troppe volte si assiste al caso di
leaders che si dichiararono autonomisti

... finchè sono all'opposizione, per diventare centralisti una volta al governo, salvo ricredersi di nuovo quando ne vengano estromessi..."(11)

Thirdly, the issue emerged most forcefully during periods of crisis between State and society and most particularly during periods when the regime itself entered into crisis. It was the particular nature and crisis of the Fascist regime, and the manner in which the Resistance Movement developed which threw open the debate on regionalism in a prominent manner and in a way which took the concept beyond the confines of the tradition of parochialism or campanillismo associated with the communal and provincial levels of government.. It was not only the revulsion against the centralisation of the Fascist regime which brought regionalism to the fore but also the ease with which the regime had subverted the weak pre-Fascist local government structures. While there was a call for the renovation of local autonomies there was a perceived need for larger forms of self-government with constitutionally enshrined powers which could not so easily be swept away by a political force in control of the central government. The 'Republican Concentration' (Concentrazione Repubblicana), which had aimed at uniting all the democratic forces of opposition around a programme which would present an 'alternative' to the Fascist regime had proposed wide-ranging regional devolution as a

cardinal feature of the new State. Three factors reinforced this tendency: firstly, the emergence of separatist and independence movements in the islands and the border regions, which forced the government to provide a large measure of regional autonomy to prevent the complete dismemberment of the State(12); secondly, the attitude of the Allies who were not averse to a re-establishment of the State along regional lines (a committee in the American Embassy, for example, argued that the State should be rebuilt on the American federalist model(13)); thirdly, the influence of the experience of the partisan republics(14) and the manner in which the Resistance Movement developed in the period after 1943. This was probably the most important factor. Rotelli, for example, stresses the salience of the Resistance,

"non solo come momento di formulazioni programmatiche e autonomistiche da parte di partiti...ma anche come fenomeno che, per i suoi elementi politico-istituzionali, anticipò già o cercò di anticipare le linee di un futuro stato democratico caratterizzato dalle autonomie locali e dal regionalismo."(15)

This was essentially due to the way in which the Committees of National Liberation had developed as territorial phenomena which not only aimed at overthrowing the Fascists but at providing forms of local self-government, most particularly at the regional level. The liberation of Florence

was the most significant episode in this development, since it saw the establishment of the first CLN before the arrival of the allies. It had operated underground throughout the German occupation, replaced the Prefect, appointed a new mayor and reorganised the machinery of government so that when the allied forces arrived they found the nucleus of an anti-Fascist regime already in operation.(16) Thus, the Resistance Movement not only had a considerable influence on the type of State which should replace the centralised Fascist State apparatus but gave the subsequent regional debate an essentially 'political' character (rather than a purely 'technical' one) which was to last even after the CLNs were in a critical state: regional autonomy became identified with the political struggle for liberation and power.(17)

The essentially political nature of the debate, however, was not reflected in a unanimous opinion that the regional system should be a political entity. There was not only a considerable division of opinion between parties but within parties. Indeed, the regional issue cut across party lines to such an extent that it was not clear whether there would be a wide enough consensus to reconstruct the State along regional lines. In general, the regionalist influence of the factors mentioned above found its most forceful expression in the programmes of the Christian Democratic Party, the Republican Party and the Actionist Party. These parties had

taken up the mantle of garantismo: the failure of the nation to prevent the emergence of Fascism had been due to the inherent weakness of sub-national institutions which had failed to provide adequate popular representation and participation. The DC, for example, argued that "l'accentramento livellatore burocratico ed soppressione di ogni autonomia" had been "la principale causa del progressivo e fatale decadere della libertà che trovò il suo epilogo nello Stato autoritario fascista."(18). These parties, therefore, aimed at forging a State based on wide-ranging regionally devolved powers as a means of preventing a revival of the Fascist menace. The parties of the Right (the Liberals and the Monarchists) were, in general, against any form of regional devolution, although there was a minority in the PLI, led by Einaudi, who were opposed to Croce's vision of the centralised State. The Socialists officially supported only an administrative form of decentralisation at the regional level, although a considerable part of what was to be the Social Democratic Party (after the PSIUP split in January 1947) was to support regional devolution.(19)

How was the development of the regional question since Italian unification likely to effect the PCI's 'institutional vacuum'? The party's response to the problem of regional devolution in the period before the convening of the Constituent Assembly can be fully comprehended only in the

light of the conflicting pressures which were peculiar to a party wedded to an international ideology. These pressures stemmed from, on the one hand, the party's ideological heritage, its strategy for power between 1921 and 1935, and how the party had responded to the strength of Italy's regional tradition; and, on the other hand, from the way in which the strategy after 1935 became particularly subject to the influence of the political and social environment which emerged with the collapse of the Fascist regime.

Italian Communism and the Geographic Distribution of Power,
1921-1935: 'Proletarian Centralism'

Founded in 1921 by Antonio Gramsci and Amadeo Bordiga as a result of a split in the Italian Socialist Party, the PCI replaced the PSI as the Italian member of the Third International and was, therefore, doctrinally wedded to the Marxist-Leninist theory of the State: the representative State was a fundamental part of the bourgeois-capitalist order which had to be smashed and replaced by a new proletarian order - the dictatorship of the proletariat - from which the Socialist State would be constructed.(20) The main reason for the split from the PSI was that the mainstream of the party increasingly tended to renounce this doctrine in its strategy for power, this being ultimately put to the test during the occupation of the factories in Turin in 1920-1921. While this episode led

Gramsci and Bordiga to perceive the necessity of founding a new party, their own differences of opinion over the correct strategy for power were considerable and eventually led to a clash and to the predominance of the Gramscian line. That this became the new party's heritage was significant, essentially because of the differences which distinguished Gramsci's position from both Bordiga's and the PSI's.

By the early 1900's the PSI, in the perception of future Communist party members, was becoming increasingly reformist in its outlook essentially through its presence and activity in institutions such as co-operatives, trade unions and local governments.(21) Bordiga, whose power base was in Naples, sat at the other extreme, holding what might be described as a 'mechanistic' interpretation of Marxist doctrine: the capitalist order was destined to collapse and the role of the vanguard party was to wait for a revolutionary situation to present itself and then seize power. Workers' institutions, such as Soviets, would then be created. For Bordiga the vanguard party was the prime element in the revolutionary process, its role being to lead the masses when the propitious moment presented itself. As a result, he did not place great emphasis on the working class's activity within capitalist society and advocated a complete abstention from representative institutions.

What distinguished Gramsci (whose power base was in Turin around the Ordine Nuovo group) from both Bordiga and the PSI was that while opposing the PSI's rejection of armed revolution and accepting Marx's breakdown theory of capitalism, he was, at the same time, constantly concerned with the problem of a successful transition from capitalism to socialism, how such a transition could be prepared for, and what the future socialist State would look like. This led him to focus on the nature of the institutions which the proletariat should use to successfully seize and manage power. This was not to say that Gramsci aimed at theoretically institutionalising the revolutionary process. His very early writings, for example, remained in keeping with the Marxist tendency not to specify the order which was likely to arise after the proletariat had seized power:

"Il proletariato realizza il suo ordine, costituendo istituti politici che garantiscano la libertà di questo sviluppo, che assicurino la permanenza del suo potere. La dittatura è l'istituto fondamentale che garantisce la libertà, che impedisce i colpi di mano delle minoranze faziose."(22)

Gramsci realised, however, that, in the Soviet Union, the dictatorship had been based on the co-existence of two important institutions, the Communist Party and the Soviet. It was through the latter, he argued, that the proletariat had

formed its own form of representation and that, as a result, proletarian sovereignty had been forged in terms diametrically opposed to the representative forms of the parliamentary Western type.(23) This led him to attempt to identify the type of institution which could fulfil the role of proletarian sovereignty not only after the revolutionary seizure of power but within the context of the bourgeois order itself. For Gramsci, the revolution was not the result of a single, miraculous political stroke or act 'from above', but a process which had to begin before the seizure of power and continue afterwards, in the form of an ongoing mass 'revolution from below', which would not involve the simple transfer of political power but rather a transfer of industrial and economic power which the former would reflect:

"La rivoluzione non è un atto taumaturgico, è un processo dialettico di sviluppo storico."(24)

As Clark notes,

"Gramsci...regarded successful revolution as being essentially an institutional question (and not, for example, a military one). The right institutions had to be set up, and made to generate the right consensus."(25)

He identified the factory council as being the only institution capable of stimulating and guiding this process because it was based on the process of production and thus at

the core of the mechanism of exploitation, rather than being connected directly to the representative democratic regime. It was, therefore, the only institution which could strengthen the 'Communist consciousness' of the working class (i.e. the awareness of its position in the economic system of production), and the awareness of its own unity. This was essential to preparing for the successful transfer of political power as a result of increasing the working class's strength at the heart of the industrial process.(26) Finally, and most importantly, the factory council guaranteed a successful transition from a bourgeois to a proletarian regime because it represented the nucleus of the Socialist state itself. To strengthen the competences of the factory councils and to link and co-ordinate them into a system of power, Gramsci (and Togliatti) argued, involved creating the framework of a 'workers' democracy' in the heart of the capitalist society. The factory council was 'the model of the proletarian State' which could be prepared in advance to substitute its bourgeois counterpart.(27) This meant that proletarian sovereignty in the new State would be exercised through representation on an industrial basis, thus overcoming the territorial basis of representation which was characteristic of the bourgeois representative State:

"Poichè lo Stato operaio è un momento del processo di sviluppo della società umana che tende a identificare i rapporti della sua

convivenza politica coi rapporti tecnici della produzione industriale, lo Stato operaio non si fonda su circoscrizioni territoriali, ma sulle formazioni organiche della produzione: le fabbriche, i cantieri, gli arsenali, le miniere, le fattorie."(28)

Such a State would also provide a form of 'legitimacy' for the proletarian order after the overthrow of the bourgeois regime. This did not overlook the political party, whose essential role was to promote the development of the factory councils and co-ordinate them locally and nationally, and so reduce the danger of a separation of the political from the social struggle.(29) This had significant implications for the organisation of the party of the 'proletarian vanguard', which would be on the same basis as the proletarian State: "that of 'organic units of production' where party members could most effectively help the working class in its task of preparing and carrying through the revolution."(30)

Thus, by rejecting Bordiga's 'mechanistic' view of Marxist doctrine as a 'revolution from above' and introducing the question of the institutions which could prepare for, help execute and legitimise the proletarian revolution, Gramsci concluded that these institutions had to overcome the concept of the territorial distribution of power, which was characteristic of bourgeois societies, by opposing it with an industrial organisation of power within bourgeois society

itself. This would guard against both the uncertainties of Bordiga's line and prevent the integration of the revolutionary forces into the capitalist system which was the prime danger of the Socialist Party's line.(31) The development of the factory council movement in the biennio rosso (1919-1921) and the resultant occupation of the factories confirmed for the Ordine Nuovo group the validity of its view of the factory council as the fundamental proletarian institution. However, the movement's defeat in 1921 was interpreted by the group as being largely the consequence of the PSI's failure to give its unequivocal support, confirming the need for a new party of the working class.(32)

If the defeat of the factory council movement was instrumental to the founding of the Communist Party, it also led the new party, and Gramsci in particular, to develop a more national perspective in assessing the prospects of revolution in Italy. Gramsci began to assess more fully the implications of Italy's dual society, an industrially developing North and a backward rural South. This was not to say that the differences between the North and South had hitherto been overlooked. Winning over the peasant in the South had always been regarded as a crucial element in the revolution's success, and the forging of peasant committees had always been an integral element of the Ordine Nuovo's programme.(33) Nevertheless, one of the characteristics of

the new party was its increasing awareness that territorial identities were so deep-rooted in Italy that they were intimately linked to political factors. This being the case, it was recognised that a successful revolutionary strategy could not overlook the territorial dimension of power. This became all the more relevant as Fascism developed in the 1920's and the use of 'democratic' objectives was deemed necessary to gain hegemony over the non-proletarian strata and to introduce a temporary tactical transition phase between Fascism and the dictatorship of the proletariat.(34) Gramsci, in his essay on the 'Southern Question', argued that the crucial problem which the Turin Communists had posed was,

"...la quistione dell' 'egemonia del proletariato', cioè della base sociale della dittatura proletaria e dello Stato operaio. Il proletariato può diventare classe dirigente e dominante nella misura in cui riesce a creare un sistema di alleanze di classe che gli permetta di mobilitare contro il capitalismo e lo Stato borghese la maggioranza della popolazione lavoratrice, ciò che significa, in Italia, nella misura in cui riesce a ottenere il consenso delle larghe masse contadine."(35)

For Gramsci, however, the peasant question was historically determined and had two essential characteristics, the Vatican question and the Southern question, both of which had to be resolved before the peasants could be won over. Focusing on the latter, he presented an analysis which ran

counter to the tradition of posing the problem of the South in terms of a centralised model of imbalanced development imposed by the North (see the first section of this chapter) He argued that the problem of the South originated in the way in which the ruling class of the North had consolidated its position at the end of the nineteenth century through the founding of the nation-State on the basis of an alliance with the big landowners of the South and the exploitation of the peasants. This had been made possible by the development of 'Southern intellectuals' (epitomised in Giustino Fortunato and Benedetto Croce) who intellectually underpinned the industrial-agrarian bloc:

"...il cittadino meridionale è legato al grande proprietario terriero per il tramite dell'intellettuale. Questo tipo di organizzazione è il tipo più diffuso in tutto il Mezzogiorno continentale e in Sicilia. Esso realizza un mostruoso blocco agrario che nel suo complesso funziona da intermediario e da sorvegliante del capitalismo settentrionale e delle grandi banche. Il suo unico scopo è di conservare lo statu quo."(36)

The only way in which this industrial-agrarian bloc could be broken was to overcome the dominance of the 'Southern Intellectual' through the promotion of a new strata of intellectuals who, by introducing into the equation the proletariat of the North, would radically alter the premises of the problem.(37) The peasantry of the South had to be made

aware that their salvation lay in an alliance with the proletariat of the North, while at the same time the proletariat of the North had to be made aware that the revolution in Italy was doomed unless it could win over the peasant, and this meant, in the Italian context, carrying the entire South of the country. There were considerable difficulties in forging such an alliance because one of the main effects of Italy's economic backwardness was the development, or retention, of deep-rooted regional identities:

"Là dove il proletariato ha superato i caratteri regionali le classi contadine li hanno conservati, perchè il carattere della economia agricola è rimasto arretrato. Per evitare il sorgere del 'regionalismo' noi dobbiamo tener conto degli 'specifici aspetti del problema economico delle regioni...lo Stato operaio italiano dovrà 'superare' la regione risolvendo i problemi regionali."(38)

This, in its turn, led to the expression of political regionalism in the form of political movements and parties of a 'regionalist', 'autonomist' or 'Southern' nature.(39) These movements were viewed as being symptomatic of the fragile unity of the Italian State and as retarding the increasing centralisation of political and economic power at the national and international level which the Marxist analysis dictated, and which, in Italy, had seen its first major expression in the achievement of unification.(40) The movements impeded the

development of the revolutionary struggle by confining different regions' backwardness within a territorial context, thus blurring the essential class nature of the exploitation of the peasantry and the fact that regional imbalance raised the question of the Italian State in general. It was argued that while the dominance of the bourgeoisie had expressed itself, in Italy, in a peculiarly territorial manner, it was still intimately linked to class dominance. A response which stressed only the territorial aspect of such dominance undermined the building of a revolutionary alliance between the workers of the North and the peasantry of the South, which was the only response that linked the factors of class and territory and had the potential of breaking the agrarian-industrial bloc:

"I movimenti regionalisti, autonomisti del meridionale, ponendosi sul terreno della lotta di 'tutta' la regione, di 'tutto' il Mezzogiorno contro lo Stato centrale, identificato nel 'Nord', nel suo insieme, favoriscono questa confusione e questa divisione delle forze rivoluzionarie."(41)

Regionalism, in short, was regarded as a natural expression of the bourgeoisie's attempt to defuse the increasing intensity of the class struggle through dispersing the lower class's aspirations on a territorial basis.(42) The dangers of regionalist movements, however, were seen to be

considerable because of their ability to gain rapidly a wide social base, particularly at moments of acute crisis which could be used against the working class.(43) These dangers became more evident when the forces of opposition to the Fascist regime began to co-ordinate their action to present a common programme which would embody an alternative to the Fascist regime. As already noted, one of the central planks of the 'Republican Concentration' (Concentrazione Repubblicana) was the renovation of the State on a regional or federal base, as a means of resolving the problem of the South and of guarding against a recurrence of Fascism. This was fiercely opposed by the PCI. A federalist or regionalist solution, it was argued, would break the revolutionary 'wave' and its centralising tendencies by frustrating the influence of the proletariat over the peasantry and breaking the unity existing between them.(44)

If, for the PCI, the territorial divisions in Italy were a serious impediment to the development of a class consciousness of the working class and a powerful weapon in the hands of the bourgeoisie, what were the implications for the structure of the State in a successful revolutionary strategy? More specifically, if the peasantry, under the influence of petty bourgeois ideology, was inclined to identify the origin of its own backwardness in the centralised State imposed on it by the North - regionalist parties and

proposals consequently acting as attractive solutions - how could the revolutionary party present an alternative which would not appear to be just another form of 'Northern centralisation'? The PCI's response was to propose its own form of federalism, based on the Soviet model, to counter 'bourgeois-democratic' federalist and regionalist proposals. This originated in 1923 in a letter from Gramsci to the party stressing the importance of a commitment on the part of the PCI to the problem of the South as a territorial entity, and consequently proposing the formula of a "Repubblica federale degli operai e contadini":

"Noi dobbiamo dare importanza specialmente alla questione meridionale, cioè alla questione in cui il problema dei rapporti tra operai e contadini si pone non solo come un problema di rapporto di classe, ma anche e specialmente come un problema territoriale, cioè come uno degli aspetti della questione nazionale."(45)

This was subsequently developed by Grieco who argued, in his Theses on peasant work in the South, that the problems of the Mezzogiorno had to be resolved in an 'autonomous manner', which would involve particular administrative and legislative provisions for the South.(46) The resultant State structure was described as a "Federazione delle repubbliche soviettiste meridionale" which would be part of the "Unione

delle repubbliche soviettiste italiane".(47) This idea became official party policy at the Fourth Congress in 1931.(48)

Nevertheless, the federal State which the PCI proposed had little to do with a territorial dispersion of power. Its declared aim was to take into account the severe imbalance caused by capitalist development i.e. one of the first major tasks of the workers' State would be to tackle the problems left unresolved by the bourgeois-democratic revolution, and this meant reducing the differences between North and South. This would be a natural result of the alliance forged between the workers and the peasants. This policy, however, "non ha niente a vedere con quella delle autonomie...il motivo delle autonomie non ha niente di rivoluzionario, al contrario esso è un motivo reazionario." 'Regional autonomy', as Grieco made clear, was a bourgeois concept which was destined to disappear.(49) The PCI's 'federalism', in fact, was to be evidence that the proletariat remained in the vanguard of the historical process of centralisation:

"Il proletariato rivoluzionario esprime la tendenza progressiva contenuta nello sviluppo delle forze produttive dell'economia mondiale, la tendenza all'internazionalizzazione, cioè all'unificazione, alla centralizzazione...In conseguenza di ciò, il proletariato propugna, in generale, l'unificazione, la centralizzazione democratica, come forma di organizzazione del suo Stato."(50)

This was the only form of State which could fulfil the two main goals of the dictatorship of the proletariat: the abolition of classes and the destruction of the State itself.(51) The worker's State, therefore, was to be organised along the lines of the party's own organisational principle, 'democratic centralism', and that of the Soviet model. Each State of the Federation would be free to leave the Union, and others could join; elections would be organised according to place of work rather than on territorial divisions, as would the organisation of the party (i.e. it would be based on the cell); finally, while it was declared that the States would enjoy a degree of 'local autonomy', this evidently would amount to no more than a form of administrative decentralisation(52)

Thus, it can be said that during the period from the Turin factory movement to the launching of the Popular Front strategy in 1935, despite an evident development in the approach of Italian Communism towards the State, there was little room for equivocation with respect to its approach towards the territorial distribution of power within the State: the concept was regarded as belonging fundamentally to the bourgeois tradition and thus one to be surmounted through an industrial organisation of power. Nevertheless, Italy's regional tradition was not overlooked. Indeed, the territorial divisions in Italy were viewed as being so deep-rooted that

they were inextricably intertwined with class divisions, this making the role of the revolutionary party more complex. A successful revolutionary strategy had to take account of these territorial divisions because their political effects were the biggest obstacle to the forging of a true working class consciousness and a probable fortress of reaction in a revolutionary situation.(53)

As seen in Chapter One, the launching of the Popular Front strategy was not accompanied by any new theoretical analysis and it left the ideological position described above largely untouched. The Popular Front was a defensive policy based on the premise that the resurrection of bourgeois democracy offered better prospects to the working class than the maintenance of Fascism. The democratic intermediate stage which it embodied, therefore, was bereft of a concrete institutional formula, leaving the party's ultimate ideological goal, a Soviet-style State, unchanged. This did not mean, however, that the PCI's centralist ideology would automatically fill the new strategy's 'institutional vacuum', because the PCI, in finally deciding to unite with the democratic forces of Italian society to oust the Fascists and to pose democratic goals as strategic objectives, found itself forced into using the very territorial divisions in Italian society which it had always aimed at overcoming. This had noticeable effects on the PCI's nascence as a mass party and

on the institutional structures of the progressive democratic period which were thought to be necessary. These became very pronounced as the Resistance Movement developed and the Committees of National Liberation became operative.

The Resistance Movement and the Committees of National Liberation: a 'Revolution from Below': (1935-1944)

As seen in Chapter One, there were considerable differences of opinion within the PCI about the nature of the struggle which the CLNs were meant to be leading and about the role of the CLNs after the fall of Fascism. The party based in the North viewed the CLNs as instruments of class rather than national struggle, this struggle leading to a revolutionary insurrection and the replacement of the Fascist State by a proletarian order based on the CLNs as instruments of direct democracy. The party based in the South, on the other hand, viewed the CLNs as the prime means of promoting a policy of national unity and the replacement of the Fascist regime with a democratic republic which would not necessarily abolish the CLNs but would integrate them into the new State. These differences are less significant than the unity which existed within the party as to the methodological aspect which the CLNs embodied as a mode of struggle: the PCI's Resistance strategy became a 'rooting' strategy based on overturning the centralised fascist regime through the consolidation and

extension of the democratic forces' power at the grass-roots level.(54) For the party as a whole, the CLNs, as territorially based entities (which, as argued, found their most prominent expression at the regional level), became the major instruments of the Resistance movement: firstly, they became the main instrument in the process of epurazione i.e. the purge of Fascist personnel and their replacement by the forces of the Resistance. Indeed, this was the main reason why Togliatti called for the reinstatement of local elections as soon as possible.(55) Secondly, they were the chief means of seeking agreement between the various forces of the Resistance about the manner in which political, economic and social reconstruction should take place after the defeat of Fascism. This had considerable effects on the PCI's conception of the State to be reconstructed after Fascism, both at the level of the new and growing mass membership and, as a consequence, at the level of the party leadership's pronouncements.

With respect to the first, as the CLNs became the main instruments in the purge of fascist personnel they also became the main instruments through which the 'new party' began to be constructed as a natural extension of the new strategy.(56) As a result, the massive influx of new members which took place in these years brought in a new kind of militant: one whose experience of Communism was limited to the Resistance movement and the CLNs, and who consequently accentuated the expression

of territorial, regional interests within the party. As Gaspari and Martinelli's study of the development of the 'new party' in Tuscany shows, this tended to have two effects.(57) Firstly, it led to a 'regionalisation' of the PCI, and thus the organisation of the party on a territorial rather than a functional basis. Togliatti himself stressed the importance to party strategy of decentralising the party apparatus.(58) This centrifugal tendency reached extremes in the outlying areas of the country where there were separatist and independence movements. In Sardinia, for example, a Partito comunista per l'autonomismo sardo was formed in defiance of the party's National Direction, the dissidents being reabsorbed only because of the PCI's explicit support for autonomy for the island.(59) The development in party organisation was formalized in the creation of a 'Regional Committee' at the party's National Organisation Conference in 1947. Secondly, and more importantly, it influenced the new elites at the regional level in their views on the type of State which was to replace the Fascist regime. For example, the first issue of Toscana Nuova, a journal promoted by the Tuscan section of the PCI, stated that:

"... è nostro desiderio orientare, fin da oggi, i lavoratori verso un ordinamento regionale, facendo loro conoscere quali sino le principali questioni da risolvere nella nostra regione, e come, con la costituzione di tale Ente, possono essere meglio risolte. Non miriamo a formare una

mentalità regionalistica, a far risorgere interessi particolaristici, ma a sviluppare una coscienza unitaria dei problemi regionali, nel quadro di uno Stato unitario."(60)

The decentralising influence of the Popular Front strategy as it emerged in the course of its implementation, as opposed to its conception, was not limited to the growing mass membership - from the statements made during this period it also appeared to include the leadership. It is significant that, despite the differences within the leadership regarding the future role of the CLNs, both sides seemed to agree on the importance of the sub-national territorial element in providing the main impetus within the new society..On the one hand, those who remained committed to a socialist revolution (i.e. the party organisation in the North) viewed the CLNs as the institutional structure of the future proletarian State in the form of organs of direct democracy. This was a radical departure from the party's earlier conception of a highly centralised State organised on an industrial basis. The new conception suddenly introduced the notion of the 'periphery' as a major renovatory aspect of the new society.(61) On the other hand, while Togliatti and the leadership in Rome did not envisage the CLNs as embodying the actual structure of the future State, they nonetheless perceived these institutions, or at least the functions being performed by them, as being

crucial to the form which the progressive democratic State would take:

"...è inevitabile che nel corso di questa lotta i Comitati di Liberazione assumano funzioni vere e proprie di governo...E sarebbe assurdo che, venuta la liberazione, si pensasse di poter liquidare queste funzioni e gli organismi che le hanno esercitate."(62)

The response of the PCI to the Action Party's 'open letter' of November 1944 was significant. As Catalano notes, this letter marked the first differences of opinion within the National Liberation Committee for Northern Italy between the more progressive and the more conservative forces. The letter was extremely vague with respect to economic questions and focused primarily on the reconstruction of a democratic State, the fundamental task resting with the Ministry of the Interior, whose task it would be, "to guide the people in the creation of organs of regional and communal self-government" which would not be merely bureaucratic but 'autonomous' entities guaranteeing freedom for the country.(63) The PCI replied that the contents of the letter were identical with the ideals for which the PCI was striving and that the letter clearly showed that, with the collapse of the old bureaucratic State, it was the spontaneous growth of "new democratic organs and of new mass organisations of a unitarian nature" which would provide for the participation of the Italian people in

the life of the nation both before and after liberation.(64) It was argued, therefore, that there should be "una forma di strettissima collaborazione" between the CLNs and the regular organs of government at both central and sub-national levels, at least until the latter were reconstituted on a democratic basis.(65) The decentralist tendencies of this position were not left merely as implications. Amendola, for example, argued that the CLNs demonstrated that,

"...nel corso della lotta il popolo ha imparato a governarsi da sè, e la nuova democrazia è sorta come espressione della capacità di autogoverno delle masse popolari."(66)

The CLNs were described as institutions which were not to be counterposed to traditional democratic institutions but rather to become "un indispensabile elemento integrativo" which would enrich the traditional democratic forms with those of 'direct democracy' and 'direct participation' of the citizen. Their significance for the future State was their proximity to the populace and thus their ability to provide a form of self-government. In order to legitimise the new State, Amendola argued,

"è necessario che possa contare sull'appoggio e sull'aiuto delle masse popolari; ha bisogno che la sua azione sia integrata dalla pronta iniziativa locale, che non si aspetti tutto dall'altro, ma si cerchi invece, con le risorse disponibili, di mettersi subito al lavoro. Ha

bisogno cioè che si verifichi un forte decentramento di funzioni."(67)
(my emphasis)

It was only in this way that "la immissione nella vita politica delle forze popolari" could be obtained and "un regime di autogoverno popolare" created.(68) Togliatti seemed to be even more specific: when asked whether the national government was aware of the profound need for political and administrative autonomy at the regional level as the prime inspiration for national reconstruction, he replied that,

"...tutti i partiti comprendono ed affermano che non si potrà ricostruire l'Italia se non sulla base di un regime di autonomie regionale, che dovranno essere particolarmente larghe soprattutto per la Sicilia e la Sardegna, regioni che più di tutte hanno sofferto del centralismo burocratico del vecchio Stato italiano reazionario."(69) (my emphasis)

A Regionalist Vocation?

The introduction of a bourgeois-democratic phase into the socialist struggle seemed to place the party's traditional centralist ideology under considerable pressure. The demise of the Fascist regime and the development of the Resistance movement caused, at a general level, an explosion of the regional issue, and such widespread debate amongst the democratic forces and the Italian people that all the political forces quickly committed themselves to some form of

'regionalism'. The PCI, as the major force of the Resistance, appeared to be particularly subject to these pressures because its strategy during the Resistance largely stemmed from that launched by the Popular Front in 1935, and was obscure with respect to its prospective institutional framework. There seemed to be an awareness of the importance of regional self-government and this, coupled to the influx of new members into the party led the leadership to emphasise the lasting value of the functions carried out by the CLNs, implying that, even if these institutions were not to be part of the new State, the principle which they enshrined, 'regional self-government', would be. From a reading of party statements and speeches, then, Gramsci's 'revolution from below' - through the use of institutions located at the point of production - seemed on the verge of a radical re-interpretation.

In this context, it was hardly surprising that some observers foresaw regional devolution as a prospective cardinal part of the PCI's proposals in the Constituent Assembly. Francesco Romano, for example, writing in 1945, referred to the "autonomismo regionale del Partito Comunista" which, he claimed, while only recently developed, had its origins in Gramsci's view of the Southern Question.(70) It quickly became apparent, however, that the 'convergence' was not quite as unequivocal as the author suspected. In the same year in which he wrote this and less than a year after

Togliatti's commitment to a 'regime of regional autonomies', the PCI's legal expert, Vezio Crisafulli - in replying to the Actionist Jemolo's lament that corporatist tendencies were re-emerging with the result of an inversion of the position of a few months before when all of the parties of the Resistance had supported regional autonomy - stated that,

"...non è esatto che alcuni mesi or sono l'autonomia delle regioni fosse nel programma di tutti i partiti ... solo quattro partiti - democristiano, liberale, d'azione, e repubblicano - hanno posto la rivendicazione dell'autonomia regionale tra i propri capisaldi programmatici sin dal periodo della illegalità."(71)

The PCI upheld a claim for regional autonomy but 'autonomy', it seemed, was open to differing interpretations.

'Regional Administrative Autonomy': a Non-Ideological Approach

As argued in Chapter One, the PCI, in general, was tardy in drawing up an institutional programme for the Constitution. The way in which it tackled the centralisation/decentralisation issue was characteristic of this. By the time the Constituent Assembly met the party still did not have a comprehensive scheme within which to debate its claim to be in support of the creation of a regional system. Its first official statement was in an inter-party committee set up on the initiative of the DC to study the regional

problem. The essence of the party's position, outlined by its representative, Grieco, was that it was against the view (prevalent in the Committee) that a comprehensive project should be drawn up by the Committee. Rather, the Committee should limit its work to the affirmation of certain general principles which the Constituent Assembly could discuss.(72) The PCI's own 'principles' were developed during the next two years (before the convening of the Constituent Assembly) in a few articles in the party press and in the course of the party's presence on two governmental committees, the proposals appearing to be as much responses to those of the other parties as promotion of the party's own text.(73)

The PCI's position was based largely on the same principles as its concept of the Constitution. Just as the Constitution was not to be based on abstract, ideological principles, the party refused to take up an a priori position on the distribution of power between centre and periphery:

"La prima cosa ... è che non può esistere un posizione preconcetta, a priori, assolutamente favorevole o assolutamente contraria ad un ordinamento regionale dello Stato."(74)

The problem, it was stated, had to be viewed not in terms of 'abstract schemes' but rather in relation to the real needs of the country at that particular time, which were those of 'reconstruction'.(75) The fundamental tasks of

reconstruction, as already seen, were declared as being threefold: the consolidation of national unity, the birth of a democratic regime and the carrying out of social and economic reform. This meant, in the first instance, a rejection of what was described - but never specifically defined - as a 'regional federation' or 'federal State'. Federalist proposals were regarded as originating from abstract, formal criteria and a mistaken interpretation of Italian history: namely that Fascism had arisen as a result of the Risorgimento's failure to forge a federal State, instead of a unitary-centralised State, and that the latter should be, therefore, the goal of the 'second Risorgimento'. The German case, it was argued, disproved this because the Nazi's had been able to come to power as easily in a federal State as the Italian Fascists had done in a centralised one. The weaknesses of the Italian State after unification had not derived from the fact that the State was unitary but rather from the manner in which unity had been reached, "unità formale, frutto di un compromesso fra i gruppi borghesi e gruppi reazionari della grande proprietà fondiaria..."(76) As a result, the masses had been prevented from exercising political power, national unity had never been consolidated and the real interests of the population had not been met. While the structure of the State had not determined the collapse of the old regime, the question of unity was now so important that, as Togliatti stated, "è pure strettamente

legata a quella della struttura del nuovo Stato italiano." National unity, it was said, should not be placed in danger through 'hasty' federal experiments which would provide for the creation of 'reactionary outposts' counter-posed to the tasks of national reconstruction.(77)

The rejection of federalism, however, did not mean "che ignoriamo le regioni e che non vogliamo concedere loro la necessaria autonomia."(78) The creation of a regional institution was supported and was regarded as a potential aid to the consolidation of the new Republic, but on condition that it served as a means of aiding reconstruction in the economic and social fields. The regional institution had to be considered not as,

"...uno scema di organizzazione dello Stato, a sè stante, ma come uno strumento che può facilitare, a certe condizioni, la realizzazione di quelle riforme di struttura, nel campo industriale, agrario ed in altri campi, che debbono dare un nuovo contenuto alla nuova democrazia italiana."(79)

This meant, however, two types of 'autonomy' being granted to the regions. "Una autonomia particolarmente ampia" was to be granted to Sicily and Sardinia, which would involve the creation of regional governments with legislative and financial autonomy (as was being discussed in the Statute then being drafted). This 'large autonomy' was justified on the

grounds that the islands had peculiar problems which had been left unresolved after seventy five years of the unitary State and which could only be resolved,

"...chiamandovi a partecipare
direttamente le masse popolare
isolane, secondo i loro antiche
desideri."(80)

The question of regional autonomy for the islands arose, it was argued, from the demands of the population itself; something which was not viewed to be the case in the regions which made up the rest of Italy. These were not to be granted autonomy of a 'political character' because there were no demands for this from the population and because the tasks of reconstruction in agriculture, industry, transport, public works (in addition to the more general problem of the South) required national planning and firm centralised control. Leaving the resolution of these problems to the "libero gioco delle iniziative locali" would lead to greater regional imbalance and thus an aggravation of the problem of the South.(81) It followed that the regional institution had to remain of an administrative nature:

"...come non siamo favorevoli ad un sistema federativo regionale, non siamo neppure favorevole ad un organizzazione di Stato la quale assegni all'Ente 'regione' facoltà legislative e normative..."(82)

Nevertheless, although the regional system would remain within the framework of administrative decentralisation, Grieco claimed that,

"...una concezione amministrativa della funzione della Regione non è in contrasto n| con l'autonomia (nei limiti dei poteri che possono essere attribuiti alle Regioni) n| con l'esigenza di sviluppare le iniziative locali."(83)

The PCI proposed what it described as a form of 'administrative autonomy' ("autonomia amministrativa").(84) The resolution drawn up at the end of the Fifth Congress stated that the party was in favour of autonomy for the comunes, of the abolition of the prefect and,

"è favorevole a riconoscere alla regioni particolari funzioni autonome nel campo amministrativo, nella organizzazione della vita economica, della sanità pubblica ecc."(85) (my emphasis)

The regional institutions would have their own financial resources ("problema assai delicato - occorrerà discutere attentamente") and would be managed by freely elected officials, who would replace the prefect.(86) It was claimed that this form of regionalism responded correctly to the criteria of 'concrete needs' rather than of 'abstract schemes':

"L'amministrazione regionale, ...dopo che siano debellati il grande capitale monopolistico e la grande

proprietà di tipo feudale può contribuire alla estensione delle basi della democrazia e dello Stato democratico, allo sviluppo delle iniziative locali, ad un più rapido disbrigo degli affari pubblici e, quindi, allo snellimento dell'apparato statale."(87)

Nevertheless, even administrative autonomy had its dangers:

"L'autonomia amministrativa regionale, anche limitata, potrebbe aggravare le diversità economiche oggi esistente tra regione e regione..."(88)(my emphasis)

Esoteric Regionalism

On a matter which (once the Constitutional debates began) was to be declared as "il tema pregiudiziale ad ogni altro" with respect to the form of the State, the PCI's position was obscure, particularly in comparison with the proposals of other parties.(89) Not only was there a failure to elaborate a comprehensive scheme for the regional system which the party was apparently proposing, but there was also a failure to define the concepts it referred to. The party was 'anti-federalist', in favour of 'large autonomy' for Sicily and Sardinia, but against that form of autonomy for the rest of the Italian regions for which it proposed 'administrative autonomy'. Yet, 'federalism' was never defined and how it differed from the 'regional legislative autonomy' the party

was against remained unclear (which it preferred to call 'large autonomy' and not federalism, when applied to Sicily and Sardinia). Apart from one reference by Grieco to a 'regional federation' and to 'legislative autonomy', the party constantly presented the alternatives as being only two: 'administrative autonomy' or 'federalism':

"In tema di decentramento istituzionale si presenterà il problema delle 'regioni'...Qui, la nostra posizione è ben chiara: contrari ad ogni sistema federalistico...non abbiamo però pregiudiziali - in luogo delle attuali province - di enti regionali, con propri organi elettivi e con determinati compiti amministrativi ed economici."(90)

This completely ignored the most significant proposals of the debate (of the DC, PRI and Pd'A) for the creation of a regional system with constitutionally defined legislative powers in certain policy areas, by lumping those proposals tout court within the framework of federalism, and campaigning vigorously against the latter (which, it should be noted, did not have a serious following in Italy at this time). The confusion engendered by this policy, whether or not it was deliberate, had noticeable effects, as Rotelli accurately notes:

"tale confusione di concetti...giovò soprattutto agli antiregionalisti ed ai regionalisti più moderati poiché essi, assumendo che la reiezione della potestà legislativa regionale

fosse implicita nella reiezione del federalismo, per la quale era stato facile suscitare il consenso invocando l'unità nazionale, potevano poi presentare, come unica alternativa al federalismo respinto, una Regione priva di effettiva autonomia politica."(91)

This may further explain why the party attempted to dress up its own proposals for administrative decentralisation in the guise of regional 'autonomy' and to separate them from 'ordinary' forms of administrative decentralisation. That this was an arbitrary division was clearly revealed when Crisafulli attempted to define the difference between them. He defined 'regional administrative autonomy' as coming within the framework of "decentramento istituzionale (col passaggio, cioè, di determinate funzioni dall'amministrazione diretta dello Stato a organismi autonomi)"; while, on the other hand, there existed "decentramento burocratico (col trasferimento di compiti, oggi demandati all'amministrazione centrale, a organi statali periferici..."(92)(my emphasis). There were to be two forms of decentralisation, then, both of which would carry out the same duties (i.e. administration previously carried out by the centre) but the institutions carrying out the duties would be different, because while one set would be merely State field services, created, one assumes, on an ad hoc basis, the other set would be 'autonomous' because (it would seem) their tasks and their electoral nature would be constitutionally

defined. What was the significance of constitutionally enshrining one and not the other? The PCI's proposals did not appear to concern constitutional matters at all, since they came within the framework of the administrative organisation of the State. Crisafulli seemed to be aware of this when, having outlined the PCI's regionalist proposals, he noted that,

"Naturalmente, la soluzione di tutti questi problemi, nei loro dettagli, rientra piuttosto nella riforma dell'amministrazione che in quella costituzionale: i principi, però, tocca alla Costituzione stabilirli, e tra essi è indispensabile che venga solennamente affermato il diritto dei Comuni e degli altri enti territoriali all'autonomia amministrativa e al rispetto di tale autonomia da parte degli organi del potere centrale."(93)

Yet this tended to conflict with the very grounds on which the PCI claimed to be approaching the problem i.e that one could not take an a priori view on questions such as the organisation of the State. Institutions were viewed simply as instrumental devices which could, if properly used, aid the reconstruction of the country, the emphasis being placed on the contribution which regional administrative decentralisation could make firstly, to the economic reconstruction of the country (while not endangering national unity), and secondly to the widening of the country's

democratic base (by making the administration more accountable to the populace). There was a refusal to evaluate regionalism and thus to justify the party's position either against the values of democracy (in the liberal-democratic sense) or against the party's own centrist ideological heritage, which was never referred to. Grieco, for example, went as far as to contest,

"l'opinione secondo la quale il 'problema regionale' abbia un carattere 'permanente ed immanente', e che questo stesso carattere abbia e debba avere una Costituzione. Ogni legge, e quindi anche una legge fondamentale costituzionale, è transitoria; ed essa è tanto più impregnata di spirito democratico, quanto più è suscettibile di essere modificata nella pratica."(94)

The party's simultaneous insistence on including in the Constitution a commitment to what it claimed was regional autonomy (but which was essentially an administrative matter unrelated to the question of the distribution of power) seemed somewhat disingenuous. Even if constitutional laws could be regarded as 'transitory', making administrative decentralisation a constitutional requirement made little sense except for its preventative aspect i.e. that it precluded the possibility of a genuine devolution of power. In short, the PCI seemed bent on blurring, or making

ambivalent, what was for other parties a fundamental choice.

As Mény notes,

"Au-delà de la centralisation et de la décentralisation...c'est le sort de la nation et de l'Etat qui est en balance."(95)

The PCI was having constitutionally to define what it perceived to be the correct geographic distribution of power within the State, or, in other words, what type of democratic Republic it envisaged. Its refusal to accept these as the 'rules of the game' left its position at a tactical or instrumental level, and therefore liable to change. Yet, at some point the party would have to vote for or against what would be, in the liberal-democratic context, a fundamental decision, and on this point its position seemed unequivocal: there should be no devolution of political power from the centre.

What were the origins of the PCI's obscure position? There are, broadly speaking, three possible explanations. The first would be that there was a genuine degree of confusion and ambivalence within the party which arose from the 'novelty' of the new strategy, from the fact that the strategy did not place primary importance on the organisational form of the State (but rather on the accession to power of 'new men' around a constitutional programme of social and economic reform), and from the pressures arising from the political and

social environment and the nature of the 'New Party'. The second explanation would be that the PCI was keeping its options open as long as possible in order to assess the likely permanence of the coalition of national unity or the prospects of the Left coming to power alone, thus leaving open the possibility of a centralist or decentralist solution while the Constitutional debates lasted. In other words, its strategy allowed for tactical alternatives with respect to the form of the future State.

While the above two explanations emphasise the tactical nature of the PCI's position the third explanation would be that the party leadership's conception of the distribution of power between centre and periphery was never in doubt. The party, it could be argued, remained centralist, the ambivalence being no more than a response, at the rhetorical level, to electoral exigences and internal party pressures which had developed since 1943. The leadership may have recognised that it would be politically disastrous not to show some form of commitment to dismantling the centralised Fascist State and institutionalizing the decentralist spirit of the Resistance Movement. The support for the CLNs, moreover, may have arisen from the simple fact that the party wielded much influence within these bodies in the post-war 'transition period'. In this respect the party's choice could be interpreted as being a fundamental part of its 'strategy for

power'. Even if this was the case, however, it still begs the question of what, behind the rhetoric of 'progressive democracy', was the PCI's 'strategy for power', and why was it that regional devolution was so inimical to that strategy? The answer to this did not become clear until the drafting of the regional project in the Constitutional Commissions.

* * * * *

Chapter Three

'Progressive Democratic' Centralism: Constitutional Jacobinism or Gramscian Hegemony? (July 1946-March 1947)

"I lavori della seconda sottocommissione ... analizzati dal punto di vista della elaborazione comunista, mostrano maggiormente i limiti della prospettiva del PCI sulla complessa problematica istituzionali. Problemi come l'istituzione dell'Ente Regione ... vedono spesso i comunisti sulla difensiva, più attenti cioè a rintuzzare i tentativi ... di introdurre organismi che sfuggano al controllo democratico dell'elettorato, invece di tentare di sviluppare una elaborazione personale capace di individuare quanto di positivo per lo sviluppo democratico del Paese era contenuto in queste proposte." (G.Conti, M.Pieretti, G.Santomassimo)(1)

"...certo quello che avvenne nel quadro istituzionale ... in the Constitutional debates ... non può che trovare la spiegazione nel corso dei dibattiti svoltasi nella Commissione dei 75. Era matura ... in una grande parte dei costituenti la coscienza di dar vita ad un nuovo tipo di Stato del quale i rapporti tra i tre partiti principali ... doveva rappresentare un elemento decisivo di caratterizzazione. Si era imposta ... la consapevolezza che gli accordi e i compromessi raggiunti in questa base dovevano essere proiettati come un elemento programmatico di rinnovamento dello Stato italiano." (E.Ragionieri)(2)

With a policy of 'staking all' on the elections to the Constituent Assembly (see Chapter One) the results must clearly have been a blow to the PCI. The aim had been to obtain, together with the Socialists, about half the 556 seats, but the results fell short of this: the PCI obtained 104 seats with 18.9 per cent of the vote, the PSIUP 115 seats with 20.7 per cent, while the DC obtained 207 seats with 35.2 per cent. The remaining seats were divided amongst thirteen other parties.(3) The results, however, were not sufficient to provoke a change in strategy. Firstly, there had been an increase in the overall vote of the Left as compared with the Spring local elections when the combined Communist-Socialist vote had been approximately equal to that of the DC. Now the former topped the latter. Secondly, it quickly became apparent that a stable governmental majority around a comprehensive constitutional programme could not be formed, meaning that separate majorities would have to be formed on each issue. From the plethora of parties elected, ten parliamentary groups emerged: the three large ones (DC, PSIUP and PCI), which

between them held 76.6 per cent of the seats, followed by seven minor groups (the Republican Party (PRI), Uomo Qualunque (UQ), Unione Democratica Nazionale (UDN), Blocco Nazionale della Libertà, Democratico del lavoro, Autonomista, and a gruppo misto.)⁽⁴⁾ This increased both the potential influence of individual parties and the likelihood that parliamentary tactics would play a role in determining the outcome of the Constitutional debates. Thirdly, the only strategic alternative open to the PCI was going into outright opposition, meaning isolation and the probable erosion of its legitimacy as a democratic renovatory force. Thus, while the election results gave the PCI problems with the party activists and resulted in the downgrading of its participation in De Gasperi's tri-partite coalition (through Togliatti leaving his ministerial post), they did not affect the basic premise of the party's strategy: the possibility of founding a 'progressive democratic Republic' through the party's direct participation in the drafting of the Constitutional order.

This chapter analyses the behaviour of the PCI during the drafting of the regional project in the commissions set up by the Constituent Assembly (the Second Subcommittee, the Committee of 10 and the Commission of 75) and in the preliminary debate on the project in the Constituent Assembly itself. This covers the period from July 1946 to March 1947 which was important because, while there were changes that

took place in the composition of the government (particularly in January 1947 when the socialist party split in two), the basic formula of 'national solidarity' remained in force (the removal of the Communists and Socialists from the government taking place in May 1947). The first part of the chapter, therefore, analyses the position of the PCI during the drafting of the project and its approach to this task. The position was ardently centralist and the approach tended to reduce the work of the commissions to a political struggle over one issue of the project. (regional legislative power), tactical manoeuvring consequently playing an important part in the discussions. The second part of the chapter attempts to identify the origins of this position and approach. It is argued that, despite the apparent 'instrumental' value accorded to institutions by the PCI and the agreement of various authors on the party's stance being 'tactical' and therefore liable to sudden change, the rejection of regional devolution should be viewed as a long-term strategic choice made under certain conditions, this choice being related to the party's underlying strategy for power. This argument is crucial to the evaluation of the possible effects of a change of conditions on the PCI's institutional choices (which will be the subject of Chapter Four).

Regional Legislative Autonomy: a Consensus in Principle

On 15 July 1946, the Constituent Assembly delegated the task of drafting the Constitutional project to a Commissione per la Costituzione, which became known as the Commission of 75 (Commissione dei 75), after the number of its members, and which represented the parties in proportion to their strength in the Assembly.(5) This Commission was further divided into three subcommissions: the first was responsible for citizens' rights and duties; the second was responsible for the organisation of the State (this subcommission was sub-divided creating a special section concerned with the judiciary); and the third was responsible for social and economic rights. These subcommissions presented the results of their work to the Commission of 75 which, in plenary session, drafted the complete Constitutional project. The Commission of 75 then co-opted a drafting committee (comitato di redazione, called the Committee of 18, after the number of its members) to finalise the constitutional provisions and to represent the Commission's text in the Constituent Assembly. The work of the Commissions was important in the sense that it gave some indication of the points of major consensus which might be reached in the Assembly because the membership of the Commissions corresponded to party strengths in the Assembly. However, on some issues no clear majority emerged in the Commissions and, at the same time, the parties remained

internally divided. This tended to increase the importance of the text which emerged from the Commissions: if the issue was subject to considerable division there were strong arguments for accepting the text rather than attempting radical amendments.

The problem of local autonomy came under the aegis of the second subcommission, which decided to hold a preliminary debate to see whether members were, in principle, in favour of the creation of an institution at the regional level and, if so, what its rudimentary characteristics should be. The problem with such a debate was the assumption which lay behind it: that the parties would subsequently act on the principles they had espoused when it came to drafting a concrete scheme. This was not to be the case.

The Preliminary Debate in the Second Subcommission (26 July 1946 - 1 August 1946)

The Communists who spoke in the preliminary debate were Grieco, La Rocca, Terracini and Nobile (who was an independent elected on the Communist list).(6) The line presented by the first three was much the same as that espoused before the convening of the Assembly, although the link between federalism and regional autonomy was made more explicit. The PCI, La Rocca stated, was against "la tesi federalista e qualsiasi tesi regionalista che praticamente possa sboccare in

federalismo." This was defined as "un regionalismo troppo spinto, che sia federalismo mascherato", or, in Grieco's words, as concerning a "competenza legislativa e normativa...che porterebbe ad un federalismo mascherato." The party would not, therefore, support "nè uno Stato federale nè uno Stato definito regionale (forse qui è questione di parole)"(7)(my emphasis) In clarifying this, however, the party introduced nuances with respect to the notion of 'legislative power'. The regional institution, Grieco and La Rocca argued, should be granted 'administrative powers' and 'technical-economic powers' which would go beyond mere administrative decentralisation to incorporate a "facoltà legislativa delegata" leaving "una larga possibilità di iniziativa e non potestà legislativa".(8) At the same time, Terracini stated that, "una competenza legislativa debba essere affidata alla regione, ma in un campo relativamente limitato." He then pointed out the difficulties of granting legislative powers even in fields such as hunting and fishing because of the likelihood of overlapping jurisdictions.(9) Nobile, meanwhile, opposed the creation of a regional system altogether, even for Sicily and Sardinia, and in so doing used virtually the same arguments as the other Communist members.

At the end of the debate, when the subcommission attempted to define the principles which underpinned the regional project, the PCI presented a motion which identified

the regions as "le naturali basi per un sistema decentrato di organizzazione e funzionamento dello Stato unitario", and called for the creation of regional governments,

"dotati di autonomia amministrativa e forniti di potestà legislativa da esercitarsi nei modi e sulle materie che verranno stabilite con la legge costituzionale."(10)(my emphasis)

However, the Communists withdrew this motion in favour of a motion presented by Piccioni for the Christian Democrats. This received every member's vote except that of Nobile.(11) What then had the Communists approved? The creation of a regional institution,

- "a). come ente autarchico (cioè con fini propri di interesse regionale e con capacità di svolgere attività propria per il conseguimento di tali fini);
- b). come ente autonomo (cioè con potere legislativo nell'ambito delle specifiche competenze che gli verranno attribuite e nel rispetto dell'ordinamento giuridico generale dello Stato);
- c). come ente rappresentativo degli interessi locali, su basi elettive;
- d). come ente dotato di autonomia finanziaria..."(12) (my emphasis)

The following day L'Unità described the Communist action as a withdrawal of its motion in favour of a 'similar motion' presented by Piccioni. The fact that the Communists had expressed reservations about the motion's reference to legislative power was not mentioned.(13) The Socialist daily,

Avanti! interpreted the vote in a very optimistic manner.(14) The Roman daily, Il Messagero, however, took a more realistic line. Having expressed mild surprise that the Communists seemed to have conceded more than they had originally planned, the newspaper commented that,

"Tuttavia, non sarà inutile osservare che un problema di tanta complessità la soluzione non può essere raggiunta solo mediante l'affermazione di alcuni principii."(15)

The vote represented, at a formal level, a wide consensus on the need to found the new State on a regional basis. If it had been binding on the parties or if, at least, it had conditioned the parties' future behaviour it would have represented an enormous step. Yet, on being forced to draft a text for the first time, the political parties found themselves divided on the very issue which had been central to that consensus. Thus began a long political struggle over regional devolution.

Regional Legislative Autonomy: National Unity Put to the Test

On the basis of the apparent consensus achieved in the preliminary debate, the subcommission co-opted a drafting committee (called the Committee of 10, after the number of its members) to define a provisional regional project based on the principles contained in Piccioni's motion. The work of this

committee revealed how ephemeral the decision reached in the subcommission was, and highlighted the futility of a preliminary debate based on finding a consensus on 'principles' of regional devolution.

The Committee of 10 (2 August - 3 September 1946)

Besides the majority text (represented by Ambrosini) three other texts were produced by the Committee of 10, on the part of the Communist, Grieco, the Socialist, Lami-Starnuti, and the Republican, Zuccarini.(16) The major difference between these texts and the majority text concerned the regional system's legislative power, and it was this issue which henceforth became the major focus of the regional debate and around which the principle of regional autonomy was fought.

In fact, as Ambrosini revealed in his report to the subcommission(17), the majority text represented an intermediary solution between two extremes: on the one hand, the proposals of Zuccarini, Lussu and Bordon, which provided for a largely uninhibited exercise of legislative power in all policy areas except for those expressly stipulated as being reserved to the State (their proposals verged closely on a federal State structure); and, on the other hand, the proposals of Grieco and Lami Starnuti which gave the regional governments merely the limited power of implementing (or, as

they defined it, 'integrating') the norms which issued from the central government (and even this power was within a minor range of policy areas). This power was still defined as 'legislative' but in the sense of a 'legislative power of integration'. As a result, two forms of 'legislative power' were drafted into the majority text: firstly, what came to be called 'exclusive legislative power' ("potestà legislativa esclusiva"), which gave the regional system the power to legislate "in armonia con la costituzione e coi principi fondamentali dell'ordinamento giuridico dello Stato e nel rispetto degli interessi nazionali" (article 3 of the text); and secondly, "una potestà legislativa di integrazione delle norme direttive e generali emanate con legge dello Stato" (article 4 of the text). A number of significant policy areas were allocated to the first type of power, while those regarded as requiring overall national control were placed within the latter type of power.(18) The majority text, it should be said, respected Piccioni's motion, which was the Committee's objective. As Rotelli notes,

"l'ordine del giorno Piccioni ...
 conteneva una formulazione implicante
 certamente la potestà legislativa, e
 probabilmente anche quella
 esclusiva."(19)

Certainly, those who supported the majority text in the Committee (the Christian Democrats, the Republicans, the

Actionists and the Sardisti) did not regard a 'legislative power of integration' as a real or adequate form of legislative power, which was how the Communists and Socialists seemed to be squaring their position with their earlier support of Piccioni's motion. Indeed, Grieco's text threatened not only to remove the exclusive legislative power but to reduce the Committee's list of policy areas, which would in any case only be subject to a regional power of integration. (20) Moreover, on having for the first time to draw up specific proposals, Grieco appeared to abandon the notion that his regional system would remain 'autonomous' (which had been the basis of the party's pre-Assembly declarations). His first article stated that, "il territorio dello Stato è ripartito in Regioni autonome, Regioni e Comuni", and the next, "Sono Regioni autonome la Sicilia, la Sardegna, la Val d'Aosta, il Trentino Alto-Adige." The others were to be "Enti autarchici dotati di diritti propri secondo i principi fissati nella Costituzione", these being administrative and legislative powers of integration.(21) Thus, even if the PCI's position retained a sense of ambiguity (through the maintainance of a form of 'legislative' power in its proposals), it was tempered by the accompanying implication that this form of legislative power was not really autonomous.

In short, the Committee of 10, having been appointed as a result of a wide consensus on the principle of 'regional

autonomy', found itself divided on an issue which had been regarded as a prerequisite to that consensus: whether or not to grant the regional system proper legislative powers. Furthermore, although the political parties found themselves divided into two broad camps on the issue (the Christian Democrats, Actionists, Republicans and Sardisti on the one hand, and the Communists, Socialists and Liberals on the other) the issue cut across party lines to such an extent that it was unclear whether the majority mustered in the Committee of 10 (largely as a result of the devolutionists selected by certain of the parties) would prevail in the future.

The Committee of 10 presented its text to the Second Subcommittee on 13 November 1946, this text providing the guidelines according to which the subcommittee drafted the regional project to be presented to the Commission of 75.

The Second Subcommittee (13 November 1946 - 18 December 1946)

That the PCI had finally abandoned its earlier ambiguity with regard to notions of regional autonomy was quickly confirmed in the main debate of the subcommittee, when Laconi argued that a distinction be made explicit in the first two articles of the project between 'autonomous regions' and 'other regions'. While this was presented with the apparent aim of distinguishing between the special statute regions and the other regions, the devolutionists recognised

that this would provide a good basis for the anti-devolutionists to argue against the subsequent attribution to the regional system of anything amounting to an 'autonomous nature' i.e. a legislative power.(22)

When the amendments were rejected(23) the Communists, in alliance with the Socialists and others, presented an amendment to article 3 of the project replacing the exclusive legislative power with a power to issue "norme di integrazione e di attuazione per adattare alle condizioni locali le norme generali e direttive emanate con legge dello Stato."(24). With the disappearance of the word 'legislative' from the anti-devolutionists' proposals, Ambrosini pleaded that this was not only contrary to the principle which was agreed upon in the Committee of 10 but represented even less than the Communist text presented to that Committee (i.e.Grieco's) which recognised a legislative power on certain matters, albeit not more than a 'legislative power of integration'.(25) The Communist justification for the amendment was explained by Laconi, Nobile and La Rocca, the common characteristic of the speeches being the danger the existing project represented to national unity, because the scheme was not based on real, current needs but rather arose from, "schemi logici preformati o da particolari esigenze di ordine politico, che non coincidono con quelle nazionale e democratiche". At this historical juncture, Laconi observed,

"il processo di unificazione culturale, politica ed economica del paese sia giunto ad un punto tale da escludere la necessità di larghe autonomie legislative per la maggior parte delle regioni."(26)

Article 3 (i.e. an exclusive legislative power) was viewed as excluding the possibility of State intervention on matters of national importance, which would result in "una serie di legislazioni discordanti, tali da minacciare l'unità nazionale."(27) At Laconi's insistence the amendment was put to a vote and was defeated by a small majority, the Committee's text being accepted with a minor amendment.(28)

Faced with the inclusion of exclusive legislative power in the subcommission's project, the anti-devolutionists attempted to empty the concept of any meaning through reducing the policy areas within which the regional system would have jurisdiction. Agriculture was the first area to be analysed and this had a significant effect on the development of events because all the political parties held agriculture to be of great importance. Although rapid industrialisation was in the offing, few politicians in the immediate post-war period foresaw this development and Italy was perceived as (and indeed was) a mainly agricultural society. Problems such as the Mezzogiorno were seen solely in terms of the necessity of agricultural reform and, as a consequence, a major aspect of the regionalism debate became (as it had been in the pre-war

period (see Chapter Two)) inextricably linked to this. Both proponents and opponents of regional devolution used agricultural reform as a justification for their arguments.

Consequently, when the subcommission came to discuss agriculture the debate rapidly digressed from the matter of content to the question of exactly what type of 'legislative power' agriculture was to be devolved to i.e. the interpretation of exclusive legislative power which had already been approved. The anti-devolutionists reiterated their arguments that a regional legislative power limited by the Constitution and the juridical order of the State effectively amounted to an unlimited power, thus excluding the State's possibility of intervening in agriculture.(29) Certain members of the subcommission who had voted against the anti-devolutionists' amendment to article 3 were nonetheless sympathetic to this interpretation, and implied that unless the wording were clarified to make it more explicit that the national Parliament would retain "la potestà di una propria legislazione generale di principio", they would not vote for the inclusion of agriculture in article 3. Lussu, for example, stated that this interpretation was what he and, in his view, the Committee of 10, had intended when they voted the text.(30) Despite Mortati's objection that, if this were the case, there would be no distinction between article 3 and article 4(31), the devolutionists recognised their dilemma:

the inclusion of article 3 in the project was turning out to be a Pyrrhic victory, since it seemed likely that the slender majority would not hold together to carry through the inclusion of policy areas of any significance, thus effectively rendering the article null and void. The policy areas which were excluded from article 3 would be, at the most, subject to no more than a power of 'integration' (i.e. if they were subsequently included in article 4).

The devolutionists' response to this dilemma was to formulate a third concept of legislative power which lay between the existing two. Mortati argued that there was a difficulty in supporting the removal of policy areas from article 3 while article 4 remained as it was, since the latter's existing formulation contained two limitations on the regional system's normative activity: firstly, it presupposed that the regional governments could not legislate in those areas unless a general law had been laid down by the State (i.e. there was no allowance for regional initiative); and secondly, it referred to "norme direttive e generali" as one entity when in fact there were two which should be distinguished.(32) While article 3 was too 'extreme' in one direction for many in the subcommission, the alternative, article 4, was too extreme in the other. Mortati, therefore, proposed replacing article 4 with an article of two parts. The

first part (article 4) would provide for the power to legislate,

"nel rispetto della costituzione e nell'ambito dei principi direttivi che lo Stato ritenga di dovere emanare allo scopo di garantire, con una regolamentazione uniforme, gli interessi unitari della Nazione..."

This was called a 'concurrent legislative power' ("potestà legislativa concorrente"), because, while it allowed the regional governments to legislate within certain policy areas, the State was still able to issue general directives in those areas. Meanwhile, the second part (article 4-bis) simply provided for a "potere regolamentare esecutivo". Mortati argued that this division would, on the one hand, clear up the equivocation surrounding article 4 and, on the other, make the removal of certain policy areas from article 3 more acceptable since they could be subsequently included within the regional system's concurrent legislative power as opposed to a mere executive power. He personally would be in favour of such a transference for agriculture, he said.(33)

The Communist response to this strategy was mixed. Nobile supported it simply on the grounds that it distinguished the one type of power in which he felt policy areas could be granted to the regional system (executive power) thus making his approach to the task easier.(34) Laconi and La Rocca were still pre-occupied with article 3, in that

Mortati's new formulation did not remove the danger of interpreting article 3 in a certain way. Indeed, the new formulation was regarded as emphasising the impossibility of State intervention in the policy areas allocated to article 3.(35) To an extent, this was irrelevant because the vote about to be taken would not alter the wording of article 3. This reasoning seemed to be behind Grieco's decision to abstain, in that the new formulation at least made more likely the downgrading of significant policy areas (by transferring them from article 3 to article 4) and kept open the option of ultimately allocating these to a purely executive power. Mortati's new formulation was, consequently, easily accepted.(36)

It could be argued that in their indifference the Communists and other anti-devolutionists had been out-manoeuvred, since if this was a compromise it was one weighted heavily in the devolutionists' favour: while the new formulation would not necessarily have any effect on the anti-devolutionists' approach to the problem it might hold together the slender majority required to preserve legislative power in some of the more important policy areas. The strategy, moreover, contained a potential side benefit: the inclusion of policy areas such as industry and commerce in article 4 (as opposed to article 4-bis) which would amount to an upgrading of their previous status.(37) Most important of all was the

fact that, to some extent, there was not a great deal of difference between the concurrent and exclusive legislative power. Fabbri had hinted at this in saying that the new form of legislative power proposed by Mortati "è concorrente e, in un certo senso, diviene esclusiva, ove lo Stato non ritenga che vi siano interessi generali da disciplinare."(38)

The Communists seemed to become aware of this new dilemma when, after the voting on the policy areas to be allocated to article 3, a discussion ensued on the exact interpretation of article 4. During this discussion, Laconi noted that Mortati's modifications had been accepted on the presupposition of removing policy areas from an exclusive legislative power but a discussion had not taken place on the exact meaning of a concurrent legislative power. The problem now, he stated, was that with article 4 "si concede troppo alla Regione" because "i limiti sono posti soltanto a carico dello Stato", while in article 4-bis, "si concede troppo poco" since "l'attività legislativa è affidata interamente allo Stato e si attribuisce alla Regione soltanto un potere regolamentare esecutivo." He therefore proposed the addition of a third part to article 4 as a whole, providing for a regional power to promulgate "norme di attuazione per adattare alle condizioni locali le norme generali e direttive emanate con leggi dello Stato..."(39)

This proposal seems to indicate that Laconi was aware that with article 4 in its existing formulation, the 'borderline voters' - faced with the choice between allocating policy areas to a concurrent legislative power or to a mere executive power - would be likely to favour the former, the formulation of which, for him, came too close towards article 3's exclusive power. With his amendment, the appeal of rejecting the inclusion of certain policy areas in article 4 would be greater since there would be something more significant to which they could be transferred - a power of 'integration' which could be presented as having a 'legislative' character.

For this strategy to work, it was necessary for the amendment to be passed before the debate on the allocation of policy areas to article 4. Significantly, however, the Chairman decided to postpone the whole discussion until after the allocation of the policy areas.(40) When the proposal re-emerged on the agenda, Laconi, who had been its original proponent, dissociated himself from the debate and rejected the system in its entirety. He said that the system was the result of a compromise between two incompatible viewpoints, one which wished to attribute to the regional system "legislazione esclusiva, concorrente e regolamentare", and the other which wanted to attribute to the system "una

legislazione primaria ... nell'ambito di principi fissati dallo Stato, ed una regolamentare ... "

"Ora che dalla discussione emerge l'insostenibilità del compromesso .../ dichiaro/ ... di non poter dare la ... /mia/ ... adesione al sistema in esame, e mentre ... /mi riservo/ ... di portare la questione in altra sede ... mi asterrò ... dal partecipare alla votazione."(41)

The proposal was nonetheless re-considered and a suggestion by Mortati and Perassi to separate the power of integration from that of regulation (due to the former's 'legislative' character) was accepted, thus creating, in all, four types of regional power.(42)

The voting on policy areas to be included in article 3 went much as predicted: agriculture, forests, caves, hunting, antiquities and the fine arts, tourism and professional schools were all pruned from the Committee of 10's original list. Indeed, only one vote was required, the other items being nodded through, and there were few declarations of voting intentions (which was the method by which a debate could begin on each item).(43)

The policy areas to be included in article 4 (i.e. the concurrent legislative power) involved a harder battle. To begin with, Nobile attempted to prevent the formulation of a list by proposing that one be drawn up by the future legislative assembly. This was rejected (44), and in the

voting that followed, while the devolutionists managed to maintain the inclusion of matters such as forests, caves, hunting, tourism, public waters, electrical energy and, most importantly, agriculture, the Communist-Socialist-Liberal alliance held firm on important matters such as industry, trade, credit, mining, railways and elementary and university education.(45) It is of note that the arguments used against the inclusion of these and other policy areas in article 4 were precisely the same as those used against inclusion in article 3: firstly, the almost unlimited nature of the legislative power to which the policy areas were being devolved (46); secondly, the national importance of the items being discussed, the assumption being that if the matter was of importance to the nation it was best handled at central government level. Ambrosini's plea that, "a base di queste norme è il presupposto della salvaguardia degli interessi nazionali") was not enough to prevent the exclusion of some of the more important areas.(47) The items which were removed from both exclusive and concurrent legislation were subsequently included within the framework of a legislative 'power of integration'.(48)

The second subcommission completed its work on 18 December 1946, leaving a month before the Commission of the 75 debated the project. The PCI used this time to campaign against the subcommission's proposed text. A book was

published containing a number of Grieco's pre-Assembly articles on regionalism and his proposals in the Committee of 10. The Introduction stressed that the proposed project was unacceptable because of the arbitrary division of some of the traditional regions and because the regional system had been provided with,

"una somma di facoltà (compresa la facoltà legislativa primaria per diverse materie) tali che il nuovo Ente sembra mascherare una sorte di federalismo, pericoloso per l'unità statale italiana."(49)

Togliatti, meanwhile, in a speech at Florence on 10 January 1947, stressed the Communists' aversion to,

"l'esagerato regionalismo, questa smania di dividere ancora una volta l'Italia in piccoli statarelli, ognuno di quali dovrebbe avere non soltanto il suo Parlamento ma la sua politica e persino la sua economia."

He encouraged the party to struggle against this and other points of the Constitution which impeded the expression of the popular will.(50) It was hardly surprising, therefore, that when the Commission of 75 came to discuss the second subcommission's regional project, the Communists not only reopened the debate on regional legislative power but on the system in its entirety.

The Commission of 75 in Plenary Session (17 January 1947 - 1 February 1947)

The Communists did this through the presentation of two separate Communist motions which, at first sight, seemed to indicate a division within the party. The first, presented by Laconi (with Lami-Starnuti (PSLI) and Bozzi (PLI)) aimed at reducing the regional system's power to a "facoltà legislativa di integrazione" and triggered off arguments similar to those which had taken place in the second subcommission.(51) However, before the debate had proceeded very far Togliatti himself called into question the entire regional project by presenting a motion to the effect that it should be completely revised.(52) In support of the motion, Togliatti argued that the fears which the Communists had earlier expressed about regional autonomy would materialise through the proposed project which was characterised by,

"un complesso di norme, che, lunghi dall'essere coerenti, sono, anzi, contraddittorie ed alcune volte vano persino...a cadere nel ridicolo."

The reason for this, he said, (echoing Laconi's earlier comments) was that the regional project was the result of a compromise between two different conceptions, one of federalism and the other of administrative decentralisation. This was not a compromise of principles (which could not be found) but of formulas from which "si è spostato da una parte

o dall'altra, a seconda delle vicende delle presenze nella sottocommissione." This had led to individual decisions being taken with little regard for the overall structure. Having claimed that the regional system was a compromise between two extremes, Togliatti then declared that there was a 'fundamental defect' in the project - "vi rimangono profonde le tracce del federalismo mentre non esiste il decentramento":

"... /Ritengo/ ... inaccettabile il progetto, poichè con esso non vi è decentramento ma si crea un'altra istanza, senza sopprimere nessuna di quelle precedenti, si crea l'istanza legislazione subordinata, vastissima: si crea il vero staterello federale"
(my emphasis)

Consequently, he argued, the system drawn up would exacerbate the plight of the Mezzogiorno and impede agricultural reform; it would overload the administrative apparatus; the vague norms concerning financial autonomy had the traces of a 'regional economy'; the overall effect would be to frustrate the raising of the general level of the economy and to threaten national unity.(53) His motion recognised the necessity of "un ampio decentramento amministrativo, ... più ampio sviluppo delle autonomie locali", and "un regime di ampia autonomia per la Sicilia, la Sardegna e le zone mistilingui", but was opposed to the "elementi anche indiretti e attenuati di federalismo" which had been introduced into the Constitution. Thus,

"la creazione dell'ente Regione dovrà essere fatta attenendosi a questa direttiva e in questo senso debbono essere riveduti gli articoli relativi alle autonomie locali."(54)

The significance of Togliatti's argument was that it was basically the same as that used by Laconi earlier in defence of his own, more specific amendment (removing the regional system's legislative power).(55) Indeed, Togliatti, at the beginning of his speech, associated himself with Laconi.(56) Laconi had pointed out the unpropitious nature of the proposed system and related its dangers directly to articles 3 and 4: the constitutional norms, national interests and juridical order of the State which served as limits on the regional system's legislative power were, he had said, no more than those imposed on the State's legislative power. Hence,

"il sistema proposta si andrebbe verso una Costituzione federale dello Stato, creando inoltre un enorme appesantimento della burocrazia."(57)

Togliatti, while listing the effects of the 'federal elements' was, nevertheless, more reticent about specifying the symptoms except that because wide-ranging regional legislative powers had been granted, a 'federal State' had been created. This linking of federalism to regional legislative autonomy, of course, was in keeping with the party's pre-Assembly declarations and was emphasised the day

after the voting on the two Communist motions by L'Unità whose front page declared, "Si lavoro a danno dell'unità nazionale. Hanno vinto i federalisti: Potere legislativo alla regione."(58) Thus, for Togliatti, (apart from a reference to the vagueness of the article on financial autonomy and to the fact that forbidding regional import and export duties was indicative of a federal State) the 'federal elements' he wanted removed amounted to precisely those which Laconi's motion aimed at removing: regional legislative power.(59)

. If this were the case (i.e. that the two Communist motions were essentially the same), it would seem that Togliatti's motion was a tactical manoeuvre to increase the chances of the removal of legislative power (otherwise there was little point in the presentation of his motion because Laconi's was, of the two, the one most likely to be accepted). In this way, the two motions, rather than revealing dissent within the Communist line, represented an insidious 'raising of the stakes' (either planned or impromptu on the part of Togliatti) but with the retention of the same fundamental objective: the Communists were prepared to sacrifice the entire regional system rather than accept a system based on legislative autonomy (it was unlikely that the Commission would have time to discuss all the articles again as Togliatti's motion implied); in comparison to this, Laconi's motion appeared more moderate and as a form of compromise: the

Communists would save the system if regional legislative power was removed (which, on close analysis, seems to be precisely the objective of Togliatti's motion). The assumption was that the borderline voters, having rejected Togliatti's more extreme sounding motion, might feel more inclined to support Laconi's.

If this was a tactical move by Togliatti it came very close to succeeding. His own motion was, indeed, rejected by a solid margin, only a part of the recently split Socialist camp following the Communist lead.(60) The vote on the amendment of Laconi, Bozzi and Lami Starnuti was, however, much closer, and although it was defeated by three votes the result did not reflect the exact alignment within the Commission. Of 54 members present 51 participated in the vote (i.e. either voted or abstained). Two of the non-participants were Communists (Nobile and Noce Teresa) and the third, the Socialist Boccioni, had already voted for the Laconi/Conti amendment presented in the Second Subcommittee which had aimed at reducing the regional system's legislative power to one of 'integration'. Finally, of the two abstentions in the vote, one, Colitto, had declared his approval of the Laconi amendment during the debate and would later speak against the regional system in the debate in the Assembly. Thus, in theory at least, Laconi's amendment could have passed.(61) Had it done so the Communists and others would have been able to go

to the debate in the Assembly in a stronger position, since it would have been then the task of the devolutionists to change the drafted text. The greater significance of the vote, however, was that it simply indicated that the issue, far from being resolved, had once again been postponed, this time to be debated outside the committee 'womb' by the only body which could reach a definitive decision, the Constituent Assembly. (62)

. Attempting to Break the Devolutionary Impetus

To summarise the PCI's position in the Constitutional Commissions, it can be said that, when free of the political and social environment and of the 'luxury' of affirming principles, the party's centralist ethos was fully revealed. This resulted in a defensive and political approach in the Constitutional Commissions to the question of regional devolution. This approach depended more on opposing the conceptions of others than on promoting the party's own text, and tended to reduce the Commission's work to a form of political struggle over the issue of regional legislative power, tactical moves consequently playing an important part.

The party's tactics consisted of firstly, successive attempts to remove the regional system's legislative power through reducing it to an arbitrary 'legislative' power which it called a 'legislative power of integration' and secondly,

when this failed, successive attempts to render the system's autonomy ineffective through reducing the policy areas to be allocated to the system's jurisdiction and changing the remainder of the articles in the project on which regional autonomy was dependent. Apart from the Monarchists, the PCI was the most anti-regionalist party on the Commission.(63) The party's policy resembled a desperate rearguard action against the devolutionary tendencies which had appeared in the post-war political and social climate.

The defensive nature of the party's approach was most forcefully illustrated in the selection of Umberto Nobile to represent it on the second subcommission. A former general and an independent elected on the PCI list, Nobile was not only anti-devolutionist but anti-regionalist in the narrowest sense i.e. he did not consider the creation of an institution at the regional level necessary because the administrative decentralisation which the country required could be carried out at the level of the provinces and the comunes. That he was selected to represent a party committed to the creation of a regional system founded on 'legislative powers of integration' and administrative powers in the name of greater democracy and efficiency would seem to suggest that Togliatti simply wanted to strengthen the anti-devolutionist cause: the presentation of a line that was more extreme than other Communist contributions would 'moderate' the anti-devolutionist nature

of the latter in the perception of the subcommission's members. Whatever the reason, Nobile's presence did not lend credence to the PCI's putative commitment to some form of regional decentralisation.(64) The party's defensive posture was also illustrated in the weakness and implausibility of its arguments, weaknesses which the devolutionists could easily exploit. Firstly, Togliatti's argument was, in a way, self-contradictory: the regional system was a confused complex of norms, the result of a compromise between two extremes, but at the same time a true 'federal State' had been created. The devolutionists accepted the compromise argument but indicated that if there was a lack of harmony in the project it was due to the abandonment by one part of the subcommission (i.e. the Communists and others) of the original agreement reached in the preliminary debate.(65) With respect to the 'federal State' argument, the PCI was on even weaker ground. While anti-federalist arguments may have proved useful before the convening of the Constituent Assembly in provoking fears that the proposals of others hid federalist ambitions, these arguments would have less effect after the project had been drafted unless they stood up to the test. In short, it did not prove a difficult task for the devolutionists to show that the beast they had created could hardly be called federal.(66) In addition to this, the main assumption on which the Communist

position was based was inconsistent. Regional autonomy, it was claimed, was an innovation,

"che non risponde affatto al sentimento popolare italiano e che non trova la sua ragione in una situazione politica, sociale, ed economica quale è quella attuale dell'Italia."

This was because the motivations which lay behind traditional regionalists such as Minghetti, Mazzini and Cattaneo were no longer valid now that State national unity had been realised (their arguments had been pre-Unification). Nevertheless, four regions had valid claims for regional autonomy because of their pressing political, social and economic needs which had resulted largely from their having been cut off from the formative process of national unity.(67) This, of course, failed to explain for the devolutionists why the Mezzogiorno, of which two of those regions were a part, should remain under a centralised regime. The implication was that the PCI's recognition of autonomy for the island regions was no more than an acceptance of a fait accompli.(68) Finally, the implausibility of the Communist position was emphasized by the simultaneous claim that regionally autonomous governments would provide outposts for reactionaries to impede the implementation of the popular will. On the one hand, this failed to account for the autonomy being granted to the special statute regions and, on the

other, overlooked the fact that the opposition to the devolutionists' proposals in the Constituent Assembly constituted a curious alliance between the extreme Left and the Right.

What were the origins of the negative approach adopted by the PCI towards the issue of regional devolution in the Constitutional commissions?

The Origins of the Centralised State in the Communist analysis

In one sense it could be argued that the approach was a reflection or natural consequence of the party's attitude towards institutional questions in general during this period (as outlined in Chapter One). Firstly, the party refused to take an a priori position regarding the organisational structure of the State; such a position was dependent on the tasks at hand and was subject to change according to the 'objective situation'. Secondly, the organisational form of the State seemed to be of secondary importance within the party's strategic schema: it was the Constitution's nature as a pact between the progressive forces of Italian society around a programme of social and economic reform which would be the blueprint of progressive democracy and which would raise it beyond the traditional Western conception of democracy. This position was reflected in the absence of a comprehensive programme of institutional reform. There was a

tendency towards an acceptance of the representative State tout court with little consideration of the different paradigms of representative government in the West. As a consequence, it could be argued, the party was more prone to external influences and internal party pressures in the formulation of its position on an issue such as regional devolution. This led to the ambivalence in the party's early proposals and, when forced to draft a text, the retreat to an essentially defensive, tactical position in the absence of a concrete programme of its own; and further, a position which saw the party in considerable disarray. Hence, there was the rapid shift from a position which supported regional devolution (through the support of the Piccioni motion in the preliminary debate) to one which not only rejected regional devolution but which was prepared to sacrifice the entire project on the issue.

This kind of interpretation has been an important means of supporting the thesis of the later 'overnight transition' of the PCI from centralists into devolutionists (which will be dealt with in Chapter Four).(69) At this point it should be qualified by the solidarity of the party in general once the constitutional debates began. One of the distinguishing features of the PCI in comparison with most other parties was the existence of a 'party line' with respect to the Constitution. This was largely because of the personal imprint

of Togliatti on almost all of the PCI's constitutional work. Terracini, a party activist during the period, has stated that each initiative on the part of the Communist group was stamped with Togliatti's advice, largely because the leadership did not have many party members at its disposal who were knowledgeable about the matters under discussion.(70) If the second subcommission was not an exception to this rule it is difficult to believe that the appointment of Nobile and the approval of Piccioni's motion were not tactical manouevres on the part of Togliatti. In other words, if the party representatives took a defensive stance on the second subcommission it was at the behest of Togliatti. This is further corroborated by the similarity in the position taken by Togliatti himself on the Commission of 75.

This does not, of course, preclude the possibility that it was precisely the ambiguous nature of Togliatti's strategy which was at the root of the party's defensive position (i.e. a party line did not really exist with regard to institutions). This being said, it should be stressed that there was a distinct difference between the party's pre-Assembly position and that which emerged during the work of the commissions. If the position were negative or defensive it was not, after the preliminary debate, ambivalent about the crucial issue of regional legislative power. Indeed, the only exception to party unity was, as has been seen, Nobile who was

more centralist than the official party line. In other words, diverse pressures are not sufficient to explain the essentially centralist position adopted once the work of the Constituent Assembly began.

Finally, this does not rule out the possibility that the PCI's centralist position was tactical in the sense of keeping open its options on the distribution of territorial power. Nonetheless, this fails to place the rejection of regional devolution within the context of any long-term strategic assumptions on which the PCI would have been working as a basis for gaining power in the post-war period. If the originality of the progressive democratic period was the enshrinement of its principles in the Constitution, the PCI, at some point, had to make certain assumptions and take certain decisions in the long-term. It follows that it is important to view the rejection of regional devolution firstly, against the PCI's declared strategic goals to identify the nature of the rejection; and secondly, against the party's (implicit or explicit) strategy for power to identify the possible reasons for the rejection. The first of these (the envisaged nature of centre-periphery relations within 'progressive democracy') emerged more clearly in the PCI's response to the Commission of 75's overall project in the preliminary debate in the Constituent Assembly. The second

(centralisation and the party's strategy for power) will subsequently be assessed.

Regional Devolution and Progressive Democracy: the Constituent Assembly's general debate on the Commission of 75's Constitutional Project (4 March - 12 March 1947)

In responding to the overall Constitutional project, the PCI finally inserted its position on the territorial distribution of power within the State into its general strategic perspective (as outlined in Chapter One). In doing so, it quickly became evident that the centralised State formed a crucial part of the party's strategic analysis.

It will be recalled that, in the Communist perception, the norms in the Constitution had to respond to three fundamental needs: liberty and popular sovereignty, national unity, and social and economic progress, these needs being inextricably linked (see Chapter One). The significance of regional devolution to each of these (in the presentation of the Communist position) will be briefly analysed.

The Communist definition of popular sovereignty was that,

"ogni organo e ogni potere deve avere il suo fondamento, la sua origine nel popolo o deve essere controllato dal popolo o da quegli organi che nel popolo trovano la loro radice."(71)

Or, more specifically,

"Bisogna lasciare che la volontà popolare si possa esprimere attraverso gli istituti parlamentari, attraverso le istituzioni, sulla base costituzionale."(72)

As argued in Chapter One, the PCI claimed that this was not demonstrative of a 'liberal-democratic' form of commitment to the fundamental principle behind the Western democratic tradition because of the accompanying rejection of parliamentary institutions as values per se (the applicability or inapplicability of which is crucial to the argument of this chapter and which will be dealt with shortly). Of relevance at this point is that 'adhering' (in whatever way) to the principle of parliamentary sovereignty would not necessarily preclude the inclusion in the State structure of the type of devolved powers envisaged in the Constitutional project. Indeed, as the defenders of the project had constantly pleaded, the nature of, and limitation on, regional autonomy in their proposals left the national Parliament still clearly sovereign. For the PCI, however, popular sovereignty had to be expressed "nel modo più diretto", and this had significant implications:

"...strumento immediato di questa volontà /popolare/ e depositario della sovranità popolare è unicamente il Parlamento, che esercita la funzione legislativa."(73) (my emphasis)

For the PCI, "il regime democratico più avanzato, il più lucido, quello che traducesse in un modo più semplice e schietto la volontà popolare" was that in which the national Parliament (in the form of one House) was the expression not only of popular sovereignty, but possessed legislative sovereignty as well i.e. Parliament was not just to have the final say in the decision-making process but the only say. Anything which threatened this 'legislative monopoly' or impeded the power emanating from it, posed a threat to popular sovereignty.(74) Consequently, in the project which had been drafted, the party came out against such aspects as the parliamentary legislative process, which was described as "pesante e farraginoso", against 'spurious bicameralism' as well as regional legislative autonomy. These aspects of the project were perceived as a,

"tendenza a limitare, a correggere a bilanciare l'azione popolare, tendenza che suona sfiducia nel popolo e nei suoi organi rappresentativi, la tendenza a limitare l'azione delle istanze democratiche, a frenarla, a disperderla nel tempo, ad impedire cioè che la democrazia diventi qualche cosa di efficiente, qualche cosa di decisivo nella vita del Paese, a togliere cioè allo Stato democratico la capacità di tradurre in atto la volontà popolare."(75) (my emphasis)

Regional autonomy specifically concerned the creation of "un organismo predeterminante contrapposto allo Stato" which would amount to "uno strumento di remora alla volontà popolare." This interpretation of popular sovereignty stemmed from the second, constitutional need: national unity.

National unity had two facets: moral and political. The former concerned unity between the Church and the State as enshrined in the inclusion of the Lateran Pacts in the Constitution, while the latter involved unity between political forces in the reconstruction of the State and unity between political structures, both of which popular sovereignty had to provide for. It was the proposed regional system which threatened this unity more than any other aspect of the Constitutional project. Laconi argued that granting regional governments three different types of legislative power ('exclusive', 'concurrent', and 'integrationist'), rather than enhancing popular control over the State, amounted to the

"frazionamento del potere legislativo,
al disgregamento dell'unità organica
del nostro Paese."(76)

It was the 'fragmentation' of State legislative power which was perceived as the main danger to national unity and this was equally a threat to the third constitutional need: the country's social and economic progress.

Italy was viewed as being a fragmented country whose regions differed greatly in their levels of development. Some regions were viewed as ready for reform of a socialist nature, while others had not yet developed beyond a feudalistic stage.(77) It was in this situation that the devolution of significant powers in areas such as agriculture was a danger to the overall national development of the country. Indeed, the spirit with which the devolutionists presented their arguments (with references to regional markets, ports, hinterlands, outlets to the sea etc.) coupled with the inclusion of the norm preventing inter-regional transit duties, confirmed, for Togliatti, that the orientation of the regional system was substantially federal.(78)

The above arguments had considerable strategic and theoretic implications for the PCI's position on regional autonomy which, until then, had not been apparent in its rhetoric. As argued in Chapter One, while the most significant departure from Marxist-Leninist doctrine of the idea of 'progressive democracy' was its use of the existing institutional framework as a means of advancing towards socialism, the PCI emphasised that this was not because of any inherent value in those institutions. Party rhetoric constantly emphasized the 'peculiarity' of the Italian situation: a twenty year period of Fascism had brought the working class, with the Resistance movement at its head, to a

position where it was able to become the new leading class at the head of a new political and social bloc committed to a vast programme of social and economic reform. The inclusion in the Constitution of a number of social rights and a programmatic commitment to reform was to be the concrete evidence of this situation. It was precisely this which allowed the existing bourgeois institutional framework to be used. The implication was that the institutional framework of the new State was of secondary importance, this being corroborated through the party's refusal to take an a priori view of concepts such as regional autonomy. Institutions were simply instrumental to the tasks at hand and subject, therefore, to change.

The presentation of this view was understandable: it would have been politically disastrous to have extolled the virtues of bourgeois democracy when one of the fundamental aspects of the party's credibility with its militants was the link to the Soviet Union. Yet this tended to belie the underlying significance of the form of the State. Firstly, if the 'originality' of the idea of 'progressive democracy' lay in the Constitution's nature as a pact between the progressive forces of Italian society based on a programme of advanced social and economic reform, the realisation of this programme was ultimately dependent on the exercise of popular sovereignty, which involved fundamental choices concerning the

organisation of the State. Togliatti made this clear in his speech on the constitutional project: social and economic progress was declared as being dependent on both the triumph of the popular will and the maintenance of national unity; the latter, however, was dependent on the exercise of popular sovereignty which was concerned with the democratic organisation of the State.(79) Consequently, the structure of the State through which popular sovereignty was exercised was declared to be not secondary but paramount in the Communist conception of the constitution:

"La garanzia suprema e decisiva che il nostro paese si orienterà realmente sulla strada di un rinnovamento sociale sta nella democraticità assoluta dell'ordinamento dello Stato, sta nella partecipazione effettiva di tutti i lavoratori ... alla vita sociale, economica, politica del paese; sta nel fatto che tutto l'ordinamento dello Stato poggia sul principio della sovranità popolare."(80) (my emphasis)

It seemed, therefore, that the activation of the factors necessary to take the constitutional conception beyond a bourgeois one depended, ultimately, on the 'bourgeois' State apparatus through which popular sovereignty would be exercised. If this seemed to contradict earlier claims about the significance of the organisation of the State, and to drift towards a liberal-democratic approach to the question, the 'escape' was in the circularity of the argument: as seen,

the PCI's very definition of popular sovereignty was determined by the need for national unity (and social and economic progress). Even given that the structure of the State was of primary importance, that structure was not determined by an abstract theory of democracy but simply by the needs of national unity and social and economic progress. This was the significance of Togliatti's comment that even the structure of the State was dependent on national unity and of his refusal to take an a priori view on institutions. National unity was the foundation stone on which the entire edifice of progressive democracy rested. Nevertheless, this introduced a second, more profound, implication.

If the PCI claimed that its views on the structure of the State, and consequently on such aspects as the distribution of power between centre and periphery, were not a priori views, the fact was that its overall strategy was based on very similar claims: progressive democracy amounted to a refutation that there existed an a priori road to socialism. International experience, Togliatti noted, had shown that under the existing conditions of world class struggle 'new roads' to Socialism could be found which would be different to the road pursued by the working class in the Soviet Union. It was, therefore, the PCI's task to find its 'own road' based on the particular traditions and conditions of Italy.(81) If, then, progressive democracy was based on conditions peculiar

to Italy in that period it nonetheless had a distinct 'permanence' to it. It would be effective for the coming historical period, creating the conditions necessary for a transformation to socialism (although what form that transformation would take was not specified). Togliatti himself stressed that the needs which the constitutional norms had to provide for (liberal and popular sovereignty, national unity and social and economic progress) were not,

"qualcosa di transitorio, ma sono esigenze permanenti e concrete, corrispondenti alla situazione storica ben determinata che sta davanti a noi."(82)

In short, since the form of the new State was determined by the same conditions as the overall strategy itself (the guiding condition being national unity) the institutional choices made were as 'permanent' as the 'permanence' of the strategy itself (in the party's own strategic perspective). If national unity collapsed so, too, did progressive democracy in its entirety. This had considerable implications for the apparent 'conditional' rejection of organisational aspects of the State, such as regional devolution. The PCI seemed to be transposing the Marxist approach to the form of the State during the dictatorship of the proletariat (i.e. the form of the State could vary) to an intermediate democratic phase, with the aim

of retaining the image of the purely instrumental value of the State. However, since Marx was referring to the situation after the revolutionary destruction of the representative State, the transposition of the law to a situation before the overthrow of the capitalist State meant that decisions on the form of the State had the same permanence (in the party's strategic perspective) as those made by liberal-democrats: both were based on a theory of democracy, the difference being that one was a theory of democracy which led to socialism.

As a result, the apparently 'conditional' nature of the PCI's rejection of regional legislative autonomy (as implied in its statements in the pre-Assembly period and in the preliminary debate in the second subcommission), and its consequent tactical stance were both open to question. The stress had always been placed on economic grounds and on the needs of national reconstruction, democratic grounds having been shunned for the most part since these, in effect, involved an a priori view of regional autonomy. Yet, seen in the light of firstly, the underlying importance of the form of the State and secondly, the permanence of the party's constitutional ideas and strategy, the rejection was hardly 'conditional': hand in hand with national unity and social and economic reconstruction went the creation of a State organised on the principle of popular sovereignty. This would entail the destruction of the political and social roots of Fascism and

the commencement of the progressive democratic period. This would be based on a new political and social 'bloc' which would lead towards the pre-conditions necessary for a transformation to socialism. The party had made its choice: if socialism was to be achieved through Western democratic means in Italy, regional autonomy was to have no role in the process. Did this not amount to a rejection of regional autonomy as an end in itself?

If the above arguments suggest that the rejection of regional autonomy was more than a tactical manoeuvre, they do not imply a rejection on theoretical or ideological grounds. A rejection on these grounds existed only in so far as the overall strategy itself was theoretically based and, as noted in Chapter One, this did not go beyond claims for the 'historical peculiarity' of the Italian situation. Yet, if one accepts that, for Togliatti, progressive democracy represented more than just a post-war tactical manoeuvre, the structure of the future representative State was a crucial part of his analysis, and the decisions made amounted to long-term ones within his strategic perspective. This raises the question of the underlying nature of the PCI's strategy for power during this period. Why did the PCI regard a dispersion of power between centre and periphery as being inimical to this strategy?

Regional Devolution and the PCI's Strategy for Power

There are two possible interpretations of the PCI's strategic rejection of regional devolution. The first is that the PCI's strategy was far less 'Gramscian' than its rhetoric implied. The shift from earlier ambiguity regarding regional devolution to a centralist position represented an abandonment of the Resistance strategy (which had been predicated on infiltrating every 'crease' of Italian society through the exploitation of Italy's deep-rooted territorial divisions), in favour of a strategy which might be described as 'constitutional jacobinism': that is, a purely electoral strategy which depended on a victory of the Left in the national elections and the subsequent formation of a government by the PCI and the PSI.

This optimistic estimation of the party's ability to seize control of the representative State seemed conducive to a straightforward transposition of the party's ideological heritage to its electoral strategy. This heritage included the Marxist theory of the State (which, although maintaining that the form of the State could vary under the dictatorship of the proletariat suggested the need for a strong centralised State in order to carry out extensive planning in the face of remnants of the bourgeois order); the influence of the Soviet model (which had put into practice the Marxist position); and

the party's own tackling of the issue in the period between 1921 and 1935.

The second interpretation is that the shift from ambiguity to an outright centralist position, far from representing an abandonment of the Resistance's 'rooting strategy', was, in fact, the natural development of the strategy, which occurred as a result of both its success and a rather optimistic interpretation (by Togliatti) of Italian society. If the Resistance and the CLN strategy had been predicated on the notion of a 'revolution from below', relying chiefly on a territorial dispersion of its forces and emerging institutions of government, the essential reason for this was that the forces implementing it were excluded from political power and were seeking to oust the forces which had maintained power through a centralised bureaucratic dictatorship. As argued in Chapter Two, the fragmented and diversified nature of Italian society had always tended to generate a centralised response from groups in the ruling 'area' and a decentralised response from minority groups outside the ruling 'area'; the latter seeing sub-national institutions as an effective means by which their ideologies might gain a degree of acceptability in society.

As a consequence, the defeat of the Fascist movement and of the German occupying armies led to an interpretation of Italian society which was largely optimistic, and one on which

the nature of progressive democracy and its State form became heavily based. It is easy to forget that before 1944 the DC had never been a ruling party, and thus Italy emerged from a twenty year old Fascist dictatorship with an array of democratic parties contending for office. While Togliatti always recognised the continued strength and influence of Catholicism and the Right in Italian society, he saw this as being matched or dominated by the existence of a new secular ideology or culture which was neither 'socialist' nor 'bourgeois'. but 'progressive', and one which had emerged as a result of the Fascist experience and was symbolised by the unity of all democratic forces. It was this ideology which Togliatti could see the PCI capturing and, through which, gaining the hegemony over society essential for a gradual transformation to a socialist society. This interpretation did not emerge solely from the success of the Resistance, but from the further gains it led to: the abolition of the monarchy, the formation of the tri-partite coalition and its commitment to the renovation of Italy, and the 40 per cent of the vote gained by the Unity of Action Pact in the 1946 elections. Coupled with these factors was the apparent weakness of Italian capitalism, which had been severely dislocated and compromised.(83)

It might be argued, therefore, that the strategy was predicated less on a victory of the Left in the national

elections, than on the reflection at a political level of the new progressive sector of Italian society. This would be through the continuation of the government of national unity within which the PCI's battle for hegemony would take place. Furthermore, it might be claimed that it was this which determined Togliatti's conception of the distribution of power between centre and periphery within the new State. The PCI, as potential leaders of the new dominant ideology confronted with the persistence, in a marginalised form, of the old defeated ideologies, would be acting contrary to its own interests by institutionally dispersing power within a diversified and fragmented society. This would inevitably provide effective outposts where those ideologies would persist and these would impede the development of the PCI's own hegemony. This was a lesson of history which, as seen in Chapter Two, even the Fascist experience exemplified.

Indeed, this was corroborated by the experience of the CLNs as the political situation became more stable. For the PCI, as noted in Chapter Two, one of the main aims of the continued existence of the CLNs was the purge of previous personnel at local level. However, after the fall of the Parri government one of the first areas in which the political purge came to a halt was the local authorities.(84) At the same time, the fall of the Parri government marked the first step in what has been described as the 'Southern System' - the

dominance of the old landowning class in the Mezzogiorno.(85) These may have been important factors behind the final abandonment of support for the CLNs as potential institutions of the future State, and the reinforcement of the party's main goal (the convocation of the Constituent Assembly). And they also indicated that the remnants of the old reactionary order would probably persist largely on a territorial basis in those parts of the political system which were beyond the direct influence of the main forces of government and in areas where the progressive forces were likely to be weak (i.e. essentially in the South).

In short, it could be argued that Togliatti's conception of the correct distribution of power between centre and periphery in the new State was perfectly in keeping with his interpretation of Italian society and the basic principles which had determined party strategy since the beginning of the Resistance.

The above interpretations of the nature of the PCI's strategy for power in relation to the territorial distribution of power are important, since they indicate the apparent conditions under which the PCI's institutional choices were made: a change in those conditions would, therefore, be necessary to cause a change in those choices. Certainly, in March 1947, the conditions were such that the PCI's rejection of the proposed regional project seemed clear.(86) The irony

of the party's position, however, was that it was precisely the debate on the organisation of the State which had demonstrated the precariousness of progressive democracy's founding principle: national unity. And it was precisely this principle which collapsed just before the final debate on the regional system, resulting in the forging of the new State in drastically changed political circumstances.

* * * * *

Chapter Four

Forging the Unitary Decentralised State: a Communist

'U-Turn'? (May-June 1947)

"... il garantismo, ch'era stato sin qui l'argomento fondamentale del regionalismo della DC, viene assunto senz'altro dal PCI..." "...è una vicenda che merita qualche approfondimento di più..." (Ettore Rotelli)(1)

"... soltanto lentamente, soltanto fra il 1947 comincia ad affermarsi nel Partito Comunista un orientamento favorevole non solo alle Regioni a statuto speciale, ma anche alle Regioni a statuto ordinario. Come avviene questo? Su questo punto non c'è ancora una documentazione sufficiente." (Ernesto Ragionieri)(2)

On 12 May 1947, amidst an increasingly worsening economic situation, De Gasperi resigned and opened a new government crisis. Although this did not mean the immediate expulsion of the forces of the Left from government it soon became clear that the Christian Democrats, under pressure from the Church and the United States (and with the Peace Treaty and the Lateran Pacts both having been signed), did not envisage a reformulation of the tri-partite coalition.(3) After the failures of both Nitti and Orlando to form governments, the task was returned to De Gasperi on 24 May.

A sitting held the day before, about the Assembly's procedure of work on the Constitution, revealed the extent to which some of the political parties felt that this new government crisis might influence the debate on the regional system. The first part of the Constitution having been drawn up, the original arrangement was that the Assembly would continue with the second part, beginning with the regional system because this matter was regarded as affecting all others. However, the degree of dissension over the regional system had already become apparent in the 'Committee of 18'

(which was the co-ordinating committee representing the Commission of the 75 and its Constitutional project in the Assembly) with the early announcements of amendments which threatened either to cancel Title V of the Constitution or to postpone the whole question to the future National Assembly.(4) As a result, the devolutionists, and in particular the Christian Democrats, argued for a postponement of the discussion on the regional system either by dealing with a less contentious issue first, such as the magistrature or constitutional guarantees, or by simply postponing the Assembly's constitutional work. Piccioni argued that the 'psychological condition' of the Assembly was not conducive to tackling a fundamental issue such as the regional system, and that the Committee of 18 should be given more time to examine the amendments presented to see if a new formulation could be worked out. This would also help to dispel some of the tension existing in the Assembly.(5) The anti-devolutionists, meanwhile, were opposed to any form of postponement because of the regional system's overall impact on the constitutional project and some were even against a postponement of the Assembly's work in general, Togliatti and Grassi calling for the immediate commencement of the debate on the regional system.(6)

This showed that there was still no clear indication as to which way the voting on the basic questions concerning the

regional system would go, and showed the degree of bargaining which had already begun in the Committee of 18 and which would be necessary to resolve those questions i.e. those of legislative autonomy and of the creation of a regional institution in the Constitution. It also showed that the various political groups perceived the developing political situation as having a potential influence on the outcome of the debate. Certainly, the anti-devolutionists seemed more optimistic about winning the crucial votes in the existing unstable situation.

Eventually, Piccioni's suggestion that the Assembly adjourn its work until 27 May was accepted. This was, by chance, the day on which De Gasperi announced the formation of a government that would exclude the Left. This was finalised on 30 May with the creation of a government consisting of Christian Democrats, two Liberals and four independents. The confidence debate on the Government took place between 9 and 21 June, the result being approval by a majority of 43 votes. The debate on the regional system ran from 27 May to 22 July, with two additional sittings in October and one in December. Thus, the two debates overlapped, and this increased the possibility of one influencing the outcome of the other. Of note in this respect is that, although the new government had to be ratified by the Assembly, it seemed obvious, after 30 May, that De Gasperi had announced his government only after

he was certain of a majority in the confidence vote. The confidence debate, therefore, did not effectively amount to a threat to the government and, consequently, the political situation began to be more stable, but in an atmosphere which was characterised by increasing hostility between the main political forces.(7)

This chapter assesses the effect of the changing political situation on the debate on the regional system in the Constituent Assembly during the important period between May and July 1947 when the crucial decisions relating to regional legislative autonomy were made. It is this period (and specifically 12 June) that is the subject of a 'u-turn' made by the PCI on the issue of regional devolution, as claimed by Ettore Rotelli and other authors, this 'u-turn' apparently having been decisive to the incorporation in the Constitution of a system of legislatively autonomous regional governments.(8) Through a close analysis of the debate it is shown firstly, that there was no change in the PCI's long-term position on regional devolution (as outlined in Chapters Two and Three) and secondly, how Rotelli and others misinterpreted the debate. Finally, these arguments are supported by an analysis of the reasons or assumptions behind Rotelli's and others' arguments which, it is claimed, are open to question. The conclusion drawn is that the PCI did not begin to change position on the issue of regional devolution until after the

crucial votes on regional legislative autonomy had taken place. The exact nature and timing of this change will be the subject of Chapter Five.

The Debate on Regional Legislative Autonomy
in the Constituent Assembly

If the main reason for postponing the Assembly's work had been to try and find a wider range of agreement on the regional system, the degree of failure was evident at the opening of the debate when the Liberal Rubilli, the Socialist Nobili Tito Oro and the Communist Nobile presented motions to remove Title V from the Constitution. Rubilli's motion was declared to have priority over the others and with the commencement of the debate on this issue the fundamental question was raised again: whether or not to incorporate some kind of regional system in the Constitution.

The Communist contribution to this discussion was provided by Gullo, Assennato and Nobile.(9) Nobile's was intended specifically to defend his own motion, the purpose of which, he stated, was to avoid a long debate on an unimportant question, through postponing the entire question to the future Assembly. At the same time he felt that a longer debate on the issue would bury it completely, because regionalism was a pathological phenomenon linked to the post-war turmoil. Having stated this, the remainder of his speech centred on a critique

of the proposed regional project, this critique being similar to those of Assenato and Gullo: that historically the centralised State was not responsible for the plight of the Mezzogiorno and that the introduction of regional autonomy would impede future attempts by the State to remedy the situation, since it would contribute to the maintenance of the old ruling class which was wedded to the status quo.

If Nobile's position was fairly clear, through the presentation of his own motion, the speeches of the other two members left the PCI's position unclear, mainly because they amounted to a critique of Title V as a whole (as drawn up by the Commission of the 75) rather than being directed specifically to Rubilli's motion. This tended to confuse the essential issue, in that no matter what their views were on the drafted project, the first decision that had to be taken was on the subject raised by Rubilli: whether or not to abolish Title V from the Constitution thus ruling out (at least so far as the Constituent Assembly was concerned) the inclusion of any regional system in the Constitution. If the motion was passed the Constituent Assembly's task was over as far as regionalism was concerned; if it was rejected then the basic principle of acceptance of the creation of a constitutionally defined regional system had been accepted and the exact nature of the regional institution had to be defined (fundamentally, this involved the choice between a purely

administrative institution or one endowed with legislative autonomy). Even if Rubilli's motion, calling for the abolition of Title V as drawn up by the Commission of 75, was rejected this did not mean that Title V as drafted by the Commission was automatically accepted.

Thus, the Communist critique, when focusing on the "nuova istituzione, così come progettata", "come ente politico"(10) (this being almost without exception a critique of the regional system being endowed with 'exclusive' and 'concurrent' legislative powers), had a distinctive anti-devolutionist tone but not necessarily an anti-regionalist tone: there was no specific indication as to how the party would vote on Rubilli's motion. Gullo's sole anxiety concerned the legislative power granted to the regional system in the constitutional project which made the regional institution an "ente politico" and pushed the system dangerously close to federalism. He contended that there were arguments for administrative decentralisation which he did not want to repeat, and that the arguments against financial and legislative autonomy did not rule out the fact that, "noi siamo, da un punto di vista puramente amministrativo, per la più larga forma di autogoverno locale" which would be achieved through widening the comune's powers and abolishing the prefectural system.(11) Assenato's speech was based

exclusively on the project which had been drafted and how it would effect the Mezzogiorno.

In short, the rejection of regional devolution was not accompanied by any clear statement on the party's view of the value of a regional institution per se. The party's last position on the matter (in the Commission of 75) was that it had supported the creation of a regional system endowed with 'legislative powers of integration' (which the devolutionists claimed amounted to little more than a form of administrative decentralisation), yet, at the same time, it had been prepared to sacrifice the entire project if it meant the realisation of a 'concurrent' or 'exclusive' form of legislative power. Nobile, however, had been against the creation of any regional institution (see Chapter Three). The vagueness and similarities of the three speeches seemed to suggest that the party was going to use the same tactical manoeuvre in the Assembly.

This was confirmed a few days later on 7 June when Ambrosini spoke for the Christian Democrats. His speech revealed the degree of dissension within the Committee of 18, not only between the devolutionists and the anti-devolutionists but among the devolutionists themselves. Ambrosini argued that during the work of the Second Subcommittee two basic theses had been presented, that of a 'power of integration' and that of an 'exclusive power' (with

a 'concurrent power' later being added between the two). In the Commission of 75, the latter formulation had predominated by a margin of only two votes, which indicated the degree of support existing for the former. ("Era una tesi regionalista, sebbene in grado diverso dall'altro"). However, on the project's presentation to the Assembly there now emerged a third, more extreme, thesis; that of completely abolishing Title V and postponing all decisions to the future Legislative Assembly. In this situation, Ambrosini continued, devolutionists such as Conti (who had presented a motion calling for an immediate examination of the individual articles of the regional project) longed for "la battaglia, al rischiare il tutto per tutto" i.e. they were confident enough with the present line-up of parties to risk a straight vote on Rubilli's motion. Others, however, were not prepared to risk such a battle, "purchè non trionfi la terza tesi, il rinvio, e la Regione non sia seppellita." Consequently,

"sembra che gli ultraregionalisti siano disposti a rinunciare alla competenza 'esclusiva'. Non è impossibile, anche se non sarà troppo facile. Mi auguro che si riesca per salvar la Regione."

If a compromise was not found the outcome would be either,

"rinvio e seppellimento ... o accettazione ... della tesi estrema ... con una maggioranza di pochissimi voti. La Regione uscirà da una

battaglia furiosa fra molto
malcontento a non sarà questa, io
credo, la via migliore per darle
vita."(12)

This speech reveals that, within the Committee of 18, the Communists and the Socialists had threatened to vote for Rubilli's motion (otherwise Ambrosini and others would not have been so concerned about a vote taking place). While such action did not numerically guarantee a rejection of Title V, the threat had been sufficient to cause re-thinking on the part of the devolutionists, some of whom were now prepared to compromise to find a formula which would guarantee the safe rejection of Rubilli's motion. The significant point was that the PCI was attempting to force the devolutionists to compromise on an issue which would be decided after the vote on Rubilli's motion. Ambrosini's response amounted to a declaration that if the Communists and Socialists voted against Rubilli's motion (thus guaranteeing its safe rejection), the devolutionists would subsequently renounce the form of 'exclusive power'. If, on the other hand, the Communists and Socialists voted for Rubilli's motion and it was still defeated the devolutionists would almost certainly press for "la tesi estrema", an 'exclusive' form of legislative power. The Communist response to this offer came almost immediately in the form of a motion presented by Grieco and Laconi which recognised the necessity of enacting,

"un ampio decentramento amministrativo democratico dello Stato, a mezzo della creazione dell'Ente Regione, avente facoltà legislativa di integrazione e di attuazione per le materia da stabilirsi, onde adattare alle condizioni locali le leggi della Repubblica..."

It further recognised the necessity of conserving, and strengthening the provinces and called for limiting Title V to affirming the constitutional principles of the regional institution,

"rinviando ad una legge speciale la regolamentazione delle funzioni del nuovo Ente e dei suoi rapporti con le Provincie, i Comuni e lo Stato."(13)

In defending the motion, Grieco reaffirmed the PCI's basic position on regional decentralisation before the party had begun its tactical manoeuvres. He argued that the PCI's motion provided for "un ampio decentramento amministrativo democratico dello Stato". This was not "un decentramento burocratico, ma un decentramento democratico, affidato ad organi elettivi locali...", which would favour

"lo sviluppo delle forze democratiche in Italia, di aiutare il crearsi di una nuova classe dirigente del Paese, attraverso l'esercizio più largo del sistema democratico nella pubblica amministrazione, mediante il quale il popolo sarà costretto a decidere non più solo nel campo ristretto delle funzioni comunali e provinciali, ma in un campo più vasto."(14)

Leaving aside the validity or invalidity of these claims, the significant point about the motion was that, taken at face-value, it prejudged the Communist vote on Rubilli's motion, in that it not only provided for the creation of a regional institution, but specified certain principles from which such an institution should be created. It followed that if the PCI were to act on its motion it would vote against Rubilli's motion, thus assuring the creation of a regional institution. Yet, the concern and bargaining within the Committee of 18 continued, indicating that the PCI was still prepared to vote for Rubilli's motion. The motion, therefore, should be seen as a rejection of Ambrosini's offer of the removal of 'exclusive power'. The Communists had, in effect, brought the bargaining that was taking place in the Committee of 18 onto the floor of the Assembly: they were presenting a motion which, under the constitutional debate procedure, explicitly rejected Rubilli's motion but on which they were not prepared to act unless the devolutionists were prepared to subsequently limit the regional system's legislative power to one of integration (by accepting the removal of concurrent as well as exclusive legislative power). This was why Grieco, in his speech, stressed that the validity of the proposal was not only in its content (see above) but also in its acceptability in the current political make up of the Assembly:

"...penso anch'io che l'Ente Regione può passare in questa Assemblea, alla

condizione che esso moderi le sue esigenze e si presenti come qualche cosa di possibile dinanzi alle popolazioni e si giustifichi come uno strumento utile della nuova democrazia italiana."(15)

The implication was that of the three theses listed by Ambrosini it was the Communist one which represented the best form of compromise because it was the one around which the greatest consensus could be built. This offer, in turn, was not acceptable to the devolutionists. In the following sitting, Riuni (the Chairman of the Commission of 75), defending the drafted project, said that the controversial point in the Committee of 18 remained "quello della potestà legislativa da attribuirsi alla Regione", and that a search for a consensus was still continuing.(16) At this stage the discussion closed and the Committee was given a final extra day to try to come to an agreement before the various motions were put to the vote.(17) This last attempt to reach an agreement failed, as Riuni explained on 12 June:

"I democristiani, i repubblicani, e gli altri più spinti autonomisti si sono dichiarati, nelle ultime adunanze del Comitato, disposti a rinunciare alla legislazione esclusiva, purchè si conservassero le altre due forme: quelle cioè della legislazione concorrente e di quella integrativa, cercando di farne una sola, in modo di andare al di là della pure integrazione, che appariva a qualcuno essere poco più di un regolamento."

The devolutionists, he noted, were not prepared to accept solely this third type of power, and therefore offered a,

"formula intermedia fra la legislazione concorrente e l'integrativa, ed in certo modo comprensiva di ambedue, nel senso che la Regione avrebbe potestà, in date materie, entro i limiti dei principi delle direttive, stabilite dalle leggi dello Stato."

This meant the retention of both powers within one article which was regarded by the devolutionists as a significant 'retreat' (in the aim of achieving a compromise), in that the regional governments would be able to legislate only within the limits specified by the State. This did not prove to be acceptable, however, to the Communists and Socialists, he said, who described it as an 'ambiguous formula'. They were prepared to grant the regional governments the authority to 'adapt' State laws to local situations, leaving the State to lay down solely general laws in certain areas. But they were not prepared to accept any formal (constitutional) limitations on the State's law-making authority. It was on this issue, Riuni concluded, that the attempt to reach a compromise had foundered.(18)

With the failure to reach an agreement, the devolutionists reasserted their freedom of action in further discussions. In the short term this took the form of a motion

recognising the necessity of creating the regional system and calling for the examination of the individual articles of the project. This implied, on the one hand, that the devolutionists were now resigned to risking the possible adverse outcome of a vote on Rubilli's motion (i.e. the cancellation of any form of regional institution in the Constitution) and, on the other, that if Rubilli's motion were to be rejected they would probably press for the acceptance of Title V in its existing form (i.e. with 'concurrent' and 'exclusive' power).

Yet, the Communists and Socialists surprised the Assembly by voting against Rubilli's motion, thus ensuring its rejection. Although this was, of course, consistent with the PCI's last publicly declared decision (the Grieco/Laconi motion, which accepted the necessity of creating a regional institution), the fact that Riuni had already made clear that the attempt to reach a compromise had foundered, and the shock with which the Assembly received the voting declarations of Laconi (for the Communists) and Targetti (for the Socialists), indicated that the two parties were expected to vote otherwise. After Targetti's speech Rubilli, who had been temporarily absent from the Chamber, said that he had not forecast "la tumultuosa decadenza di quaranta o cinquanta oratori in pochi minuti" and felt that it was because he had not explained in full the purpose behind his motion. He

thought that others on the Committee, such as Grassi, Bozzi and Grieco, were in agreement with him.(19) Porzio, another Liberal, declared that

"mi sembra di trovarmi sulla via di Damasco. Vedo conversioni improvvisate, inaspettate. Sono miracoli. Sono i miracoli della Democrazia cristiana?"(20)

That the vote was a surprise was, as will be seen, further confirmed by a speech by Laconi which indicated that the Assembly had not been expecting this decision and that the changing political situation had been partly behind it. But what exactly did the PCI's change in position amount to? Two possibilities emerge: first, the PCI had unexpectedly accepted the compromise at the last minute, so that the party was ensuring the safe rejection of Rubilli's motion in exchange for the removal of 'exclusive power'; or second, the party had simply changed its mind on Rubilli's motion but that this did not govern its acceptance of a 'concurrent power' when that vote arose i.e. its vote against Rubilli's motion meant that it would continue to struggle for its own brand of regionalism (i.e. a 'legislative power of integration' at most). If these were the two alternatives, the problem was that Laconi's speech was so carefully worded that it was difficult to detect exactly the PCI's new position.

He said that the Communist position was firstly, not to support any motions which rejected or postponed the question of the regional system and secondly, to support 'special autonomy' for four regions while being against "soluzioni estremistiche" for the rest of Italy. There the party was in favour of 'democratic progress' through "un profondo decentramento amministrativo" which would be achieved through autonomy for the communes, an increase in the powers of the provinces and,

"la costituzione di un ente regionale che non abbia i propri poteri ed il proprio campo di competenza unicamente limitato al settore amministrativo, ma abbia anche una qualche facoltà di integrare le leggi dello Stato e di dettarne per renderle aderenti alle necessità regionali."

This position (i.e. a 'legislative power of integration') was aimed at responding to two concerns: firstly, and fundamentally,

"di preservare intatta e solida l'unità dello Stato. Quando ci si parla di dare alle Regioni una potestà esclusiva o concorrente con quella dello Stato che pregiudichi i poteri dello Stato e limiti questi poteri, non siamo d'accordo. Noi pensiamo che l'autonomia delle Regioni debba essere contenuta entro l'unità politica del Paese" (my emphasis)

Secondly, (and in a phraseology that apparently qualifies the first factor),

"Ma, è indubbio che, particolarmente in quest'ultimo periodo, guardando intorno a noi e vedendo l'avviamento che va prendendo la situazione italiana, ci si è prospettata la necessità o l'eventualità di accedere a soluzioni diverse, di prendere in considerazione un rafforzamento degli enti locali che giunga anche a dare alla Regione un volto autonomo. Ed è in questo senso che abbiamo acceduto alle soluzione intermedie che poco fa prospettavo, ed alle quali noi daremo il nostro voto." (my emphasis).

. Thus, whilst apparently implying that the Italian political situation had caused the PCI to consider accepting a regional system with an 'autonomous nature', the 'intermediary solutions' which this had led to were no more than those which he had just outlined ("che poco fa prospettavo"), which effectively represented the position outlined in the Grieco/Laconi motion and the point on which the attempted compromise had failed. His conclusion heightened the contradiction of his argument:

"Forse questo stupirà qualcuno. Poco fa, un collega richiama il discorso dell'onorevole Gullo, ma, uomini come siamo, aderenti alle situazioni, e sempre intenti a guardare la evoluzione delle cose, noi non abbiamo potuto non tener conto del fatto che in questo recente periodo l'avviamento delle cose italiane non è tale da non dare delle

preoccupazioni a chiunque sia interessato alla difesa del regime democratico e desideroso di stabilire nel Paese dei solidi baluardi, e contro qualunque tentativo volto a violare la libertà ed i principi essenziali della democrazia. Ed è per questa ragione, soprattutto per questa ragione, che accediamo a questa soluzione intermedia: ordinamento regionale contenuto in limiti che non pregiudichino l'unità politica del Paese ma capace, ove si renda necessario, nel corso degli eventi, di fare delle Regioni dei solidi presidi della libertà e della democrazia."(21) (my emphasis)

The 'intermediary solution', then, was a regional system which did not threaten the political unity of the country; which specifically ruled out 'concurrent' and 'exclusive' legislative powers (see the two quotes above) and yet one that was still capable, when and where necessary, of acting as a 'bastion' of liberty and democracy. The contradictions in this speech are evident. On the one hand, Laconi gave the impression that as a result of the changing political situation the PCI had shifted its position to the point of resolving the deadlock with the devolutionists; on the other hand, the solution proposed seemed to be no more than the party's constantly stressed theme of "decentramento amministrativo democratico" and 'legislative powers of integration'. To an extent, this was not so unusual in that the PCI had always claimed that its proposals for the regional

system had 'autonomist' implications. Furthermore, the reference to Gullo indicated that the shift was with reference to that position rather than to the one represented by the Laconi/Grieco motion. (If he had referred to the latter then it would have meant a shift in position on the issue of legislative power). Nevertheless, the stress on the change in the political situation and the fact that it had influenced the PCI into accepting a new position which was apparently grounded in a garantista (and thus an autonomous) conception of regional government tended to overshadow the fact that the party's position on the crucial issue of 'regional autonomy' had not shifted at all. It was hardly surprising that the Assembly was not only shocked but also confused. Porzio, having expressed his astonishment at Laconi's voting declaration, said that,

"Ma non ho capito bene: è pro? E contro. E di quelli folgorati dalla luce di Damasco?"(22)

The clarification came immediately after the vote on Rubilli's motion which was, predictably, rejected by a large majority. The rejection of this motion meant that the principle of accepting a regional institution in the Constitution was accepted but nothing more. Having approved this, the exact nature of the institution had to be defined, using the Commission of 75's project as a guideline. The

Communists and some Social Democrats immediately made their position clear with the presentation of a motion which recognised the necessity of "un ampio decentramento amministrativo democratico dello Stato" at the level of the region, of the regional institution being endowed with a "potestà normativa nei limiti della attuazione e della integrazione delle direttive e dei principi fissati dalle leggi della Repubblica", with particular conditions of autonomy for four special regions. It thus deliberated that the Constitution should affirm the existence of a regional institution,

"con l'indicazione dei poteri e degli organi del nuovo ente e di quanto altro sia necessario alla sua essenziale definizione costituzionale." (23)

The presentation of this motion confirms that the decision not to carry out the threat of voting for Rubilli's motion did not entail a change in position on the issue of legislative power, despite the confusing rhetoric of Laconi's speech. Why had the PCI shifted position on Rubilli's motion? The party's explanation was, as already seen, that the contribution which a democratically elected regional system with administrative and 'legislative powers of integration' would make to the protection of liberty and democracy in the changed political situation had caused it to vote against

Rubilli's motion. This is inadequate, because it does not explain why the party had earlier been prepared to sacrifice its own form of regionalism by voting for Rubilli's motion which represented a development contrary to the developing political situation. This, as seen, had never been publicly declared, its purpose being to force the devolutionists into compromising on the issue of concurrent and exclusive legislative power in return for guaranteeing the creation of a regional system endowed with administrative and 'integrationist' powers.

It follows that the shift in position has to be viewed in the light of the failure to achieve the sought after compromise. This failure had led the devolutionists, as already seen, to reassert their liberty of action, meaning that they would have almost certainly pressed for exclusive powers in the event of Rubilli's motion being rejected. The PCI had then been faced with the dilemma of voting for something it had never actually wanted (the rejection of the regional system) when there still remained the chance of obtaining what it did want, a regional system with administrative and 'integrationist' powers. More significantly, if it had decided to vote for Rubilli's motion and the motion had been approved it would have indicated that the party would almost certainly have been able to achieve its own brand of regionalism (since the right wing parties would

have voted for 'legislative powers of integration' if they knew that if these were rejected, concurrent or exclusive powers might follow). This had effectively removed the point of voting for Rubilli's motion. Thus, to an extent, the threat had been a bluff, the bluff having been called, although the threat had exposed a willingness on the part of the devolutionists to sacrifice the exclusive form of power. And since the PCI had now guaranteed the safe rejection of Rubilli's motion the party could continue to bargain over both the exclusive and concurrent forms of power. Thus, Laconi's public explanation for the party's vote was designed to mask the failure of its tactical manoeuvre to obtain the removal of both the exclusive and concurrent forms of legislative power.

With the rejection of Rubilli's motion, the new motion presented by the Communists and Social Democrats was now crucial, since the principle of legislative power was dependent upon it. If passed, the regional system would remain at the level of administrative decentralisation with 'powers of integration'; if rejected, the way was open towards a concurrent or even exclusive power. The devolutionists were still not prepared to risk a straight vote on the issue and returned to the negotiating table in an attempt to reach a compromise.(24) When this attempt failed they attempted to bypass the vote through the presentation of a motion by Lussu which simply stated that, "L'Assemblea esaurita la

discussione, passa all'esame degli articoli", which they claimed had priority over the Communist/Social Democrat motion.(25) There followed a fierce two hour discussion on the question of which motion should procedurally be voted on first, during which Togliatti threatened to leave the Assembly with his party if the issue was to be resolved by a vote rather than by the President, since this would be violating the rights of the minority.(26) The devolutionists' argument was that the PCI/PSLI motion amounted to a series of amendments to the project and not a general amendment and that it therefore contradicted something already voted on through the rejection of Rubilli's motion. They were also determined to prevent the possible acceptance of what was described as administrative decentralisation under a false 'autonomous cloak'. The response was that the rejection of Rubilli's motion had simply provided for the creation of a regional institution, leaving "aperte tutte le strade ad ogni altra eventuale votazione." Thus, the motion, said Laconi,

"investe una questione di sostanza in quanto incide sul punto principale dell'ordinamento regionale, e cioè sulla potestà legislativa più o meno larga che deve essere conferita alla regione...Forse voi credete che eliminare una questione di questo genere possa servire a modificare i nostri pareri?...questo è l'ultimo baluardo del buon senso: mi consentano di dirlo. L'ordine del giorno Bonomi /as it was called/ è l'ultima trincea di coloro che non vogliono lanciarsi nel buio,

procedendo a delle costruzioni prive
di qualsiasi fondamento e del tutto
avulse dalla tradizione
italiana."(27)

The President decided in the Communists' favour, but the motion was rejected and, after a two week break in the Assembly's proceedings, Lussu's motion was subsequently approved.(28) Although the rejection of the former indicated that a majority in the Assembly could not be mustered for solely regional 'powers of integration', the latter motion only called for the examination of the individual articles. As a consequence, before the three articles (109, 110 and 111) concerning legislative power came up for discussion there were attempts by the Communist Nobile and the Socialist Targetti either to postpone the details of the new institution to the future Assembly or to reduce the institution to a purely administrative one. These attempts failed.(29) Yet, at the beginning of the discussion of the three articles concerning legislative power, Riuni announced that a compromise had been reached in that a text had been accepted by a majority of the Committee providing for the merging of concurrent and 'integrationist' powers under one article with the removal of exclusive power i.e. the same compromise that had been attempted earlier. Now, according to Riuni,

"si è ottenuto ... dai rappresentanti
delle due tendenze sulle questioni
dell'autonomia un assenso
fondamentale sul testo proposto dal

Comitato ... la corrente meno autonomista ha accettato: così mi hanno dichiarato rappresentanti di questa tendenza."

However, he continued,

"vi è stato ... fra essi qualche dubbio ... il dubbio era che con la formula che è stata proposta lo Stato sia costretto a imporre limiti a se stesso e che sull'esistenza di questi limiti possa essere chiamata a giudicare la Corte Costituzionale."(30)

These doubts were stronger than Riuni implied and were expressed in motions presented by Lami Starnuti, Preti and Biùni (of the PSLI), Targetti (of the PSI), Bozzi (of the PLI) and Nobile (of the PCI), which either called for the postponement of the list of policy areas to the future Assembly (thus providing for the possible annulment of the effect of concurrent legislative power)(31), or for the complete rejection of concurrent power and only the maintenance of 'a power of integration'.(32) If these motions were not the whims of the individuals concerned but expressed the respective party lines there could hardly be said to have existed an agreement, as the Christian Democrat Mortati indicated:

"Noi avevamo data la nostra adesione al testo concordato...perchè pensavamo che esso fosse accettato da tutti i partiti e quindi costituisse una base per una rapida decisione. Ma sembra che questo accordo non ci sia,

in quanto sono state formulate da più parti delle riserve per quanto riguarda l'accettazione di alcuni punti del nuovo testo."

He proposed, therefore, an amendment calling for the return to the Commission of 75's original text (i.e. a return to the attempt to obtain exclusive power). The agreement was, therefore, threatened from both sides. Riuni's response was that,

"Io non ho alcun elemento per dire che l'accettazione è mancata. Poco fa, in un rapido scambio di idee con l'on. Piccioni e l'on. Grieco s'era ancora nell'idea dell'accordo sopra questa formula. Poichè nelle discussioni, come si sa, possono sempre sorgere delle divergenze io mi ero augurato che ciò non avvenisse; ma al momento, non ho elementi per ritenere che l'accordo sia mancato."

And when pressed by Mortati to admit that "una vera accettazione della proposta" had not been achieved in the Committee, Riuni replied that the Committee,

"ha deliberato a maggioranza...di proporre questo nuovo testo. Io ho sentito i rappresentanti dei Partiti, che mi hanno dato il loro assenso, quindi ho ragione di ritenere che finora e, se non sorgono difficoltà, anche in seguito, questo assenso sarà mantenuta."(33)

Three possible interpretations of the situation can be gleaned from the above remarks: first, that the motions

presented did not have the backing of the respective parties and thus, as Riuni implied, the agreement was not threatened; second, that the parties were breaking the recently agreed compromise; third, that the agreement was of a slightly different nature to that suggested by Riuni: it amounted to no more than the anti-devolutionists' assurance that if these motions were rejected they would vote for the compromise text, thus guaranteeing its acceptance and providing it with a wide consensus, instead of the slender majority it was likely to receive. And since the Assembly had rejected all other alternatives it could hardly be claimed that the anti-devolutionists had shifted position on the issue. What they gained from voting the compromise text was the guarantee that the devolutionists would drop exclusive power. Yet, if this was the true basis of the compromise some of the devolutionists seemed unaware of it. It is possible, therefore, that Riuni was aware of the limits of the agreement, but saw the appearance of some kind of agreement as essential to prevent the more extreme devolutionists pressing for exclusive power (as had been the point of Mortati's motion proposing a return to the Commission of 75's text) and endangering the acceptance of the compromise text.

Which interpretation is the most applicable to the PCI? Here it is useful to note the position of the PSI. Targetti, who had presented one of the motions, was the representative

of the PSI on the Committee of 18 and made an explicit declaration to the Assembly on behalf of his party that,

"noi intendiamo attribuire chiaramente ed esplicitamente all'ente Regione potestà legislativa. Abbiamo rinunciato anche a proporci la questione tanto cara a qualche collega della differenza fra facoltà normative e legislative. Attribuiamo senz'altro alla Regione facoltà legislativa, in armonia coi principi generali stabiliti dalle leggi della Repubblica."(34)

The difference of the PSI's text compared with the compromise text was that it proposed that the decision on policy areas would be postponed to the future Assembly, thus providing for possible annulment of the effects of the approval of the principle of concurrent power. Clearly Targetti's motion represented the Socialist party's position which ruled out acceptance of the compromise text until its own motion had been decided upon. The PCI's position, on the other hand, was far more ambiguous. The only motion presented was by Nobile who, as noted, had often departed from what was evidently the party line but who had been representing the party position within the Committee of 18 on the issue of Rubilli's motion. Riuni's explicit reference to Grieco and Piccioni being in agreement seems to suggest that Nobile's motion did not represent the party line and that the party would probably not vote for Targetti's motion either. Yet no

Communist took the floor to state the party's position on the matter. Furthermore, in the voting on Targetti's and Nobile's motions the margins of defeat indicate that a proportion, if not all, the Communists voted for them, and this is corroborated by the party's request for a secret vote on Nobile's motion and a request that the vote be postponed until the following sitting.(35)

That the PCI had not, in fact, shifted its position was confirmed after the rejection of the anti-devolutionists' motions and the acceptance of the compromise text, this resulting in the creation of a regional system endowed, in principle, with 'concurrent legislative power'.(36) The debate that followed put this principle to the test in that it concerned the areas within which the regional governments should be allowed to legislate. As seen in the previous chapter, the effect of regional legislative power could be nullified if the regional governments were not given any significant policy areas in which to legislate. With this evidently in mind, Ambrosini noted that it was necessary to act on the details of Article 109 in such a way that it preserved the principle already 'agreed' upon:

"nessuno di noi sicuramente vuole che nasca un 'hanunculus'; noi vogliamo che nasca una creatura viva e vitale."(37)

Yet this 'creatura viva e vitale' was precisely what the PCI seemed intent on preventing through its vote against the inclusion of the most significant policy areas: electrical energy and public waters; agriculture; forests; industry and commerce.(38) The debate on agriculture, which was perceived as one of the most crucial items by the devolutionists, provided an eloquent example of this. The Christian Democrats pleaded that,

"Se viene negata l'attività legislativa nella materia agricola alla Regione, noi avremo svuotato l'istituto dell'autonomia. L'autonomia della Regione è sempre pensata in funzione della risoluzione in loco dei problemi agricoli. Negate questa attività alla Regione e l'autonomia non avrà alcun contenuto."(39)

The plea fell on deaf ears. Gullo said that the PCI would vote against the inclusion of agriculture because

"indubbiamente, con la proposta formulazione (of article 109) noi stabiliamo una facoltà esclusiva della Regione".(40)

Consequently, he said, since agriculture was of national importance, it was inconceivable that the State should be powerless to intervene when confronted with the inactivity of certain regional governments and the 'hyperactivity' of others, or activity which was contrary to national guidelines or policies of other regions. The very

existence of different levels of activity in this field would lead to "pericolose forme di autarchia...il sorgere, di fronte alla condannata autarchia nazionale, di varie autarchie regionali." In short,

"...nel Mezzogiorno d'Italia è vano sperare dalla iniziativa locale quel rinnovamento dell'attività agraria e forestale dal punto di vista sociale, quel rinnovamento che noi possiamo avere soltanto da una legislazione di portata nazionale."(41)

This speech, coupled with the vote against the inclusion of other policy areas, amounted to a re-affirmation of the long-term party position on regional devolution: a complete negation of the value that regional legislative power in significant policy areas could contribute to the social, economic and political renovation of Italian society.

This tends to confirm that the PCI had had the same 'doubts' as the PSI over the Committee's compromise text and that Nobile's motion had represented the party line, although the party had not wanted this to be publicly declared. Hence, the reluctance of any of the members to respond to what had been evidently an appeal by Riuni that the Communist position be clarified. Finally, the fact that there was no vote count on Article 109 (see footnote 36 above) implies that it had been approved with a large majority, and thus that the parties of the Left had voted for the motion. This suggests either

that these parties had broken the agreement reached in the Committee of 18 through presenting their own motions and that, with the rejection of these (and thus the exhaustion of all 'administrative decentralisation' alternatives), they had been prepared to vote for the compromise text; or that the agreement which had been reached in the Committee was much more limited in scope than Riuni had intimated i.e. the anti-devolutionists had agreed to vote the text but only if their own motions were rejected first. For the anti-devolutionists this had ensured the removal of exclusive legislative power; for the devolutionists it had ensured that a large majority would vote for concurrent legislative power (in the event of the anti-devolutionist motions being defeated). The outcome had been a big majority for something on which there was no real consensus: regional legislative autonomy came to be incorporated in the Constitution as the result of a compromise between devolutionists and anti-devolutionists who remained entrenched in their respective camps.(42)

The debate on the rest of the regional project raised little controversy and finished on 22 July. The official party reaction was given by Laconi in two articles in the party press.(43) These articles are of crucial importance because the interpretation they give of Communist behaviour during the debate, when linked to the complicated party manoeuvrings that took place, provide the grounds for the misinterpretation of

the PCI's role in the founding of Italy's 'unitary-decentralised' State. Laconi firstly re-emphasised the PCI's rejection of an approach to the question of the organisation of the State based on 'principles':

"Questione di principio è per noi la sovranità del popolo, che ha il suo strumento nei liberi partiti e si esercita attraverso gli istituti rappresentativi. I modi e le forme di organizzazione dello Stato possono variare seconda della situazione obiettiva."

In this respect, the action of the Communist group in the Assembly, he claimed, had been consistent with the party line laid down at the Fifth Congress (the two essential points being "opposizione ad ogni organizzazione federativa" and "funzione autonome delle regioni nel campo amministrativo e nella organizzazione della vita economica"), with an adaption, "come è ovvio, alle esigenze particolari della tattica parlamentare." This line, he said, had been followed by Togliatti in the general debate on the Constitutional project and, "sebbene come è ovvio con diverso accento" by "i tre interventi di nostri compagni nel dibattito introduttivo al titolo della regione" (i.e. Gullo, Assennato and Nobile). While there were those who were surprised at the PCI's vote on 12 June, "in realtà lo stupore sarebbe giustificato se noi avessimo agito in modo diverso." Moreover, the recent changes that had led to the formation of a government influenced by

the forces of the Right had reinforced the party's behaviour. This behaviour, he claimed, had resulted in the achievement of "una vasta e profonda riforma amministrativa" which was very similar to that originally proposed by the Communists, this being part of the party's programme of the democratic re-organisation of the State to provide for the emergence of a new ruling class.

The reform, however, had been achieved only through the modifications achieved by the Communists to the 'extremist' thesis of the DC and others. The two essential modifications, he said, were the maintenance of the provinces and the limitation of the legislative powers of the regional system. Thus, "nessuna potestà legislativa di tipo primario è riconosciuto alla regione" which would have

"spezzato l'unità del paese ed infranto lo sforzo unitario delle masse popolari...Il potere legislativo nella sua essenza è infatti integralmente attribuito al Parlamento. La Regione può sviluppare un'attività legislativa propria unicamente nel quadro della legislazione fondamentale dello stato e nel rispetto degli interessi nazionali".

While, on the other hand,

"ben tre enti autonomi si inseriscono nell'apparato amministrativo dello stato - la regione, la provincia e il comune - spezzando la continuità gerarchia della burocrazia e subordinandola nei diversi settori al controllo e alla direzione delle

assemblee democratiche nell'apparato amministrativo, rimanendo intatto l'unità fondamentale della legislazione, spezza...il potere della democrazia e potenzia lo sforzo delle masse popolari, alle quali propone nell'unità della lotta obiettivi particolari vicini e immediatamente raggiungibili..."

This, at the same time, maintained unchanged the conditions necessary to the development of 'popular unitary action' for social and economic reform. In conclusion, Laconi stressed the 'garantista' nature of the reform:

"stando così le cose il nostro giudizio di massima sulla riforma non può essere che positivo. Se le forze democratiche, ed in primo luogo il nostro partito, sapranno rapidamente apprezzare la situazione e adeguare la loro azione alle mutate condizioni, si aprono per il popolo italiano nuove possibilità di lotta e di progresso democratico. E non è affatto escluso che la democrazia e la libertà trovino, nelle autonomie locali, quella valida difesa che oggi, per gli sviluppi della situazione politica, non trovano certo nell'apparato centrale nel governo dello Stato."

These articles represent not only an approval of the regional system drawn up and thus an acceptance of the concept of legislative power, but a claim that the system was very similar to that for which the PCI had been struggling. Of crucial importance is the fact that this claim is made essentially through linking the vote of 12 June on Rubilli's

motion to the subsequent drafting of the details of the regional system. The linking of Nobile to the party line on the Rubilli motion and the lack of reference to the Grieco/Laconi motion tends to confirm that the party had threatened to vote for the Rubilli motion in the Committee of 18 and that Nobile had been used to present the threat on the floor of the Assembly (since Nobile had not only presented his own anti-regionalist motion but had eventually dropped this and signed Rubilli's). This, one can assume, was part of the 'exigences' of parliamentary tactics to which were referred (i.e. to push the devolutionists into compromising). Laconi could, therefore, claim not only that the Communist vote against the motion was to be expected, (the development in the political situation apparently re-affirming this position) but also that it had been from this vote that the party had managed to achieve the modifications to the DC's 'extremist' thesis which had endangered the unity of the country.

That this was a fabrication of what the PCI's goal had been need not be stressed. What should be emphasized is the manner in which the account changes the significance of the vote of 12 June, as perceived by the external observer. Since there had been a change in the PCI's position on 12 June, Laconi's denial of this and his linking of the vote to the claimed success of the party's approach throughout the debate (i.e. a regional system endowed with concurrent legislative

power) suggests that the vote had involved a shift on the issue of concurrent legislative power itself (which, in fact, it had not, although this had been what the devolutionists had wanted). The stress on the political situation and the garantista nature of the system which had been drafted (i.e. rather than the system that Laconi was referring to on 12 June) completed such an image: a 'myth' was born.

The Myth of the Communist contribution to the
Founding of the Unitary-Decentralised State

It is now possible to see how Ettore Rotelli, in his book L'Avvento della Regione in Italia, misinterprets a crucial moment in the debate (that of the exact nature of the 'u-turn' of 12 June) and subsequently reconstructs a confusing and contradictory account of the debate in its entirety, which assigns prime responsibility to the Communists for the incorporation in the Constitution of a system of regionally autonomous governments.(44)

Rotelli explains the svolta of 12 June firstly, by reference to only the second part of Laconi's speech in the Assembly, (which, seen alone, gives the impression of the acceptance of regional autonomy), emphasising all the phrases referring to the development of the political situation; and, secondly, by reference to the two articles written by Laconi after the debate had finished in July (these representing the

PCI's approval of the legislatively autonomous regional system drawn up). From these two sources he is able to conclude firstly, that the nature of the PCI's new position was not only against the anti-regionalist motions but "a favore della stessa potestà legislativa" and secondly, that the reason for the sudden shift in position on legislative power was directly linked to the changing political situation:

"Adesso che il Partito Comunista ed il Partito Socialista erano stati estromessi dal governo, le Regioni offrivano alla sinistra prospettive nuove di lotta politica."(45)

More specifically,

"...il garantismo, ch'era stato sin qui l'argomento fondamentale del regionalismo della DC, viene assunto senz'altro dal PCI."(46)

The vote of 12 June is of such importance that it becomes the core of Rotelli's account on which the rest of his analysis depends. Thus, at the outset, he argues that the effect of the political situation on the outcome of Title V is so conspicuous that it is necessary to concentrate on the effect of the solution of the government crisis (i.e. the formation of a government without the Socialists and Communists) on some of the parties' approaches toward the regional system. As a result of this, he divides the debate into two distinct phases, the first running from 31 January to

12 and 13 June (i.e. the general discussion of the Constitutional project as a whole plus part of the debate on the regional system); and the second from 7 June to 22 July (the remainder of the main debate on the regional system). Strictly speaking, however, on the grounds of analysing the effects of the solution of the government crisis, the first phase should finish at 27 May, since this was the day the new government was announced (it was also, coincidentally, the beginning of the specific debate on the regional system). There was no particular significance to be attached to 12 June except that it was the day on which De Gasperi spoke in the Assembly, or 13 June, except that it was the day on which the discussion on the regional system changed from being a general one to an analysis of the individual articles. Thus, a strictly hypothetical analysis would begin to look for a change in the Communist position from 27 May. Having divided his analysis according to his findings Rotelli then has the task of making the rest of the debate consistent with the '12 June u-turn' (47)

To do so he firstly presents the contributions of the Communists to the 12 June as a form of linear development from 'anti-regionalism' to 'regionalism'. Thus, the first three contributions of Gullo (28 May), Nobile (29 May) and Assennato (3 June) "escludono espressamente ogni specie di potestà legislativa e revocano in dubbio la stessa opportunità della

Regione come organo amministrativo."(48) As noted earlier, while this did not emerge unequivocally in all three speeches it is not an inaccurate assessment since, as already seen, the PCI had decided to carry out the tactic (which it had used in the Commission of 75) of abandoning its platform of administrative decentralisation (or a 'legislative power of integration') in an attempt to prevent the acceptance of regional legislative power. On the basis of the three speeches, therefore, Rotelli, in the second part of his phrase above, implies that there was a retreat by the PCI even from a platform of administrative decentralisation. Accurate as this may be, he fails to explain why it was that the PCI had become more staunchly centralist (to the point of being against the creation of a regional institution altogether) after the resolution of the government crisis a few days earlier, when his thesis is predicated on precisely the opposite. Of course, his division of the debate makes such an explanation unnecessary.(49)

However, it is the 'anti-regionalist' stance of the first three contributions which enable Rotelli to present the Grieco-Laconi motion of 7 June as a regionalist development which anticipated the 'u-turn' which would occur five days later:

"Può darsi che la prevalenza del regionalismo moderato del Grieco rispetto all'anti-regionalismo dei primi tre interventi si debba

attribuire a ciò, che la presentazione dell'ordine si verifica in un momento posteriore, nel quale la soluzione della crisi di governo già comincia ad esercitare l'accennata influenza sul regionalismo comunista: l'ordine del giorno del 7 giugno anticipa forse la svolta che verrà resa esplicita cinque giorni più tardi."(50)

Thus, the PCI's position,

"...dopo essere stata quasi antiregionalista, diventa ambivalente, sia pure entro limiti ristretti, in quanto il loro regionalismo è, al più, puro decentramento amministrativo, facoltà legislativa soltanto di adattare alle condizioni locali le leggi nazionali..."(51)

That the Grieco/Laconi motion represented a development on the first three contributions is undeniable, although it did not represent a development of anything the party had wanted earlier. If anything, it represented a retreat because of the requirement that the decision on policy areas be postponed to a special law. This is not crucial to the argument, however, for the simple point was that, taken at face value (which is what Rotelli is doing), the Grieco-Laconi motion explicitly rejected Rubilli's motion and so could hardly be anticipating a 'u-turn' on it.(52) Moreover, since the devolutionists were not reassured by the presentation of the motion (i.e. they were not convinced that the PCI would

act on the motion and vote against Rubilli's motion) its presentation can be seen only as a bargaining position within the Committee of 18 on the issue of legislative power.

This contradiction is hardly perceptible in Rotelli's account because firstly, he fails to specify the exact nature of Rubilli's motion (he only mentions it in a footnote when describing the PLI's position)(53); and secondly, he implicitly links the bargaining in the Committee of 18 over the issue of legislative power (and the agreement apparently reached) to the vote of 12 June as if the vote itself actually concerned the issue of legislative power rather than the simple acceptance or rejection of the necessity of creating a regional institution (that the agreement was reached in the Committee of 18 after the vote on Rubilli's motion is clarified only later in a footnote to account for an apparent contradiction in his own analysis).(54) He subsequently sets up the following scenario:

"... DC, PRI, autonomisti-azionisti, ... perduta la maggioranza che avevano in Sottocommissione, si accinsero a rinunciare alla potestà legislative primaria (o esclusiva). I secondi /the parties of the Left/ si trovarono ad essere arbitri della situazione; alleandosi con la destra, avrebbero potuto determinare la riezione dell'ordinamento regionale; oppure se preferivano, avrebbero potuto imporre il loro regionalismo moderato, che la destra, una volta venuta meno la possibilità di respingere integralmente il Titolo V, se richiesta di ciò, avrebbe

accettato di accordarsi per sostenere la tesi meno autonomista. Perché i costituenti di sinistra, e soprattutto i comunisti, non fecero nè l'una cosa, nè l'altra?"(55)

Statistically, this is based on the assumption that all the members of the parties of the Right and the Left would vote as one body. One of the characteristics of the entire period was the degree to which the issue of regional autonomy cut across party lines, and this applied most particularly to the two Socialist parties which were formed after the split of the PSIUP in January 1947 (over the party's links with the PCI). There remained factions within both parties which were not anti-devolutionist.(56) It was the existence of such divisions that made the outcome of votes on legislative power difficult to predict. Members of the Left were as uncertain as the devolutionists about this: Togliatti, for example, in his speech during the general debate on the Constitutional project had begged the Christian Democrats and others not to settle an issue as important as the structure of the State through a majority they then possessed but might lose later.(57)

If this is all conjecture, the proof lies in the events themselves. Rotelli asks why the Communists and Socialists did not attempt to impose their "tesi meno autonomista." Yet, as already seen, this is precisely what the Communists did attempt immediately after the vote on Rubilli's

motion through the presentation of the Bonomi motion. Moreover, this motion was rejected not only because the devolutionists were not prepared to accept solely a legislative 'power of integration' but also because it failed to receive sufficient support from both the Right and the PSI, as Rotelli admits in his text.(58) According to Rotelli, instead of either imposing their more 'moderate regionalism' or rejecting the regional system in its entirety, the Communists and Socialists "acconsentirono rapidamente non solo alla definizione espressa delle funzione della Regione, ma anche ad una potestà concorrente."(59) How then does he account for the presentation of the Bonomi motion? Having explained the 'u-turn' of 12 June he then states, in relation to the Bonomi motion, that, "per i comunisti l'adesione al nuovo testo segna un progresso autonomistico..."(60) He is able to make this judgement by comparing this motion with the Grieco/Laconi motion of 7 June, the former postponing the definition of the functions of the new institution to a special law; the latter calling for an indication of the nature of the new institution's powers. Thus,

"Il PCI abbandona...un testo ambivalente, che lascia aperta la possibilità di annullare in un secondo tempo gli effetti della riforma regionale, per un testo garantista, cioè per un testo che lo garantisce sulla effettività e sulla irriversibilità della riforma stessa."(61)

In the first place, if the two motions are to be compared, a close reading of them hardly renders the latter more 'regionalist'. The Grieco/Laconi motion affirmed the necessity of creating a regional system with administrative and 'legislative powers of integration'. Yet, even if one were to accept that this motion did not ensure the irreversibility of the reform, Rotelli overlooks the fact that it was the vote on the Rubilli motion of 12 June which had already made the reform irreversible, the Communists having voted for that motion. Finally, of course, the presentation of the Bonomi motion, calling for nothing more than a 'legislative power of integration', directly contradicts Rotelli's thesis that there was a 'u-turn' on 12 June on the issue of legislative power and that this had led to the 'rapid acceptance' of concurrent legislative power on the part of the PCI.(62)

Rotelli's 'rapid acceptance', in fact, occurs with the 'agreement' finally reached in the Committee of 18 which he interprets as a straightforward compromise between the PCI and the DC: "In sostanza la DC si era accordata col PCI," a compromise which the PSI joined, "non senza alcuni indugi e qualche perplessità," this concern being registered through the presentation of Targetti's motion. That a Communist did not take the floor to confirm the agreement, he interprets as a sign of "persistente imbarazzo" for the 'u-turn' enacted. The Communist behaviour with respect to Nobile's motion and

the fact that a part, if not all, the Communists voted for this and the Socialist motion, he finds "un po' oscure", but not obscure enough, evidently, to affect his interpretation:

"L'emendamento socialista provocò forse qualche incertezza fra i costituenti comunisti, sui quali la tesi esercitava innegabilmente una certa suggestione; per un attimo si ebbe l'impressione che l'accordo fra DC e PCI potesse naufragare, infine la votazione, di reiezione della proposta, pose fine alla crisi."(63)

Finally, Rotelli has the problem of accounting for the PCI's fierce opposition, in the remainder of the debate, to the attribution of any policy areas of significance to the regional system's jurisdiction. He avoids this by simply concluding his account at this point:

"Approvata la potestà legislativa concorrente, la discussione del Titolo V, almeno dal punto di vista politico, è conclusa. Neppure l'esame delle singole materie riserva sorprese ... Gli stessi membri dell'Assemblea sanno che, con l'accordo fra DC e PCI, l'esame del Titolo V è finito ed alle votazione successive non prendono parte più di duecentocinquanta deputati."(64)(my emphasis).

And,

"Invece dal punto di vista tecnico gli aspetti più interessanti del dibattito cominciano a questo punto ... ed avremo un seguito nelle sedute del 29-30 ottobre e del 4 dicembre 1947". (65)

In footnotes he briefly refers to the fact that Nobile attempted to reduce the list of the regional system's policy areas and that there continued "qualche manifestazione di perplessità o contrarietà alla potestà legislativa da parte di deputati socialisti", but nothing further with respect to the PCI's behaviour. Later in the book he analyses the matter of the regional system's policy areas but this is from a largely technical angle and he does not mention the PCI's approach to the question in the Assembly.(66)

To summarise, it would seem that there was no 'u-turn' by the PCI on the issue of regional legislative autonomy. On 12 June 1947 the party changed its position on a motion (Rubilli's) which threatened to abolish the regional project from the Constitution. This change was in relation only to the position taken up in the Committee of 18 and not that presented on the floor of the Chamber, the former having been a tactical manoeuvre to obtain the removal of both the exclusive and concurrent forms of legislative power. The change therefore was evidence both of the failure of the manoeuvre and of an attempt to keep open the possibility of achieving a compromise (which would have been precluded had the PCI voted for Rubilli's motion and had it still been rejected since the devolutionists would have pressed for both the concurrent and exclusive forms of legislative power). The compromise which was finally reached could have been one of

the following alternatives: either it consisted of an agreement by which the parties of the Left would vote for concurrent legislative power if the devolutionists renounced exclusive legislative power, this agreement being subsequently broken through the presentation of motions attempting to reduce the regional system to an administrative entity; or it consisted of an agreement by which the parties of the Left would vote for concurrent legislative power only if their motions reducing the regional system to an administrative entity were rejected. While the votes of the PCI, it would seem, did ultimately contribute to the approval of concurrent legislative power it is not certain that those votes were indispensable and they were not the result of a 'u-turn' on the question of regional devolution.

If this explains accurately how regional devolution came to be incorporated in the Constitution it leaves one anomaly: the aim of Laconi's account of the debate (written in July) in which he claimed the regional system as the party's own achievement, this claim amounting to an approval of concurrent legislative power. Did this account represent a shift in the PCI's position on regional devolution?

As already seen, the acceptance of a concurrent legislative power was couched very much in a negative sense: the value of the result which had been achieved subsequent to the vote of 12 June was stressed as consisting less of the

approval of concurrent legislative power than firstly, of the limitation of the regional system's legislative power, (which, after all, had been achieved only through having to accept concurrent legislative power); and secondly, of the democratisation of the State apparatus, which had kept intact the 'unity of parliamentary legislation' whilst allowing the regional system to legislate within the framework of the State, thus maintaining unchanged the conditions necessary to a development of popular action for major social and economic reform. It is in this sense that the garantista emphasis of the speech can be viewed in a different light. Prima facie, this emphasis (exemplified in the last quotation from Laconi's articles above) seems unequivocally to embrace the concept of regional autonomy in garantista terms. However, the emphasis was very similar to that of Laconi's speech of 12 June which, as seen, had concerned the creation of a regional system with purely administrative powers and powers of integration (and the opposition registered by the PCI to regional legislative power after that speech has been seen). Moreover, although the application of the same theme to a regional system characterised by legislative power was markedly different, it should be stressed that the link between the two was never explicit: the administrative part of the reform and the limitation of regional legislative power received greater stress.

It should be added that if the articles did not represent a shift in the PCI's view of legislative power, Laconi was not necessarily so far from the truth when he claimed that the party's assessment of the system could only be positive: the regional system's legislative power was subject to framework laws which the State could lay down (the significance of this was later revealed with the 'Scelba Law' of 1953); most important areas of policy-making had been removed from the regional system's jurisdiction; and legislation on two of the core features of the system (the electoral procedure and financial autonomy) had been postponed to the future assembly, the implementation of the system being dependent on this (the twenty two year delay in the implementation of Title V confirms the significance of this). In short, if the PCI had not achieved its ideal goal neither had the devolutionists: dismantling Italy's centralised State was dependent on the 'benevolence' of the future national government.

Finally, the fact was that the PCI, in the end, had voted for concurrent legislative power and could hardly justify its action in terms of failed tactics. The party had been forced to sacrifice its goal of an administrative regional system to the aim of preventing the attribution of an exclusive legislative power. In this sense, the post-facto approval of the system was to be expected. It is difficult,

therefore, to claim that the two articles written by Laconi in July 1947, declaring the party's approval of Title V, unequivocally represented a change in party position on the issue of regional legislative power. The writing represents the justification of a fait accompli. Indeed, it is reasonable to surmise that a very similar appraisal of the regional system might have been made (particularly in terms of garantismo) if the system had been endowed solely with a 'legislative power of integration'.

If the above arguments show that Rotelli's thesis of the PCI's 'u-turn' would appear to be a myth, this is further supported by the fact that his thesis is based on certain assumptions which are open to question. These will now be turned to.

From Government to Opposition, from Centralisers into

Devolutionists: the Rapid Transition

Rotelli's identification of the precise moment at which the PCI changed its stance on the issue of regional devolution has hindered and confused the discussion on the reasons for this change simply because (this thesis claims) such a change did not take place at that moment.(67) Communist historians, such as Ernesto Ragionieri, in accepting the thrust of Rotelli's account, place themselves in a difficult position in attempting to justify their party's action.

Rotelli's evidence of an 'overnight transition' allows him to reject, for example, Ragionieri's suggestion that the PCI's shift to a devolutionist position may have been due to an awareness of the 'regional tradition' in Gramsci's thought:

"è arduo immaginare che un improvviso ritorno di memoria (fra l'altro non provato) per i suoi /Gramsci's/ testi di vent'anni prima abbia determinato, nello spazio di pochi giorni, un capovolgimento di opinioni sul voto da dare a proposito di un problema specifico come l'ordinamento regionale." (68)

The implausibility of Ragionieri's argument is not to be denied. Yet, the point is that Rotelli's own explanation for the 'u-turn' depends on the same time scale: namely, that within the space of a few days the PCI shifted from a centralist to a devolutionist position which (as a result of its expulsion from the government of national unity) was fundamentally garantista in nature. This argument is dependent on one (or more) of three assumptions. Firstly, that the PCI's approach to institutions in the post-war period was essentially tactical in nature, thus allowing for an immediate change in position on an issue such as regional autonomy. As seen in Chapter Two, it is possible to argue this for the period up to the convocation of the Constituent Assembly. Nevertheless, as was argued in Chapter Three, the PCI's institutional choices during the work of the Constitutional

Commissions can be viewed as fundamental part of the party's general strategy and consequently as 'permanent' as the strategy itself.

This introduces the second, more important, assumption behind the argument: that the conditions on which the party's strategy for power were based had been destroyed. As argued in Chapter Three, the PCI's strategy for power, within which regional devolution was unequivocally rejected, could be interpreted either as depending purely on an electoral victory of the Left and the carrying through of reforms within the centralised representative State; or as depending on the maintenance of the government of national unity as a reflection of the perceived dominant progressive ideology existing in Italian society, and within which the party would pursue its struggle for hegemony. The crucial question, in relation to both of these, is whether the PCI, in the few days after its expulsion from office, was aware of the significance of the fall of the government of national unity i.e. the drastic shift to the Right that it reflected and its degree of permanence, such that it would lead to electoral defeat or a long-term failure to resurrect the coalition of national unity. In short, did Togliatti realise that his interpretation of Italian society had been over optimistic? Communist opinion varies on this. Some members from that era, such as Giorgio Amendola, Pietro Secchia and Franco Rodano, claim that

Togliatti was aware of what was likely to happen and had even begun to prepare for a period of opposition. Others, such as Emilio Sereni, Ernesto Ragionieri and Giancarlo Pajetta, recognise that the party had not foreseen the drastic shift to the Right and its likely duration.(69) Certainly, Togliatti's reaction to the new situation was very mild. He described the forthcoming elections as comparable to an 'invitation to a wedding' for a democratic party such as the PCI:

"In fondo, un governo come quello attuale è un governo che tende a distruggere tutti i partiti che stanno alla sua destra, mentre tonifica quelli che stanno alla sua sinistra!..."(70)

Perhaps the most significant point was that there was no visible change in the party's overall strategy after the expulsion. There was no reassessment of the Constitution either at a general level or at the level of specific aspects of the project which came within the criteria of 'checks and balances' on the majority's power. Aspects such as parliamentary legislative procedures and the DC's project for a strong regionally-based second house were discussed after the debate on the regional system and did not register any change in the PCI's long-term position - something which Petta and others find difficult to square with their own and Rotelli's analysis:

"... va rilevato che - dopo lo spostamento a destra della DC - è

abbastanza curioso che sia il PCI a lamentarsi degli intralci che vengono posti all'azione della maggioranza, anzichè a ... compiarcersene: tanto più ... che in realtà il problema non era sfuggito al partito, che aveva infatti modificato le sue posizioni sull'ordinamento regionale, in modo da limitare maggiormente i poteri della nuova maggioranza costituitasi a Montecitorio."(71)

Rotelli's thesis, then, would not seem to be supported by the general reaction of the PCI to its expulsion from office. The PCI continued to behave as though it was still part of the governing majority, and its Constitutional conception remained fundamentally unaltered. If, therefore, the party had suddenly grasped the DC's mantle of garantismo, regional autonomy remained a strangely isolated example of such a change. This introduces the third assumption behind the 'overnight transition' thesis: that the transfer of a political party from government to opposition brings with it immediate pressures on that party's centralist ideology or position i.e. that devolution is a theme of opposition. This assumption will be dealt with in detail in Chapter Six.

The above arguments have attempted to support the interpretation of the regional debate and the critique of Rotelli presented earlier by showing that the assumptions behind the arguments of the 'overnight transition' theorists are open to question. If it has been successfully shown that

the PCI had not changed its long-term position on regional devolution then the question is immediately raised of when it actually did. This will be the subject of the next chapter which will show that the first sign of a clear change in the PCI's general strategy happened in September 1947. An event took place in that month which caused a drastic reversal of the party's policy of national unity and this subsequently led to the first tentative reassessment of the value of regional devolution.

* * * * *

Chapter Five

'In Mezzo al Guado': the Tactical and Strategical Strains of

'Moderate Regionalism' (1947-1955)

"...l'unità del paese non si favorisce con uno Stato centralizzato, con dei metodi di governo centralistici, con le soluzioni imposte dall'altro."(1)

"Certo, non tutte le disposizioni costituzionali sull'ordinamento regionale sono egualmente felici..."(2)

The founding meeting of the Cominform, held in September 1947, represented one of the most important steps in the development of the Cold War, particularly from the point of view of its effects on the Communist parties in Western Europe. These parties were heavily criticised for failing to stay in government and forge 'popular democracies' as in Eastern Europe, and were consequently ordered to change their strategies. The PCI was singled out by Zhadanov who made it clear that what was called for was a radical change of the party's political line.(3)

In view of this pressure and disillusion within his own party ranks, Togliatti could do little but respond, and the change in line came almost immediately. An article in the party weekly, Rinascita, of that month attacked the limitations of 'bourgeois democracy' and emphasised that the PCI had, when faced with the re-emergence of the old economic forces, relied too heavily on the drafting of the Constitution. The leadership, however, avoided too much self-reproach by directing its criticism at the masses and the lower echelons of the party who had been deluded with,

"l'illusione che particolari formule costituzionali e giuridiche possano, di per se stesse, assicurare la liquidazione del vecchio regime e la istaurazione di un regime nuovo, democratico e popolare...Le illusioni costituzionali portano a concepire la lotta per la Costituzione, per una nuova struttura dello Stato e della società italiana, come una lotta che si svolge e si deve svolgere solo sul piano parlamentare."(4)

It was claimed that these illusions, actively cultivated by the DC, the press, the Church and agencies of the United States, were now taking the form of an acceptance that the democratic will could be faithfully represented purely through parliamentary institutions. This called for renewed action on the part of the party organisation to fight against the myth that,

"la partecipazione dei rappresentanti della classe operaia al governo potesse, di per se stessa, senza l'intervento e la lotta delle masse nel Paese, risolvere i problemi della democratizzazione della società e dello Stato italiano."(5)

The renewed action took the form of a series of demonstrations and strikes in the main industrial centres and a general reversion to themes of class struggle, as opposed to national unity. As has been often noted, Togliatti never saw this form of struggle as being viable in the long term. Yet his problem was that it was no longer possible to continue

with the progressive democratic strategy because the conditions on which it had been predicated were no longer present. Firstly, the prospects for national unity were now remote, since the situation in Italy was a reflection of the international situation: there were two camps, capitalist and communist, the dialogue between which had become so hostile that any form of 'progressive' compromise was precluded. Secondly, and more importantly, the change in conditions had begun to take place during the drafting of the Constitution. As a result, the PCI openly recognised that the other main condition on which its strategy had been based, the rooting of the 'progressive democracy' in the Constitution, had failed.

This chapter firstly, evaluates the impact of the PCI's new political line, between September 1947 and the elections of April 1948, on the party's approach to regional devolution. It is argued that the first signs of a change in the party's position on the issue took place during a period in which the PCI recognised that it had failed to achieve (during the constitutional debates) the organisational structure of the State deemed necessary to a democratic advance to socialism. This left party strategy in a vacuum and it is argued, therefore, that the first tentative re-evaluation of regionalism by Togliatti was essentially tactical in nature. This position, however, had strategic implications which only

became apparent in the period after the 1948 elections, and the second part of the chapter turns to this.

The period from the elections to 1955 saw a 'return' to the Constitution, this being not only (as has often been claimed) from a 'defensive' perspective (i.e. because of the hostile political climate in which the party found itself) but also from an 'offensive' perspective in that it provided for the resurrection of the progressive democratic strategy in a new guise: one that emphasised a diffusion of power between centre and periphery (specifically through a devolution of power to the regional level) instead of a concentration of power at the centre. It is shown, however, that this new position was fraught with equivocation, this leaving the party in mezzo al guado: regionalism seemed to have been taken 'on board' but it remained unclear as to how or why it was important to a democratic strategy for socialism in Italy. The chapter concludes, therefore, by arguing that while a 're-thinking' on the issue of regional devolution had evidently taken place, the PCI seemed either unwilling or unable to draw all the conclusions this involved. Explaining why there had been a change in position and why this had not been carried through to its logical conclusion by 1955 will be the subject of the final chapter of Part One.

Abandoning the Constitution

For the PCI, the contents of the Constitution reflected closely the development of the political situation and the Left's failure to prevent the re-emergence of the forces of reaction. Togliatti, in his speech to the Sixth Congress (January 1948), pointed out that the document was divided into two parts, one 'progressive' and one 'reactionary'. The first part, he said, relating to programmatic commitments and positive rights as well as traditional 'abstract' rights, indicated that the Constitution was of a 'new type'. However, this progressive part was undermined by the second part, relating to the organisation of the State. In this part there was no provision for the implementation of the Constitution's programme or its positive rights. On the contrary,

"...la confluenza delle forze conservatrici della destra con quelle della Democrazia cristiana è riuscita a far passare una serie di misure con l'esclusivo intento di porre ostacoli e barriere all'azione di quella assemblea di rappresentanti del popolo..."(6)

The party seemed to recognise that it had underestimated the importance of the organisation of the State in its approach to the Constitutional debates. The preparatory document to the Sixth Congress noted that the party's electoral propaganda, while emphasising rights and programmatic commitments, had at the same time tended to

overlook questions relating to the organisation of the State which, it was declared, was the 'central problem' of any constitution. Furthermore, the document continued, it had been precisely this aspect which the DC had set out to use to annul the principles of the first part of the Constitution, the first major offensive having been the attempt to create a federal State in the debate on the regional system, which had been successfully rebuffed. The document's assessment of Title V echoed Laconi's account of the previous July in emphasising the limitations which it had managed to impose on the DC's federal project: the removal of the regional system's 'exclusive' legislative power; the reduction in number and importance of the policy areas in which the regional system would have jurisdiction; and the creation of autonomous provinces and comunes which had imposed a limitation even on the regional system's administrative power.(7)

It can be seen that while this document represented, once again, an implicit approval of concurrent legislative power, the perspective from which the assessment was written (and particularly the fact that even the limitation of the regional system's administrative power was seen as being beneficial) implied very clearly that if the party was to have any influence over the State laws establishing the principles within which the regional system could legislate those laws were likely to be highly restrictive.

Preventing the creation of a federal State, however, had not, it seemed, resulted in the forging of a State structure conducive to the progressive part of the Constitution, and Togliatti's outlook was consequently pessimistic. He said that he saw the political and constitutional future as being uncertain because of the conflicts which were likely to arise between those forces wishing to see the implementation of the progressive part and those forces who would use the reactionary part as an instrument of resistance to this:

"Commetterebbe perciò un serio errore politico e ingannerebbe il popolo chi si limitasse a dire: tutto ormai è scritto nella Costituzione: applichiamo quello che ivi è sancito e saranno realizzate tutte le aspirazioni popolari. Questo è sbagliato."(8)

In short, the preparatory document to the Sixth Congress stressed that when the DC 'shifted to the right',

"...erano posti tali freni all'attività legislativa che sarebbe stato quasi impossibile operare, in base alla Costituzione, profonde modificazioni strutturali."(9)

This effective abandonment of the Constitution did not result in a shift to illegality. Despite the fact that it was claimed that the most reactionary forces had emerged strengthened from the war and that the existing Government was

an instrument in the hands of American imperialism, the party reaffirmed its commitment to working within the democratic republic and to building a 'new type' of democracy.(10) Yet, there were inherent problems for the leadership in adopting such a position. Even if the progressive strategy had been based on Gramsci's writings, Togliatti was one of the few people at that time who had read them and, as Allum points out, the strategy was,

"too new, too subtle and too complex to be understood by the majority of the party's militants, whose only model of a Socialist revolution was the Bolshevik revolution of 1917."(11)

Many of the Party members had never taken Togliatti's line seriously anyway, thinking that it was a tactical cover whilst waiting for the mythical 'X' hour (whether or not backed by Soviet bayonets). One of the means by which party members had been re-assured had been through the constant emphasis on the importance of the party's participation in the drafting of the Constitution, which, it had been claimed, ensured the possibility of a democratic road to socialism. Consequently, the abandonment of the document, because of the failure to root 'progressive democracy' in it, and the concomitant refusal to shift to an unequivocal orthodox posture which rejected outright parliamentary institutions, left the strategy in a vacuum. Togliatti himself gave only

vague indications as to how the party might struggle for socialism in the new situation. The via italiana, he said, could not be invented or forged from abstract principles but rather arose from Italy's peculiar characteristics, traditions and conditions and the everyday struggle of the masses, the strategy consequently still being in a state of 'elaboration'. All he could offer, in fact, as concrete guidance was the maintenance of trade union unity; the unity of action of the Socialists and the Communists; the existence of a parliamentary regime; and the development of a mass movement.(12) What quickly filled this vacuum was the prospect of electoral victory. As Allum and Sassoon note,

"...the Party was careful to direct the /popular democratic/ front's energies into legal and electoral activities so far as possible. The use of the electoral campaign to divert the frustrations of the base led the PCI to proclaim that electoral victory for the front was assured. The prospect of revenge for earlier defeats canalised the energies of the militants..."(13)

Thus, whether or not the 'progressive democracy' had been genuinely based on national unity or purely on the expectation of an electoral victory for the Left, the period after September 1947 saw its replacement by a policy which, while emphasising themes of class struggle, rejected a shift to illegality and depended on an electoral victory for mainly

tactical reasons. Moreover, the strategic implications of this policy remained unclear.(14)

It was during this period, when the PCI publicly abandoned the part of the Constitution relating to the organisation of the State (because of its potential use by the forces of reaction to impede the development of the progressive democratic period), that the Party took up, in the few remaining debates in the Assembly, a rather confusing approach to the question of regional devolution.

The Neophytes of Regionalism

Two of the final sittings of the Constituent Assembly, in October and December 1947, dealing with the Constitution, were devoted to certain aspects of the regional system which had been postponed in the Summer. Although these did not concern the issue of legislative power (because, as seen in the previous chapter, that issue had been resolved definitively in July) but regional boundaries and State control over regional acts, the PCI's response to the issues showed a marked development when compared to its behaviour a few months before.

With respect to the question of regional boundaries there was an attempt by certain Christian Democrats to postpone to the future Parliament the task of defining the number and boundaries of the regions.(15) This was justified

not only because the local populations should be consulted but also on explicit political grounds:

"... invociamo oltre tutto che, commesso un errore, ed i precedenti, on. Togliatti, i precedenti non sono confortanti per il regionalismo italiano, si corregga e si dia la possibilità alla Regione di vivere domani senza originare ribellioni."(16)

This was one of the first signs of the influence of the Cold War on members of the governing parties' regionalism. The move was bitterly opposed by the chief architects of Title V, Ambrosini and Piccioni, who viewed it as an attempt to sabotage the entire reform after previous attempts to reduce the reform to one of "puro decentramento amministrativo" had all failed.(17) The defenders of the regional system were supported by the Communists who presented a motion invoking the traditional boundaries (although Nobile was for the postponement). This was defended by Togliatti himself on the grounds that De Martino's motion not only put in question the entire system which had been examined and decided upon, but it went contrary to the orientation that the Assembly had decided to give to the new State, through an underhand threat to remove the regional system's political autonomy:

"Qualcuno di noi poteva essere d'accordo con questa formulazione all'inizio del dibattito. Qualcuno di noi ha anche sostenuto questo punto di vista, cioè che fosse preferirsi un decentramento esclusivamente"

amministrativo. Ma questa non è stata la decisione dell'assemblea; questo non è stato il risultato dei nostri dibattiti che sono durati circa tre mesi. Abbiamo deciso per un decentramento regionale non solo amministrativo, cioè burocratico, ma politico, democratico e in parte anche legislativo, entro quei limiti che abbiamo fissati. Come possiamo oggi con un ordine del giorno contraddire a tutto quello che abbiamo fatto in questo senso?...Vogliamo avere le regioni costituite sulla base delle nostre decisioni nel più breve termine possibile..."(18) (my emphasis)

A similar attitude was taken regarding the question of State controls over regional acts. The Christian Democrat, Uberti, with others, proposed to delay such a decision to the future Parliament.(19) This would provide Parliament with the means to impose what was called a 'control of merit' as well as a 'control of legitimacy' over regional acts if it deemed it necessary, i.e. as well as judging the legality of regional legislation the Parliament would be able to pass a value judgement on that legislation. The PCI, which had argued unsuccessfully throughout the constitutional debates for the inclusion of both controls, now argued, through Gullo, only for the establishment of a control of legality. He confessed that,

"Ho parlato qui contro l'ordinamento regionale dello Stato; ma ora penso che se l'Assemblea ha approvato questo ordinamento, nulla sarebbe di più dannoso per il Paese che non

cercare con tutti i mezzi di ricavare dall'ordinamento stesso quanto di vantaggioso e di utile può dare. Non ci potrebbe essere nulla più dannoso che dar luogo, invece, a qualcosa di ibrido e di non ben definito" (my emphasis)

Having created the regional system, he continued, imposing a 'control of merit' would have detrimental effects, particularly on the regions of the Mezzogiorno. At this point, he addressed his comments to Riuni, one of the chief architects of Title V, and to the other devolutionists:

"quando avrete creato la Regione e avete ad essa demandato un'attività legislativa attraverso la quale la Regione deve provvedere da sola ai propri interessi, soddisfare i propri bisogni, voi sapevate che vi sono regioni dell'Italia meridionale che non possono avere risorse bastevoli a tale bisogno. Una volta che voi le scindevate, sia pure soltanto amministrativamente, dall'unità dello Stato, voi sapevate bene che creavate un ente che non poteva bastare a se stesso. Questo significa senz'altro condannare fin da questo momento tutte le regioni del Mezzogiorno a sottostare ad un controllo più penoso, ancor più dannoso di quello finora avuto..."(my emphasis)

Consequently, he argued, there should be as little control as possible imposed from the centre:

"Abbiamo creato le Regioni ... ebbene diamo a queste regioni ... la possibilità di esplicitare la loro attività in un regime di piena libertà, senza vedersi continuamente

ostacolati e controllati da
un'invadente centrale."(20)

This development was complemented by the PCI's attitude towards the Constitution's transitory provisions. On behalf of the party, Laconi pressed very strongly for a maximum period of a year to be allowed for the implementation of the regional system:

"Mi pare che dobbiamo stabilire prima di tutto questo termine, altrimenti è inutile aver creato l'ordinamento regionale".(21)

It can be seen, then, that at the final stage of the forging of the unitary-decentralised State, in the Assembly, the PCI adopted a position on the issue of regional devolution which amounted to a confession that the legislatively autonomous regional system which had been drafted was not that which had been actually desired by the Party, but that it was acting within the 'constitutional spirit' in accepting the decision of the Assembly and voting against motions which either postponed the implementation of Title V or made it work 'inefficiently'.

This position was significant in two respects. Firstly, the party's dissociation from the drafted project brought out fully the implications of the party's official position. i.e. that the value of the regional system consisted not so much in the principle of regional devolution it enshrined but

rather in the defeat of the DC's federal aspirations it represented. Indeed, in rejecting responsibility for the regional system's legislative nature, the party seemed to overcome its 'amnesia' as to what exactly happened in the debate. This position supports the argument presented in the previous chapter with regard to the PCI's approach in the debate up to July in that the party was, in a rare moment (and a moment subsequently largely overlooked), confessing the truth: that it had been against regional legislative power at the beginning of the debate, that there had not been a change of position during the debate and that, consequently, it had not obtained its original goal.

However, the more significant aspect of the new position was the second, more implicit, claim: that there was effectively no change of position now. The point was that the argument of implementing the Constitution in the 'spirit' intended by its makers was, if not false, at least disingenuous. Since the Assembly had not reached any definitive decisions on the articles it was discussing the Constitution had not been finalised with respect to these parts. Consequently, each party was entitled to present what amendments it wanted to, and if these involved postponing the implementation of a part of the Constitution, this was perfectly in keeping with the Constituent Assembly's procedure to date, as long as the President of the Assembly accepted the

motions as being within the Assembly's regulations. Thus, the PCI's new position, in order to be accepted at its face value, depended, ultimately, on the claim that the party believed that such motions went outside the Assembly's regulations, or that the party genuinely believed that the Constitution would be 'lopsided' if these motions were passed. The former was never stated, and the latter, of course, directly contradicted the party's official public position which was that it was precisely the limitations on the regional system's autonomy which were its 'positive' aspects. This suggests an ulterior motive, the nature of which was confirmed by Togliatti about a month later in a speech to the Parliamentary Commission of the Sicilian Regional Assembly, on the eve of the vote by the Constituent Assembly on the coordination of the Sicilian Statute with the Constitution:

"Devo ... dire, a titolo di confessione e autocritica, che il nostro partito aveva parecchie riserve sin dall'inizio sulla questione regionale: l'esperienza siciliana ci ha portato a superare queste riserve. Come sapete, si è tentato alla Costituente di rimettere in discussione e rimandare tutta la materia delle autonomie: noi ci siamo schierati contro. E perchè? Perchè l'esperienza siciliana fatta in base allo Statuto ci ha convinto."(22)

The only hint he gave as to how the Sicilian experience had influenced the party's general position on regional

autonomy was in noting that the composition of the new Sicilian regional government was less important than the innovation itself:

"c'è un governo regionale che ci soddisfa non come composizione, ma come centro dal quale si partono nuovi incitamenti alla formazione di nuovi quadri politici dirigenti. C'è insomma un miglioramento."(23) (my emphasis)

It might be said that if this, as implied, was applicable to the rest of Italy, Togliatti, in the space of a few words, had overturned one of the basic tenets of the progressive democratic strategy; except that, as already seen, the strategy had already effectively collapsed. The shift in position, therefore, has to be seen against the disintegration of the strategy launched in 1944; the rejection of the Constitution's formal provisions for the exercise of power as being conducive to a democratic struggle for socialism; and the replacement of the strategy with a tactically oriented policy which waited on the outcome of the elections.

In this context (and in the context of the double-edged approach to regional devolution described above), it would be difficult to argue that the PCI had, at this point, altered its view on the contribution that legislatively autonomous regional governments could make to the renovation

of Italy. On the contrary, it would appear that the party had become aware of the value of regionalism in a very different context. The magnitude and likely permanence of the Cold War was now evident. It not only precluded the possibility of resurrecting the coalition of national unity but had prompted a 'Christ versus Communism' election campaign on the part of the governing parties. While this did not completely rule out the possibility of electoral victory for the Left it made the probable effects of an electoral defeat seem increasingly daunting. The party might be forced into a desperate rear-guard action which, on the assumption that it rejected a shift to illegality, would require the mobilisation of all possible institutional and organisational resources in order to survive. Sub-national governments might provide useful 'ports in a storm', particularly as the party would probably benefit from Italy's tradition of territorially concentrated voting patterns: the 1946 elections had already indicated that the PCI would probably inherit a large part of the old Socialist 'red belt', this meaning that the two parties would be able to carry on the tradition of isole rosse. In the event of electoral victory, of course, the nature of Title V left scope either to prevent the immediate implementation of the regional system or to curtail its autonomy.

If this was an essentially tactical manoeuvre, then, which saw regional governments as offering useful 'ports in a

storm', its flaw was that it rested on a shaky assumption: that in the event of an electoral defeat of the Left, the new governing parties, as good liberal-democrats, would implement the regional system. This assumption had strategic implications for the new position (whether or not the leadership was aware of them), which would surface only after the 1948 elections.

Christian Democracy instead of Progressive Democracy.

The victory of the Christian Democratic Party in the 1948 elections was considerable. It increased its share of the popular vote by over 13 per cent, obtaining 48.5 per cent and an absolute majority in the Chamber of Deputies. The Popular Democratic Front, on the other hand, lost 10 per cent of its vote, obtaining 183 seats in the Chamber.

Despite the DC's absolute majority De Gasperi chose to govern with a coalition of parties (the Liberals, Republicans and Social Democrats), and a series of 'centrist' coalitions resulted. The reformist capabilities of these coalitions were constrained by a variety of factors: firstly, a consensus had to be formulated not only between the various parties of the coalition but also between the factions within the DC, of which the progressive wing (represented by Dossetti and La Pira) had been considerably weakened. Secondly, the DC had been brought to power on a wide-ranging social base which

tended to reflect the dualistic nature of Italian society, presenting the party with a dilemma: since its support in the South had been from the traditional agrarian interests, it was difficult to implement progressive policies in the very region which needed them most.(24) Thirdly, any reform, to be effective, needed the consent and cooperation of the bureaucracy (or at least the overcoming of its vested interests through modernisation) and a degree of approval from Confindustria and the Vatican. Finally, the government was confronted with a strong 'delegitimised' Communist Party whose exclusion from power was regarded as paramount by all parties.

This is not to say that reforms were not passed during this period. Nevertheless, one of the main victims of the above situation was the Constitution. What Di Palma describes as "orienting the Constitution in a majoritarian direction"(25) involved, on the part of the DC, non-implementation of many of the Constitution's norme programmatiche (that is, norms requiring enabling legislation for their implementation, as opposed to norme precettive which were immediately applicable). Thus, much of the first part of the Constitution, concerning the rights of citizens and obligations of the government, was not acted upon, and for the second part, those institutions which would have had the effect of reducing the power of Parliament and the executive were largely ignored or subjected to delay: the Constitutional

Court, the Supreme Council of the Judiciary, the National Council of Economy and Labour, the regional system and the referendum. (26)

Furthermore, legislative activities, whether concerning constitutional matters or not, attempted to undermine certain guarantees enshrined in the Constitution and to tilt the balance of power further towards the executive: the civil defence law; maintenance of parts of the Fascist penal code; the polivalente law, which aimed at granting police greater powers of repression against 'violent threats' to Constitutional democracy; a law transferring to the government legislative powers in a series of economic matters; proposals to limit or abolish the right to strike; the 1953 'swindle law' (legge truffa) which would grant nearly two-thirds of the seats of the Chamber to a party or coalition of parties obtaining a simple majority in an election; the 1953 Scelba Law on the regional system which had the effect of denying the regional governments any genuine autonomy if they ever came into existence; finally, the retention, through inaction, of the 1923 decrees of Mussolini governing the organisation of the bureaucracy. (27)

This 'majoritarian' policy, however, had its drawbacks, as Di Palma and Tarrow stress: it was anti-Constitutional, providing the PCI with an effective anti-government, anti-Fascist and legitimising platform; and it was defensive and

reactionary, moving the DC towards the right, thus depriving it of its reformist image and a large section of its social base, while increasing its dependence on the traditional conservative interests and the old clientelistic system of the South.(28)

The DC's response to this situation, a response most forcefully exerted by the new Secretary, Fanfani, was to attempt to strengthen the party organisation, particularly in the South and build the DC into a modern mass party. This took the form of gradually replacing the old type of clientelism and patronage (based on the individual) with its own brand, based on the organisation. This was done not only through infiltrating the traditional areas of the bureaucracy at national and local levels, but through a rapid expansion of the State sector of the economy (the parastate). It was this which enabled the party to link itself to important sectors of society and to maintain its inter-class base while becoming less dependent on the financial support of the large economic interests, and keeping rival factions within the party content. New institutions and concepts such as the 'Fund for the South' (Cassa per il Mezzogiorno), and planning, became vehicles for patronage, and the 'economic miracle' which was just 'taking off' facilitated the implementation of such a strategy. As Tarrow notes with respect to DC action in the South:

"Patronage is the basis of the 'new party' but it is patronage channeled through an organisation, rather than through a chain of individuals. Moreover, it is the mass patronage of the modern State, distributed within the framework of a progressive programme of economic development." (29)

It is these developments which help to explain why the implementation of the regional system became anathema to large sections of the governing parties.

The Regional System: A Threat to the Governing Coalition.

Title V of the Constitution, incorporating nineteen articles of the Constitution (articles 114-133), and providing for the establishment of autonomous regional governments based on a parliamentary model, endowed with certain legislative, administrative and financial powers and overseered by certain central controls, was subject to enabling legislation before it could become effective. In the first instance, this was a matter of fulfilling two transitory requirements of the Constitution (VIII and IX). These called for the drafting of legislation for firstly, the electoral system for the provincial and regional councils, and secondly, the regulation of the transfer of central government powers, officials and dependents to the regional governments, and the adjustment of laws according to the requirements of local and regional

legislative power. This legislation was to be passed within, respectively, one and three years of the date on which the Constitution came into force. In addition to this there were the requirements embodied in Title V itself: in total, three constitutional laws, eighteen ordinary laws and a Presidential decree were required before the nineteen articles became fully effective; the most important of these relating to provisions for financial autonomy and the internal organisation of the regional system.(30)

That the DC was reluctant to carry out these requirements was quickly revealed after the 1948 elections when certain regionalists began to speak of a reversal in position of the two main parties.(31) While this change in attitude was not shared by all members of the DC (particularly its Left wing which became increasingly concerned about the abandonment of a central plank of the party's doctrine)(32), it found sympathy with a number of traditionally devolutionist Republicans and revived the traditionally devolutionist Right wing of Italian politics as a strong debating force (the Liberals, Monarchists and Fascists). As a result, the regional debate continued, but in a new vein: should the Constitution be implemented or revised?(33)

The dangers that the introduction of the regional system posed for the DC were obvious. In the first instance, it would have disruptive effects within the governing

coalition. The Liberals, with the aid of some of the Conservative press, had quickly launched a campaign for the removal of Title V from the Constitution and had made it clear that they would not support any action on the part of the Government with respect to the implementation of Title V.(34)

Secondly, the introduction of the regional system would involve a general political consultation to which the party was averse. The swing to the left in the 1951-52 local elections confirmed the DC's fears and prompted the drafting of the 'swindle law'.(35) Moreover, a regional analysis of the three elections of the first legislature indicated that the Communists would obtain absolute majorities in three regions (Emilia, Tuscany and Umbria) while the DC would obtain such majorities in nine. This would mean that the 'straight majority rule' then being exercised by the Government at the centre could not continue. The fears publicly engendered by the prospect of Communist regional governments was the most widely cited reason to explain the Government's immobilism. Einaudi's rather apologetic judgement in 1952 was typical of the period:

"The chance that such Communist regional governments might proclaim their accession to the Soviet Union of Socialist Republics is one that the government is not ready to take. It is true that by falling back upon the relevant protective clauses of the Constitution the government could dissolve these Communist regional bodies, but the task would not be an

easy one and might entail civil war." (36)

A close reading of the contents of Title V would hardly render these claims realistic, but they exemplify both the propaganda and real fears existing in the polarised political climate of the 1950's. De Gasperi did not seem to be under any illusions about the connection between the Communist menace and regional autonomy (37), and Scelba (the Chairman of the DC in 1952), declared the party's inaction as serving the interests of Italian democracy. (38)

Thirdly, while losing certain areas to Communist control, other areas stood to come more closely under the influence of the old landowning gentry of the South. Local government patronage and State support of that privilege had been the foundation of the landowners' dominance in the South (the 'Southern System'). (39) As already seen, the DC was beginning to undermine this by making the South more dependent on the bureaucracy and the parastate (and thus the DC). The implementation of the regional system was likely to free the South from dependence on the DC and shift the focus of patronage to the regional governments. To prevent this the party organisation in the South needed to be strengthened. This argument was also used to oppose the call of the DC left that the government should respect the Constitution. (40)

Finally, the introduction of the regional system entailed reform of the public administration, involving deconcentration and the loss of power and prestige. Both the government and the bureaucracy were hostile to this, particularly since it would mean suppression of the most important agent of central government, the prefect, or at least the loss of his powers to the new institutions.(41) Despite the wide consensus which existed during the Constitutional debates on the evils of the prefectural system, the central government's dependence on a strong presence 'in the field' had increased and the system had been fully reinstated.(42) The most immediate effect of the replacement of the prefect would be the loss of the government's control over the local authorities and less direct control over law and order. In view of the spontaneous demonstrations which followed an assassination attempt on Togliatti in July 1948 this was held to be very pertinent.(43)

In short, the regional system represented a threat to the growth of the DC's influence in the Italian State and society. Nevertheless, the party did not explicitly disavow Title V of the Constitution and continued to affirm a commitment to its 'gradual' implementation. Guido Gonella (the party Secretary in 1953), for example, after noting that decentralisation was an essential plank of the DC's programme,

referred to the Communists' and Socialists' 'political abuse' of local governments, and commented that,

"Unfortunately we work in an historical period in which the regional reforms must occur gradually."(44)

The party's interpretation of Title V, however, seemed to have changed since the Constitutional debates. Giuseppe Bettiol justified the DC's proposal for strict central controls over the regional system by saying that,

"There is already a tendency to make the autonomy of the regions too great ... Our intention is to create an instrument of administrative decentralisation, not to decentralise the political power of the State."(45)

The Government's legislative record demonstrated this. At the end of 1948 two bills were presented to Parliament in accordance with the two transitory requirements. The first aimed at implementing an indirect electoral procedure but the bill did not go beyond the Committee stage. The second, which dealt with the internal organisation of the regional system, its legislative power and central government controls, took five years to reach the statute books and interpreted the pertinent clauses of the Constitution in such a restrictive fashion that it has been described as having "deliberately

placed the region into what was for all practical purposes an administrative and legal straight-jacket."(46)

The most important part of this bill related to the regional governments' legislative power which, as seen in previous chapters, had been the most divisive element during the Constitutional debates. The parties of the Left now bitterly learnt the difference between 'exclusive' and 'concurrent' legislative power. The former had simply required regional laws to be in accordance with the 'Republican order', while the latter had to be in accordance with the 'laws of the Republic'. It will be recalled that the PCI had argued against even the concurrent form of power on the grounds that, in practice, it amounted to the exclusive form of power. The government now saw fit to introduce the 'laws of the Republic' by stipulating that the regional governments could legislate only after the 'fundamental principles' had been enunciated for each individual area of legislation (article 9 of the law). Moreover, it was stated that laws subsequently modifying the fundamental principles automatically nullified regional laws which conflicted with the modifications, the regional governments having to make the necessary amendments within ninety days (article 10 of the law).(47)

The PCI: Marginalised and Divided

The crushing electoral defeat of April 1948 and the growth of the DC's influence in the State and society compounded the problems the PCI had been grappling with since September of the previous year. On the one hand, the defeat increased the pressure on the leadership from the Soviet Union which, as already seen, had been demanding an orthodox line since September of the previous year. An indication of the degree of pressure was Togliatti's response to the expulsion of the Yugoslav Communist Party from the Cominform for refusing to give up its 'national road' to Socialism. He followed the Soviet line apparently uncritically. On the other hand, the electoral defeat had repercussions within the party itself. As already noted, when the progressive democratic strategy collapsed after September 1947 it was replaced with more orthodox action and a promise of electoral victory. The defeat and the subsequent attempt on Togliatti's life revealed the dangers of the doppiezza inherent in Togliatti's line: there were spontaneous demonstrations and militant action during which hidden partisan weapons were brought out, and the leadership feared that an insurrection could take place.(48)

The doppiezza, however, was exacerbated by divisions within the party leadership in the years after the electoral defeat. The party's more orthodox wing, around Pietro Secchia and Giulio Senega, confronted with a strategic 'vacuum',

attempted to shift the party line radically leftwards. The debate that ensued seemed, prima facie, to concern only party organisation, the strengthening of which became one of the main concerns of the PCI during this period.(49) Nevertheless, any debate over party organisation involved fundamental choices concerning party strategy since, in the Communist analysis, these were inseparable. As Secchia himself noted,

"L'organizzazione non è che lo strumento della politica. Una netta separazione tra politica e organizzazione è perciò impossibile."(50)

Orthodox Struggle or Democratic Rebirth?

The presence of Secchia amongst the leadership was an indication of the strength and persistence of the traditional Communist activist in the party. Giorgio Galli described him as being,

"the expression of a Left-wing of the PCI formed of apparatchiki members of working class origin and ex-partisans who saw in Togliatti the person responsible for the moderate political line they opposed."(51)

This is not to say that Secchia was in favour of a seizure of the State in the late 1940s and early 1950s. He was clearly against such action in July 1948 after the attempt on Togliatti's life. He was, however, in favour of preparing the party for such a moment. Indeed, his rejection of a seizure of

the State was justified purely on tactical grounds: the objective and subjective conditions were not conducive to armed revolt; when they were the party would not hesitate to call the masses to arms.(52) This implied a strategy very different from Togliatti's. Secchia's line called for, firstly, a return to more traditional organisational methods through a reinforcement of the cadres (those actively involved and ideologically aware of the cause) at the expense of the mass (those supporting the cause only through membership and voting in elections). This involved intensive recruitment from the industrial working class and thus the concentration of party activity in the industrial North, his own power base.(53) Secondly, the line required more orthodox action which emphasised class struggle rather than national unity, particularly in responding to Government action such as the passing of the 'swindle law'. As Mafai notes,

"... mentre Togliatti pensa che con una grande battaglia politico-parlamentare si deve riuscire a incidere anche sullo schieramento delle forze politiche intermedie, Secchia pensa soprattutto a una mobilitazione di massa: scioperi, manifestazioni di strada, scontri con la polizia."(54)

The 'Southern' faction of the party, led by people such as Amendola, Alicata and Grieco, was vehemently opposed to this line. The structural dualism of Italian society had

effects not only on the DC (see above) but also on the PCI: as Tarrow shows, in the post-war period the party in the South differed considerably from its counterpart in the North in terms of membership, organisational structure and strength, leadership capacity, electoral support and the perception of the nature of the tasks to be carried out.(55) This led to a fundamentally different conception of strategy. The party had always been aware of the difference in development between the North and the South, this having been a major argument for a centralised State. Now with the party in opposition, the strategy in the South became concerned with removing 'feudal residues' and completing a 'flawed' bourgeois democratic revolution rather than problems to do with a transition to Socialism:

"The essential part of the resolution of the problem of the Mezzogiorno is to carry out a bourgeois democratic revolution in the countryside."(56)

This was the aim of the campaign for the 'Rebirth of the South' (Rinascita del Mezzogiorno) and the creation of the 'Southern Front' (Fronte del Mezzogiorno) which involved a loose mobilisation of different forces behind themes such as agrarian reform, ownership of the land and the defence of industry. The long-term goal was that of forging Gramsci's proposed alliance between the peasantry of the South and the industrial workers of the North since this was viewed as

essential to winning over the middle strata and ending the old ruling class's dominance in the South. This policy required the strengthening of the party organisation through a vast expansion of its membership, directing the party 'outwards' and anchoring it in the fabric of Italian society so that it could attract allies beyond the working class.(57)

The failure of the progressive democratic strategy, then, coupled with the effects of the structural dualism of Italian society, threatened to split the party. Because of the importance Togliatti attached to the Soviet link as a means of distinguishing the PCI from other parties and buttressing its ideological objective and because the mass membership was currently disillusioned by the results of party strategy, he recognised that it was necessary to maintain a degree of orthodox behaviour and a high level of ideological polemic against bourgeois democracy. If his encouragement of this behaviour strengthened Secchia's position, the latter was fully supported by the Soviet Union and was recognised as a potential alternative leader to Togliatti (it has been argued that Stalin's offer to Togliatti of the leadership of the Cominform was in the knowledge that Secchia was a likely successor to Togliatti.(58)). Furthermore, Secchia was in an influential position because he was responsible for party organisation.

On the other hand, Togliatti's assessment of the long-term viability of Secchia's line had not changed in the aftermath of the electoral defeat. Writing in 1958, Togliatti noted that there were two constant dangers facing the party during this period: first, that it would, when confronted with severe government provocation, remove itself from the 'democratic terrain' thus justifying further persecution; second, that it would become 'closed' in "una sterile attività di pura protesta, di semplice difesa delle nostre posizioni e dei nostri diretti", thus overlooking the primary task of advancing "la lotta per il rinnovamento della società italiana e per il socialismo,"(59)

Implicit in these statements was the awareness that a strategy based on Secchia's proposals and followed to its logical conclusion meant one of two things: successful insurrection or isolation. The former had been ruled out by Togliatti before the svolta di Salerno of 1944, and conditions had hardly changed thereafter. If anything, Lenin's two conditions for the seizure of the State were even more remote than before: the election results showed that the masses had not reached such a level of disaffection with the regime that they were prepared to destroy it, and the State apparatus was clearly not in a process of disintegration.(60)

This left Togliatti with a limited scope for analysis: since the forging of 'progressive democracy' had failed, the

analysis dictated a restoration of the socio-economic order which had underpinned the Fascist regime, the essential component of this order being the dominance of the large capitalist groups(61). The destruction of this order, Togliatti had claimed since the 1930s, had to be based on a wide alliance of democratic forces. As isolation seemed inevitable, therefore, Togliatti aimed to keep open the possibility of renewing the dialogue with the more progressive elements of the Catholic movement. This could be done only through a continuation of the appeal for national unity:

"La condizione pregiudiziale sta nel ritorno a quella politica di unità nazionale, che ha fatto la Resistenza e la Repubblica..."(62)

A policy of national unity required the consolidation and expansion of the concept of the nuovo partito, a mass party with a national character rather than a cadre party restricted to the working class. This left Togliatti very clearly in alliance with the Right of the party and its Southern faction, the alliance remaining implicit until 1953 when a combination of domestic factors (a big increase in the PCI vote in the South and a decrease in the North in the 1953 elections) and international factors (the death of Stalin and the beginning of détente) led to the demise of Secchia.(63)

The official party strategy which emerged from the divisions amongst the leadership had two aspects: firstly,

there was a return to the Resistance and the CLN strategy of forging national unity from below through the cultivation of a myriad of organismi di base which were based on a series of general objectives attracting a broad range of classes. Longo laid great stress on this social strategy at the Sixth Congress.(64) Secondly, there was an emphasis on 'constructive' or 'responsible' opposition at the political level. An analysis by the party press of the parliamentary group's activity in the first legislature emphasized,

"il carattere positivo e costruttivo della sua azione, per cui si è presentata non solo come forza contraposta alla maggioranza stessa, cioè come forza capace non solo di criticare ma di dirigere e di governare."(65)

The party's attitude towards governmental legislation, it was claimed, was based on 'national interests' rather than obstructionism.(66) Indeed, the high percentage of legislation passed with the support of the PCI (either at committee level or on the floor of the House) has been the subject of close analysis. During these years bills dealing with the referendum, the Constitutional Court, the regional system, public security, social security and housing were all voted by the PCI. Filibustering was used only on three occasions, in the debates on the Civil Defence law, the

electoral law of 1953 and on joining the Atlantic Alliance.(67)

The political and social aspects of the strategy had one common focus: the implementation of the Constitution and this became the pivot on which Togliatti's entire strategy turned. It was declared as "il compito fondamentale della classe operaia e del partito nel momento attuale."(68) The reasons for this were significant.

The Return to the Constitution

The Constitution and the anti-Fascist pact

It has often been noted that the PCI's campaign for the Constitution during the Cold War period was grounded in defensive and tactical reasoning. Mammarella, for example, writes that,

"...dopo il 18 aprile, nell'atmosfera persecutoria che si crea sia nel paese che nelle fabbriche i temi della difesa e dell'attuazione della Costituzione, e soprattutto dei principi di libertà da essa affermati, diventano l'esclusiva e costante preoccupazione di un PCI che si sente direttamente minacciato nella sua capacità d'azione e nella sua esistenza."(69)

This can be gleaned from the fact that the dominant theme of the campaign was the DC's 'moral guilt' in betraying

what had been a pact between various democratic forces. Terracini emphasised that the Constitution had not been approached on the basis of ideological or class arguments but represented a natural continuation of,

"...l'impegno assunto dalle varie correnti politiche e dai vari ceti sociali per la comune impresa della liberazione...la costituzione rappresenta un momento di incontro, in una situazione particolare, delle principali forze operanti in Italia sul piano democratico.."(70)

Thus, one of the main themes of the campaign was that the Constitution should be respected because of its nature as a pact. This argument was used, for example, about those parts of the Constitution to which the party had been originally hostile, such as the regional system:

"La Costituzione in questa /Title V/ come nelle altre materie, segna un punto di incontro e realizza un accordo...noi vi chiediamo di rispettare questo accordo, di attuare la Costituzione, di rientrare nel quadro che la Costituzione delinea."(71)

There was no specific reference to the regional system at either the Seventh Party Congress in 1951 or at the Fourth National Conference in 1955, the call for its introduction remaining implicit in the general demand for respect of the Constitution. Seen from this perspective, the Constitution represented the best refuge for the PCI to fall back to in the

hostile and polarised climate of the 1950's. It was the most effective stick with which to beat the government, since it linked the government's betrayal of the Constitution with its anti-Communism and presented the PCI as the main guarantor of the anti-Fascist pact. This provided the most effective buttress against the anti-Communism campaign that denied the integrity of the party's commitment to pluralism and democratic values. Finally, for Togliatti, it represented a focus for party unity and, at the same time, an effective guard against the growth of the influence of Secchia's line.

However, the very logic of the Communist conception of the Constitution as enunciated during the Constitutional debates had implications which went beyond the document's instrumental value and which the PCI did not hesitate to exploit. It will be recalled that the PCI's conception of the Constitution had been grounded in its interpretation of the nature of Italian society and the differing strengths of the major social and political forces in the aftermath of the Fascist period: the renovation of the State and society had been considered as of paramount importance to ideological considerations; a widespread consensus had been thought to exist on this; therefore, the drafting of a progressive democratic constitution (deemed essential to such a renovation) had been considered a possibility. The party's

commitment to this, it had been claimed, had been signified by the refusal to push for a socialist constitution.

This position, of course, might have been berated as a trap: at the same time as proposing the method by which the Constitution should be drawn up, Togliatti had been presenting an a priori formulation of the result of that method: 'progressive democracy' which would have been neither bourgeois nor socialist but a transition period providing for the emergence of a new ruling class (the working class) and the social and economic transformation of Italian society.

This meant, though, that in the Communist analysis the Constitution's nature as a pact had been inseparable from its contents, and the essential point was, as the party had earlier admitted, that the pact had collapsed with the ousting of the Left from the Government. Moreover, as noted earlier, the party had claimed that those parts of the Constitution which had not been finalised by that date had been affected by the new hostile climate, with the result that the final document was divided between a 'progressive' and a 'reactionary' part. This apparent fact was now carefully side-stepped. Laconi, for example, dated the existing 'crisis of Parliament' to the,

"...momento esatto in cui, rotta l'intesa tra tutte le forze antifasciste che aveva portato alla liberazione del Paese e alle riforme istituzionali e costituzionali, si è voluto porre per la prima volta a

base della maggioranza e del governo una piattaforma di carattere ideologico pregiudiziale ad ogni questione programmatica."(72) (my emphasis)

It had been, of course, precisely the 'institutional reforms' which had not been finalised when the anti-Fascist coalition collapsed. This fresh view on the duration of the pact, however, allowed a re-evaluation of its contents. Thus, at the same time as calling for the respect of the Constitution as a pact, the PCI followed through the logic of this position and linked the intended goals of such a method to the actual results. Indeed, the return to the Constitution both kept alive (or resurrected) the progressive democratic strategy and constituted the first signs of a decisive shift in the party's conception of what the structure of the State should be within the context of that strategy.

The Constitution and Progressive Democracy

Because of the way in which it had been forged, Togliatti argued that the Constitution represented the political and social foundations of Italian society.(73) Failure to implement the document amounted not just to a betrayal of the nation, but to a genuine coup d'état, because it meant failing to carry out the goals of the Constitution. The traditional ruling class had retained power working within

an unchanged State, the traditional socio-economic order remaining intact. In other words, the germ of the Resistance's 'revolution' was contained in the Constitution but the usurpation of power by Italy's reactionary class was preventing the document's implementation. Consequently, renovation in all its forms was regarded as ultimately dependent on the implementation of the Constitution:

"I Comunisti ritengono che esiste un programma e un patto solenne, intorno a cui la stragande maggioranza degli italiani può stringersi e che può essere la solida base di un nuovo governo, il quale garantisca la pace, l'indipendenza, la rinascita. Questo patto è la Costituzione repubblicana ..."(74) (my emphasis)

The renovation promised by the Constitution was seen to lie in four main areas: firstly, the respect of democratic liberties which had been violated through a failure to reform the public security codes and to repeal the Civil Defence Law(75); secondly, a re-orientation of foreign policy away from the dominance of 'American imperialism' towards a policy of peace(76); thirdly, the implementation of structural reforms, the germs of which were to be found in the main innovatory aspects of the Constitution and which had been included by those forces who had wished to provide Italy with a new social and economic base (77); fourthly, the formal arrangements for the exercise of power.

It should be said that the linking of the Constitution in the first three areas to the goals of progressive democracy was not inconsistent with the party's position during the Constitutional debates, since the renovation of Italian society had always been declared as being dependent on these aspects. However, it was the linking of the fourth aspect, the way in which power would be managed in the new State, which marked a radical departure in the Communist analysis. The PCI argued that the convergence of democratic forces in the drafting of the Constitution had resulted in a State structure whose territorial and functional distribution of power was unequivocal. Lelio Basso, a Left-wing Socialist whose views were fully endorsed by the Communists, described the system as being based on principles analagous to those of the British system: an antithesis between the majority and opposition in which limits were placed on the power of the former and specific rights attributed to the latter. The ruling coalition's power was limited through the Constitutional laws; the recourse to the popular referendum; the regional system; the independence of the magistrature and the Constitutional Court. The rights attributed to the opposition were two-fold: the right to check and criticise the activity of the majority party, and the right to become the majority.(78) It was claimed that neither of these rights had been respected since 1948:

"sta di fatto che tutti gli istituti previsti dalla Costituzione per liquidare l'organizzazione fascista dello Stato e per limitare ed equilibrare i poteri dell'esecutivo, solo il Parlamento è stato posto in essere."(79)

Furthermore, this one remaining 'check' was declared to be under the control of a docile, reactionary majority which supported the executive's unlimited power and denied the opposition its constitutional rights.(80) The government, therefore, was held to be acting as unconstitutionally as Mussolini had done, this being viewed as undermining the very basis of Italy's representative democracy.(81) In short, the PCI's view on how power was to be managed in the new State, as envisaged by the drafters of the Constitution, was based on what Di Palma has called a 'consociational' or 'synchronic' interpretation of the Constitution:

"According to it, the charter calls for the participation of all significant political forces in decisions at different levels and in different alliances, and corrects straight majority rule in a centralised State by giving the opposition an opportunity to share in the task of government and in the running of the territorial and functional system of checks and balances."(82)

For the Constitution to function correctly, two preliminary conditions were declared to be necessary: the

correct functioning of majority and opposition in Parliament (as already seen, the PCI itself attempted to promote the image of a responsible opposition party); and the implementation of the various organisms which made up the 'checks and balances' of the new regime. The regional system was a fundamental aspect of the latter:

"La lotta per le autonomie locali è...per noi, elemento integrante della lotta per la democrazia e per la Costituzione."(83)

There followed an attempt to re-evaluate the concept of regional devolution.

Regional Devolution and Progressive Democracy:

a Re-evaluation

It will be recalled that the PCI had claimed that its conception of the Constitution had been based on providing for three needs which had been deemed to be essential to the founding of progressive democracy and the consequent renovation of Italian society: freedom and popular sovereignty, moral and political unity, and social and economic progress. The concept of regional devolution had been rejected because, it had been claimed, it would have impeded the exercise of progressive democracy at all three levels (see Chapter One and Chapter Three). The 1950's saw a sudden reversal of this position.

Freedom and Popular Sovereignty

During the constitutional debates the PCI had claimed that its definition of popular sovereignty had arisen from the need for national unity, this having been a determining factor behind the promotion of parliamentary legislative sovereignty: the State was to be democratically shaped by a parliamentary dominance over the policy-making process. Now, it was precisely the 'unlimited legislative power' of the existing parliament which was viewed as limiting the expression of the popular will, and the transfer of power from centre to periphery, provided for in the Constitution, was identified as a fundamental part of a 'new form' of parliamentary democracy:

"la riforma autonomistica...impone un mutamento non soltanto della struttura di base dello Stato, ma anche dei metodi di legislazione e di governo dello Stato."(84)

This change was from a method of governing "attraverso una trafila che va dal capo di gabinetto del ministro dell'interno ai direttori generali, ai capidivisione, ai prefetti, ai segrateri comunali, ai marescialli dei carabinieri," to a "sistema di consultazione, di consenso, di accordo."(85) Indeed, the importance of the regional system in transforming the old method of government was shown by the fact that its implementation was a prerequisite for suppressing the institution which was symptomatic of the evils

of the old order - the prefectorial corps.⁽⁸⁶⁾ The significance of the new method, it was claimed, was that it had been a democratic response to the limitations of 'traditional Parliamentary democracy'. The Communists, Grieco argued, were "profondamente persuasi del valore democratico dell'istituto regionale", since they had long been aware of,

"l'esigenza della dilatazione della democrazia e delle sue forme statali, perchè la vecchia democrazia parlamentare non corrisponde più, da sola, ai nuovi bisogni della democrazia, non permette il contatto continuo e diretto fra lo Stato ed il popolo, non assicura il controllo continuo del popolo sui poteri statuali."⁽⁸⁷⁾

The real value of the regional system was, therefore, in the link it forged between the State and the people, since this was held to be essential to social and economic progress.

Social and economic progress

The debate on economic development in the 1950's centred mainly on the problem of the Mezzogiorno. As a consequence, regional autonomy, in the Communist analysis, became closely linked with the campaign for the 'Rebirth of the South' and was championed by that faction of the party. Government measures for the South, such as the establishment of the 'Fund for the South' and the Vanoni Plan, were opposed by the PCI on the grounds that they would provide for the

maintenance of privileged interests and the further penetration of national and foreign monopolistic capital.

For the PCI, the solution to the problems of the South was to be found in a democratic or 'self-motivated' revival.(88) This was to be achieved through the organisation, mobilisation and alliance formation of various classes, not only on a functional but on a territorial basis. The provinces and communes were to be the current focus of mobilisation but their task was also to mobilise support for the introduction of the regional system.(89) The regional system was to be the main constitutional means by which the population of the South would promote its own development.(90) This was one of the arguments used against the Scelba Law of 1953 i.e. that by restricting the regional system's legislative power in such draconian fashion it was betraying one of the fundamental social and political aims of the new institution:

"quello di consentire alle zone più arretrate, specie del Mezzogiorno, di raggiungere più rapidamente il livello delle regioni più progredite. Il governo, praticamente, intende che le regioni restino passivamente al suo rimorchio."(91)

As a result, the argument which had previously been used during the Constitutional debates, maintaining that legislatively autonomous regional governments would amount to

'reactionary outposts' and would impede social and economic development, was turned on its head:

"Per noi e quanti assieme a noi onestamente elaborarono la parte programmatica della Costituzione, l'organizzazione regionale doveva precisamente facilitare questa frana /dell'invecchiamento e putrido regime fondato sui rapporti economici e sociali oggi esistenti/, cioè il rinnovamento sociale e politico del nostro Paese condizione della nostra ascesa come nazione."(92)

The regional system was still perceived as a 'brake', but now it was an obstacle to the forces of reaction rather than to those of national reconstruction. In this way regional devolution became closely linked with both Amendola's campaign for the rebirth of the South and also with the PCI's strategy of forging national unity 'from below' by acting at the level of civil society: regional devolution was now inseparable from national unity.

National Unity

The main arguments used against the Commission of 75's project had been that the provision for regional exclusive and concurrent legislative powers amounted to the 'fragmentation' of national legislative power which would threaten the unity of the country. Now, the organic unity of the country was perceived as being enshrined in article 5 of the Constitution

which stated that, "La Repubblica, una e indivisibile, riconosce e promuove le autonomie locali". In this article, Laconi said,

"c'è la fiducia nell' unità organica del paese, c'è il desiderio di fondare su questa unità organica, su questa unità reale del paese, l'unità dello Stato."(93)

In opposing the Scelba Law, Laconi argued that the unity of the country could not be achieved through a centralised State or through solutions imposed 'from above'.(94) The Law was described as overturning the principle embodied in article 5 of the Constitution and instituting "un regime altocommissionale"(95). It was, La Rocca said, a means of formally respecting the requirements of the Constitution, while betraying the 'spirit' of the document by ensuring that the future regional system would be placed under strict central control.(96)

Thus, through a re-interpretation of the principles on which its conception of the Constitution was based, the PCI was able to draw a parallel between the contents of the Constitution and the original goals of progressive democracy with respect to the distribution of power between centre and periphery. Popular sovereignty was now conceived as being best exercised through a 'diffusion' of legislative power; social and economic progress was seen as being dependent upon

mobilisation of forces 'from below' through sub-national structures; and national unity was conceived of in terms of providing for the full expression of Italy's territorial diversity. In short, regionalism was suddenly an essential factor in the emergence of a new ruling class based around the Communist Party:

"noi che abbiamo la forza e l'impulso delle nuove classi dirigenti, è evidente che siamo interessati fisicamente, organicamente, ad ogni processo democratico, e in questo senso ... siamo interessati all'attuazione della riforma regionalistica."(97)

It should be said that the PCI's interpretation of the Constitution and the regional system it contained was not inaccurate. As seen, the Fascist experience had resulted in a wide consensus on the need for a Constitution which would be replete with checks and balances and, to some extent, this had been achieved. The PCI, however, had not been part of that consensus; its own strategy had been rooted in a different Constitutional conception to that contained in the drafted document. The party's consociational interpretation, in fact, represented a complete renunciation of the 'new course' which had been based on planning and directing the development of the economy through working-class control over the centralised State. Yet, in renouncing the 'new course' the problem with the new position was its limitations. At a general level, it

was fundamentally defensive in orientation. Rather than appearing as a positive strategy for socialism it resembled a defensive response to the Government's centralist policy. This was emphasised by an almost total absence of a strategic framework which would show why a Constitution which was replete with checks and balances should be conducive to the achievement of socialism in Italy, and a failure properly to define the Party's belief system with respect to the concepts it referred to.

Regional devolution proved to be a striking example of this. The arguments relating to the issue were not presented in the above synthesised manner, but were rather haphazard and scarce. More importantly, in attempting to define the party's belief system with respect to the issue, and to explain the Communist approach during the Constitutional debates, there seemed to be a retreat to the ambivalence which had characterised the declarations made before the convening of the Constituent Assembly.

'Moderate Regionalism': a New Heritage

"La Costituente ha approvato, come tutti ricordano, un ordinamento regionale temperato, corrispondente suppergiù a quella che sino dall'inizio era stata l'opinione prevalente del nostro Partito."(98)

Crisafulli and Grieco, in the only two detailed attempts in (1949 and 1951) to define the PCI's belief system with respect to the question of regional devolution, followed the general line laid down by Togaliatti above. Crisafulli, for example, stated that,

"Noi non siamo mai stati, è vero, accesi regionalisti in base a pregiudiziali di principio ... ma ci siamo battuti costantemente, sin dalla liberazione di Napoli, per il potenziamento delle autonomie comunali ..."(99)

Grieco similarly described the PCI's position as having been "una posizione regionalista moderata (salvo per le isole e per centri e regioni di frontiera)", and confessed that the positions held by the PCI during the various periods from 1921 onwards were not identical precisely because of the degree to which 'situations' change.(100) Both writers failed to mention one concrete aspect of this 'moderate regionalism', preferring instead to concentrate on the apparent grounds on which it had been drawn up. Crisafulli argued that these grounds had been largely 'functional' (to what extent a regional system could enlarge the democratic base of the country and aid the solution of national problems), and Grieco used the issue of agrarian reform to justify the origins of the Party's regionalism:

"Alla base della questione regionale vi è, e resta, la questione agraria e contadina ... la questione contadina

ha bisogno, per la sua soluzione, di una sempre più dilatazione della democrazia, per estendere la partecipazione dei contadini alla direzione statale ..."

Both writers further attempted ideologically to ground this still undefined position. Crisafulli, the Party's legal expert, argued that the party's position had been perfectly in keeping with Marxist-Leninist doctrine because it had not been based on a 'mechanical application of ideological schemes'. While it was true, he said, that Marx and Engels had argued for a unitary centralised State, this had never excluded "una larga autonomia amministrativa locale".

Grieco, meanwhile, representing the Southern 'faction' within the PCI, found the party's regionalist heritage in Gramsci. Through the forging of a strategy aimed at a revolutionary alliance between workers and peasants, Gramsci had led the party to search for an historical explanation of the rise of regionalist movements, particularly in the South and in the islands:

"Trovammo queste basi nella questione agraria e nelle idee e nei problemi che essa suscita sul piano di rapporti più strettamente politici e della organizzazione di Stato."

The bourgeois-democratic revolution had brought with it more advanced democratic claims at the political level and, consequently, proposals for new forms of State organisation

adequate to the revolution's development. This had led, he continued, to a critique of the bourgeoisie's regionalism and its policy in the South, and from this critique and from various regionalist programmes elaborated after Unification, "ricavammo quanto era ancora valido a dar concretezza alla nostra linea strategica rivoluzionaria e lo introducemmo nel nostro programma d'azione, ne facemmo parte integrante della nostra lotta socialista" (the concept being introduced into the programme being, it would seem, 'moderate regionalism').(101)

Thus, between them, Grieco and Crisafulli failed to make explicit either the PCI's position during the debate in the Constituent Assembly or its current position. Moreover, in the attempt ideologically to justify this ambivalence both, and Crisafulli in particular, seemed to suggest that the position was more moderate than that finally incorporated in the Constitution i.e. regional administrative rather than legislative autonomy. Indeed, as Crisafulli indicated, Title V of the Constitution was not quite so accommodating to the PCI's original proposals as the simultaneous reversal of the meanings behind its constitutional principles suggested:

"Certo, non tutte le disposizioni costituzionali sull'ordinamento regionale sono egualmente felici; ma nel complesso ci troviamo di fronte a principi sostanzialmente accettabili, anche perchè i pericoli di deviazioni federalistiche sono stati scongiurati."

That the PCI seemed to be still wedded to its notion of 'administrative autonomy' was confirmed by other conflicting claims. Crisafulli, at the beginning of his article (and contradicting the later part outlined above) denounced the Government's tendency "a ridurre sul piano della pura amministrazione l'empito della vita locale, con il solo pretesto di tutti i regimi reazionari di salvaguardare il tecnicismo amministrativo dalle 'invadenze' della politica..." Yet, Togliatti himself later used this very distinction as the basis for attacking the proposed 'swindle law'. The electoral systems for the comunes, provinces and regions, he said, unlike the parliamentary electoral system, were not constitutionally defined but were formulated by the laws of the State. The reason for this was the administrative nature of the former:

"quando dall'organismo amministrativo, dall'ente locale amministrativo qual è il comune, qual è la provincia, qual è la regione (quando la regione verrà organizzata), si passa alla rappresentanza nazionale, si esce dal terreno della amministrazione e si entra nel terreno della politica, si deve dare al paese un'assemblea la quale rappresenti esattamente la disposizione di forze che esistono nel paese stesso."(102)

More explicit than this was the re-publication (in the same year that L'Unità posthumously published Grieco's 'Unità Statale e Decentramento') of Grieco's 1944 writing

'Regionalismo e Unità d'Italia' by Chronache Meridionali (a PCI journal) under a new title, 'La Questione Regionale e il Mezzogiorno'. In this article Grieco had argued that problems such as agrarian reform and the Mezzogiorno in general could be solved only through nationally based reforms; and that consequently regional institutions should remain administrative entities. This had been the first formulation of the PCI's notion of 'administrative autonomy', analysed in Chapter Two.(103)

Finally, on a more general level, an apparent change in the conception of the territorial distribution of power in the State was not accompanied by a recognition of how important this was to the general functioning of State and society. It has been seen how, in 1944, the PCI's general constitutional appeal to the electorate tended to overlook the value of institutions by emphasising the value of the programmatic parts of a Constitution. During the Cold War period this was transformed into a general attack on institutions of the 'bourgeois order' and the 'formal' rights they guaranteed. For the Communists, the '18th April regime' was symptomatic of the limits of bourgeois democracy. It illustrated how seemingly democratic guarantees such as universal suffrage and individual liberty gave nothing to the majority of the population unless accompanied by a revolution in economic and

social relations, this factor ultimately influencing the character of more formal bodies of law:

"...la distruzione totale del privilegio economico, quale è perseguita e attrata nel mondo socialista, non può non tradursi in nuovi istituti giuridici e quindi anche in una nuova nozione della libertà."(104)

In this sense,

"il problema delle garanzie giuridiche e delle 'istituzioni', in cui queste dovrebbero prendere corpo si converte ... in quello della azione che tende a trasformare i rapporti politici e i rapporti sociali ..."(105)

It might be contended that these arguments merely represented a reversion to the themes of class struggle which the political climate required. However, such 'class struggle' has to be strictly defined. Even in this type of writing, the attack on bourgeois democracy and the idolisation of socialism did not entail an abandonment of the notion of progressive democracy. Crisafulli, in a harsh attack on the bourgeois democracy epitomised by the '18th April regime', emphasised the one important difference between this and normal bourgeois democratic regimes: the constitutional legality that was being violated was not that of bourgeois-democratic legality but the result of a 'political and social balance' of which the working-class was an essential element. The unity of

democratic and progressive forces around the working class, he said, had given birth to the Constitution which

"rappresenta il tentativo di superare alcuni dei limiti più gravi della vecchia democrazia borghese, allargando concretamente le basi sociali delle istituzioni statali e parendo le premesse per una effettiva partecipazione delle classi lavoratrici alla direzione economica e politica della nazione."(106)

Thus, arguments which spurned constitutional formal guarantees emphasised the pre-eminence of programmatic aspects not only of socialist constitutions but also of the Italian 'progressive democratic' Constitution. The apparent new role assigned to regional institutions in the renovation of Italy was not, then, accompanied by a recognition of the value of these institutions in themselves.

It may be concluded that a 're-thinking' on the question of regional devolution had taken place, otherwise the call for the implementation of the regional system would have remained on the level of the 'respect of the Constitution', which would have taken the PCI's position little beyond the essentially tactical stance of the pre-election period. The party chose to go beyond this, exploiting the ambiguity inherent in its earlier conception of the Constitution, to call for the implementation of the regional system on the grounds of achieving the goals of 'progressive democracy' as

enunciated during the constitutional debates. Yet, if there had been a re-thinking, it had either been incomplete or the party was unwilling or unable to draw all the conclusions that it involved. The equivocations of the new position left the strategy in mezzo al guado. It is important, therefore, in the final Chapter of Part One, to respond to two questions: first, why had there been a re-thinking in the first place?; and second, why had this not been carried through to its logical conclusion by 1955?

* * * * *

Chapter Six

The Re-interpretation of Gramsci's 'Revolution From

Below': Towards an Explanation

"...l'ordinamento regionale è effettivamente l'humus che fertilizza e feconda la propaganda eversiva del comunismo; direi che è proprio l'ambiente ideale in cui si fa l'esperimento in vitro sul corpo della nazione." (Santagati) (1)

"The Left, to be sure, continued to ideologise the issue, /of regional devolution/ but the ideology was adjusted to suit practical political interests. For the PCI and PSI, ideology was a dependent variable; it was not a determinant but rather a rationalisation of political decisions. Power, not doctrine, was the dominant motive." (Leonard Weinberg) (2)

This chapter is divided into two parts, the first of which attempts to account for the PCI's shift in position on the issue of regional devolution, and the second of which attempts to explain why this shift did not appear to have been carried through to its logical conclusion by 1955. The second part - in conjunction with the Introduction - introduces Part Two of the thesis.

The Origins of the Transition

If the PCI's transition from a centralist to a devolutionist position was not as rapid as Rotelli and others maintain, does this call for a re-assessment of the motivation behind the change? Here, it is instructive to note that while Rotelli argues that the PCI changed position a few days after the formation of the new De Gasperi government in June 1947 because of the party's new role in opposition, Weinberg dates the PCI's change much later but he uses essentially the same reasoning as Rotelli to explain it:

"From the mid-1950's on, PCI and PSI spokesman reinterpreted regionalism to make it compatible with working class objectives ... The reason for

this shift was that Communist and Socialist expectations of attaining power nationally diminished after 1948. Thus, the regions became attractive as alternative opportunities, if Left coalitions could be formed, for the acquisition of at least some marginal political power ... The Left, to be sure, continued to ideologise the issue, but the ideology itself was adjusted to suit practical political interests. For the PCI and PSI, ideology was a dependent variable; it was not a determinant but rather a rationalisation of political decisions. Power, not doctrine, was the dominant motive."(3)

The last sentence, but for what is written before it, might seem a slip of the pen. What is Marxist-Leninist doctrine concerned with if not the pursuit of power? 'Power' and 'doctrine' can be separated only through a re-interpretation of the nature of the 'power' which a Communist party wants to possess. For Weinberg (and Rotelli too) 'power' in this context refers to the sacrificing of the PCI's doctrinal or ideological demands (which aim, in the long-term, at the attainment of 'power') to immediate 'practical political interests', or 'some marginal political power' within the liberal-democratic State, which is unrelated to its long-term goal of power i.e. not only was the new position fundamentally tactical but the tactical manouvre remained unconnected to the Party's strategy for power. This type of

argument can be categorised within the general area of devolution as a theme of opposition.

Devolution as a Theme of Opposition

As Yves Mény rightly points out,

"... la décentralisation n'est pas en soi un thème d'opposition: c'est parce que l'opposition est, par la fonction qu'elle joue dans les institutions libérales, davantage à l'école de la 'demande sociale', que la décentralisation devient rapidement l'un de ses thèmes préférentiels." (4)

Decentralised institutions offer opposition parties a base from which to maintain the vitality and adaptability of their organisational structures, a training ground on which to prepare for gaining central power and demonstrate their capacity to govern, and a method of experimenting with, and widening, social and political alliances. The importance of these factors is enhanced where there exists "un système national bipolaire sans alternance." Thus, local communities become "les bases arrières de l'opposition",

"le dernier 'réduit', permettant la survivance souvent chétive tant au niveau militant que matériel ou financier de partis décadents au parti national." (5)

The applicability of these factors to the PCI in the 1950's is clear: the party was fully aware of its (increasing)

strength at the local level in different areas of the country and how that strength would be represented on a regional basis.(6) While the introduction of the regional system would increase the party's political representation it would, at the same time, unburden the provinces and comunes of the weight of the prefect. Such a sub-national system of autonomous governments would provide an excellent arena for experimenting with political alliances, re-opening a dialogue with the DC and widening its social base. Furthermore, the party organisation would emerge from these activities revitalised. The regional level in the organisation, created in 1948 in expectation of the introduction of the regional system, was strengthened in 1951 and had become an integral element of the party structure. Finally, the bi-polarity of the party system and its 'quasi-permanent' nature had become quickly apparent. In addition to these factors there were the specific indirect gains to be derived from supporting the implementation of the regional system. The call for the respect of the Constitution represented an excellent means of attacking the Government for its inertia, it presented the PCI as the guarantor of the anti-Fascist pact and finally, it acted as a focus for party unity.

If these are the factors to which Weinberg and Rotelli are referring (maximisation of electoral potential, strengthening of party organisation, expansion of alliances

and indirect gains), the problem is assessing to what extent, in the 1950's, they served 'practical political interests' and no more or, more specifically, to what extent they ceased to serve practical political interests and became an integral part of the PCI's strategy for power. Certainly, the argument that they served purely practical political interests might hold if applied to an immediate change of position, (which is Rotelli's view, the accuracy of which, however, was questioned in Chapter Four). Moreover, it would be applicable, as argued in Chapter Five, after September 1947 when a shift began to take place during a period in which the progressive democratic strategy was disintegrating and was replaced by a 'strategic vacuum' which hinged on the outcome of the elections. For a number of reasons, however, the period after the 1948 elections should be viewed differently.

The 1948 elections were the final confirmation of the collapse of the conditions on which the PCI's strategy for power had been based: either an electoral victory for the Left or the continuation of the coalition of national unity. Moreover, as already noted, the new situation in which the PCI found itself had a distinctly permanent nature: the party was not only marginalised but delegitimised, its position reflecting the international situation. As already seen, despite the ambiguities of the PCI's position in the Cold War period, the 'retreat' to the Constitutional pact was not

purely from a negative perspective, but marked an attempt to reformulate the party's strategy in the light of the new situation. Indeed, the divisions which emerged within the leadership during the 1950's concerned fundamental decisions over what type of party the PCI was to become (mass or cadre) and whether it should or should not have an electoral strategy. Finally, the victory of Togliatti and the Southern faction over Secchia's faction within the party resulted, as will be seen in Part Two of the thesis, in the formulations of 1956 which unequivocally embraced regional devolution as an integral part of the party's strategy for socialism.

Of course, a valid critique of the above argument might be that it was precisely the victory of the Centre and Right of the party over Secchia which saw the abandonment of socialist goals for a strategy based on no more than gaining political power within the liberal-democratic State. This may be responded to by raising the discussion to a different level through the use of one of the main ideas of the 'continuity in change' approach to the study of West European Communism, noted in the Introduction: questioning the value of attempting to identify different goals in a West European Communist party's change in strategy or in a specific aspect of that strategy. This is best illustrated by introducing the 'two-headed' approach, referred to in the Introduction, which is best done by setting the 'revisionist' argument above against

the viewpoint of wide sections of the Centre and Right in Italian politics that the PCI's change in position on regional devolution was demonstrative of the party's instrumental attitude towards representative institutions in that they were to be used purely with the aim of destroying the capitalist system of which they were a part. Attempting to escape this dichotomy introduces the question of goals and strategies to achieve these goals on the part of opposition parties. Dahl, for example, argues that the problems of distinguishing between short-term and long-term goals, and public and private goals, and of identifying which ultimately condition which, are so complex that it is more valid to speak of 'controlling goals' (whatever these may be or lead to) which tend to condition, within the constraints of the national environment, the type of strategy which emerges. The case of Communist parties (as opposed to liberal-democratic parties) is particularly problematic. Dahl suggests that the fact that the French and Italian Communist parties expound structural goals but that their strategies have the appearance of attempts to gain office through a coalition with other parties should not necessarily lead to the conclusion that revolutionary strategy is dead or that the goals are no longer valid.(7) Similarly, as noted in the Introduction, Blackmer stresses the futility of studying Communist Parties in terms of changing goals because of the argument that they are simply different means

to achieve the same ends. Rather, he argues that it is of greater value to study these parties in terms of certain 'permanent interests'.(8)

In short, the validity of the application of the government/opposition dimension to centralist/decentralist arguments is not to be denied. Yet, if one accepts that West European Communist parties attempt to grapple with problems of a different nature to those of liberal-democratic parties (i.e. the problems of a democratic transition to socialism) whether in government or opposition, and if one accepts that the situation in Italy after the 1948 elections was more demanding of a long-term response by the PCI than the situation before the elections, the argument of devolution as a theme of opposition may be regarded as insufficient to explain the motivations behind the PCI's change in position on regional devolution. It is important to return to the origins of Togliatti's strategy for socialism and the (perceived) nature of the society in which it was born.

Devolution as a Theme of Socialism

If, for Togliatti, the progressive democratic strategy was not a mere post-war tactical manoeuvre which waited on the mythical 'X' hour, but a long-term strategy based on maximising the PCI's electoral potential and gaining a Gramscian form of hegemony over Italian society by becoming

the dominant representative of the new progressive ideology, it became quickly evident, in the 1950s, that it was precisely electoral and ideological hegemony that the DC was in the process of achieving. Despite the PCI's comparison of the new regime with Fascism on the basis of its unconstitutionality and coercive measures, the DC was obtaining 'hegemony' in the form of the acceptance of its own ideology as the dominant, 'progressive' ideology in Italian society. As a British observer later noted,

"In a curious way, the DC is the Gramscian party in reverse: within itself a multi-class bloc with a definite hegemonic class, and the dominant party in a multi-party coalition." (9)

In the 1950s, this hegemony was being achieved as the result of several factors: firstly, the identification of the DC with Catholicism, which was stronger in Italy than elsewhere in Western Europe and resulted in the full backing of the party by the Vatican(10); secondly, the strength of anti-Communist feeling in Italy due to the hostile international situation; thirdly, the support of the American and European governments; fourthly, the improvement of economic conditions resulting from the Marshall Plan and the policies of economic liberation followed by the Minister of the Budget, Einaudi; fifthly, the infiltration by the party of public institutions and important sectors of society (through

a policy of 'spoils' and sottogoverno)(11); and finally, a rigorous centralisation of the State organisational structures. This last aspect was, as already seen in Chapter Two, a lesson of history linked to the diversified and fragmented nature of Italian society.

This is not to say that Togliatti's strategy misinterpreted Italian history, rather that it miscalculated what would happen at the end of the Second World War. As already seen, Togliatti's interpretation of the type of society which had emerged in the aftermath of Fascism was an optimistic one. While he always recognised the strength and influence of Catholicism and of the Right in Italian society he saw this as being matched by the existence of a new secular ideology which was neither 'socialist' nor 'bourgeois' but 'progressive'. It was to be through mastering this new ideology or culture that the PCI would gain a form of hegemony over Italian society necessary to a gradual transformation to socialism. As Blackmer writes,

"In the immediate postwar years the party tried, against the instincts of many of its cadres and members and contrary to the dominant political and social realities of the country, to act as though it were part of a 'new majority', and not an opposition party at all." (12)

The onset of the Cold War, culminating in the DC's resounding electoral victory on the basis of an anti-Communist

campaign, patently exposed this as a wrong analysis of both the nature of Italian society and of the PCI's existing role in it. It was not so much that society was not amenable to the progressive ideology embraced by the PCI, but rather that the party was not perceived as being representative of such an ideology. On the contrary, it appeared to be more representative of 'Bolshevism' which remained a minority ideology. The doppiezza that existed within the party was symptomatic of this problem: if the membership remained confused or sceptical about the integrity of the new line how could Togliatti expect society at large to accept it?

In this light, the move towards a devolutionary response and a consociational interpretation of the Constitution should be seen from the point of view of a misinterpretation of the relative strengths of different forces, and the dominance and interpretation of their ideologies, in the immediate post-war period. It should be emphasised that this did not necessarily reflect a change in the party's strategy for power. Di Palma, for instance, as already noted in the Introduction, interprets the PCI's shift towards a territorial dispersion of power and a consociational interpretation of the Constitution as embodying "a new rooting strategy of social presence, institutional penetration and political exchange designed at the same time to open and infiltrate the majority."(13) This argument is acceptable only

if one views the 'rooting strategy' as not having existed before the 1950s, or if one views the 'rooting strategy' of the Resistance movement as having been abandoned after 1944 i.e. that the PCI's strategy was based purely on an electoral victory for the Left. However, as argued in previous chapters, it is possible to view a 'rooting strategy' as having always been the basis of the PCI's approach since the Resistance, and that, after the defeat of Fascism, a centralised State machine had been an integral aspect of such a strategy. Centralisation had not overlooked social presence, institutional penetration or political exchange but had been the method of activating these factors and thus capturing what was perceived to be the dominant ideology of Italian society.

The difference emerged with the awareness that the PCI, far from being the potential 'leader' of a dominant ideology, was still the representative of a marginalised ideology, and was faced with a growing political, social, cultural and thus ideological hegemony of Italian society on the part of the DC. Consequently, the PCI's strategic goals became more long-term, in that the new monopoly of the DC and its underlying economic forces had first to be broken if the party was to gain hegemonic ascendance. Working from a marginalised position required the adoption of different means to achieve those goals, or rather, the achievement of more immediate goals first. The most crucial new goal was the achievement of

'legitimacy': the 'delegitimisation' of the PCI was the chief impediment to the re-activation of the basic principles of the progressive democratic strategy. This was a consequence of the international situation, the strategy of the DC and of the Catholic church, and the presence of the Secchian faction within the party itself.

It could be argued that the regional system was important to the PCI's 'quest for legitimacy' in two respects. Firstly, in the direct way that, in Italy's fragmented society, the sub-national level quickly proved to be the best base from which to struggle against the hegemony of the DC and the Catholic church and to project an image of the PCI itself as the guarantor of a progressive democratic culture 'suppressed' by national and international developments. In other words, undermining the DC's monopoly of power required the adoption of similar methods to those used by the Resistance Movement to undermine the Fascist regime: working from the 'grass roots' and exploiting Italy's territorial divisions to promote the acceptability of the PCI's 'ideology' in the face of a form of hegemony buttressed by a rigid centralisation of the State's organisational structure. Such a strategy would not involve using sub-national governments purely as 'ports in a storm' or as isole rosse from where the party could bide its time and increase its organisational strength; nor would it involve a simple exercise in maximising

the party's electoral potential. Rather, the strategy would involve undermining the DC's hegemony through the promotion of a particular culture and ideology, embodying a Communist 'model' of politics and society which, ultimately, could be extended to the national level.(14) In this way, it could be argued, the PCI was, in the long-term, supplementing its traditional comportement of exploiting the industrial dimension of power by the recognition of the importance, in Italy, of the territorial dimension of power, most vividly demonstrated by the experience of the Resistance Movement. As will be seen in Part Two, this latter dimension would increase in importance, in the perception of the party leadership, over the following twenty year period, to the point of prevailing over the former dimension.

The second reason for the importance of the regional system to the PCI's 'quest for legitimacy' was in an indirect way: the regional system was a fundamental and unimplemented part of the Constitution, the general commitment to which had served as the principal means, in the post-Fascist period, of legitimising the PCI's claims to be seeking a democratic road to socialism. Thus, the objective, 'direct' needs arising from the new political and social situation did not conflict with the PCI's need to become the champion of the Constitution, a crucial part of which the party had fought against (namely the regional system). In the context of these two reasons

regional devolution can be seen as both a determinant and an epiphenomenon of the change in the PCI's strategy for power.

It is the latter argument (relating to the Constitution) which helps to explain why the PCI has constantly had problems in explaining its approach to regional devolution in the Constitutional debates; and why the party has even been prepared to accept the thrust of Rotelli's account that its shift in position contributed decisively to the forging of Italy's 'unitary-decentralised' State. The Constitution, as will be seen in Part Two, was to become not only the focus for the re-establishment of the PCI's legitimacy but the most important theoretical and historical reference point for demonstrating the consistency of party strategy. It would be portrayed as the fruit of the Resistance and thus the party's 'baby'. It follows that if Italian historiography wished subsequently to attribute to the PCI the role of having been the decisive factor in the forging of a 'unitary-decentralised' State such a claim was, and still is, precisely in the PCI's interest. The party has, therefore, accepted the responsibility and helped perpetrate further what this thesis claims is a myth.

If the above represents an adequate explanation for the PCI's drift towards a decentralised response and an acceptance of regional devolution it leaves open one question: why the party had not unequivocally embraced the concept by 1955?

The Incomplete Transition

The 'incomplete transition' should be seen against the background of the arguments expounded in the Introduction relating to ideology, language and the internal functioning of Communist parties. To be brief, the mere adoption of the new position on regional devolution was not sufficient to win over the party membership. However, the climate of the Cold War period and the divisions within the party precluded a comprehensive tackling of this problem. The problems of doppiezza experienced at the level of the strategy in general, which were mentioned above as being illustrative of the PCI's problems with respect to society at large, were also illustrative of the specific problems concerning regional devolution: namely, that if the membership was still confused about the exact tactical or strategic nature of the party's 'national variant' of Marxist-Leninist doctrine launched in 1944, clarifying a change made within that variant would be a considerably more complex process. Moreover, having only recently chosen its 'road' and ruled out the incorporation of a State based on regional devolution, the party leadership was faced with the problem of formulating a justification for the concept which would be 'original', in the sense that it overcame liberal-democratic notions of decentralisation and consequently would be perceived by party members as being an integral aspect of the party's 'road to socialism' and thus of

its doctrine. As argued in Chapter Five, the attempts thus far had failed to define a scheme within which 'bourgeois democratic' notions such as regional devolution might be incorporated to achieve socialism; and the leadership's theoretical musings had left the party in mezzo al guado, claiming a form of 'moderate regionalism' which, while embracing the regional system contained in the Constitution, did not seem, on close analysis, to signify much more than a commitment to bureaucratic decentralisation. This opened an ambiguous gap in the party's ideological doctrine.

Regional devolution, then, appeared to be a peculiar case and was recognised as such by the party leadership. The problem of removing apprehension relating to the issue received specific attention once the political climate allowed a more comprehensive treatment of the issue (i.e. from 1956 onwards). Edoardo Perna, for example, criticised the party's tendency towards reducing the campaign for the regional system to one of legal principles (the implementation of the Constitution), the effect of which, he argued, was to overlook the real value of the concept of regional devolution:

"Ciò sembrano pertanto inadeguate quelle formulazioni del problema dove tutto viene ridotto ad argomento polemico nei confronti del governo, e illanguidito in generici richiami alla 'sensibilità democratica' e in platoniche invocazioni all'ossequio formale della Costituzione. Oltre ad avere un sapore alquanto moralistico e velleitario, questo modo di

presentare la questione corrisponde
ben poco all'esperienza che hanno
fatto le popolazioni in questo
decennio."(15)

He decried the 'provincialist' view of regional devolution of many party members and argued that only through losing "il carattere che a volte sembra rivestire, di una escogitazione giusnaturalistica" would the concept become inserted "nel moto unitario diretto alla trasformazione, verso il socialismo, delle strutture della società e dello Stato."(16) Certain events which took place in 1956 would give the PCI the opportunity to respond to Perna's critique and resolve the problems facing the party, and this will be the subject of Chapter Seven. However, as indicated in the Introduction, this very activity would open up fresh problems (which will be the subject of subsequent chapters) the most serious of these problems concerning the party's unity.

* * * * *



