I. Is there a third way?

Giovanni Berlinguer represented the Italian Communist Party at the 27th National Congress of the Communist Party of Australia in June 1982. He is a Deputy in the Italian parliament and a member of the Central Committee of the PCI. He is well known for his writings on industrial health.

During his visit to Australia he participated in a meeting in Melbourne on June 15, 1982, with representatives of the Japanese Communist Party on the theme "The Future of Socialism — Is there a Third Way?"

ALR reproduces here his introductory remarks.

First, I would like to say that there is a glorious past of socialism. Despite errors and various mistakes it is certain that the October Revolution and other revolutions contributed very deeply to change in the world. I may say paradoxically that the revolutions were always made by those who were the most heretical vis-à-vis marxism and vis-à-vis the previous revolutionary experiences.

Marx said that revolution would occur in the advanced and industrially developed countries like Germany, France and Great Britain. But the heretic Lenin showed that the revolution could begin in quite an underdeveloped country where there was a proletarian basis, but where the proletariat was a minority of the working classes and of the population.

The second big heretic was Mao Tse-tung because all marxist tradition said that the revolution would be led by the workers, by workers in industry. But, in fact, the Chinese revolution had as its fundamental force the peasants. Even more heretical was Fidel Castro, because all the documents and the experiences of the revolutionary movement said that revolution could not begin and continue without a revolutionary party. Fidel Castro began the revolution with a boat — with a group of people who could not be
A Rome rally of the PCI

identified with a political party as we traditionally understand the word. Only in a second phase was contact with the Communist Party of Cuba established and a new party created.

I would like to state that our main hope is the next group of heretics.

Everybody knows that in the past there were different phases of the revolutionary process. The First, Second and the Third Internationals each made a very important contribution to the growth of the working class movement and of the socialist and communist parties. But now, due to this growth, and to the development of other revolutionary forces outside the traditional group of the Third International, a new situation has been created. There cannot be any centre or any organisation which pretends to include all the revolutionary forces acting in the modern world.

Any attempt to create such an organisation would simply limit the development of the revolutionary process, and not encourage it. This is the practical experience.

On the second point: Is there a third way? In the lexicon of the Italian Communist Party we say that we are trying to follow a way that does not correspond to the Soviet model nor to the social democratic tradition. But, in fact,
it would be more precise to say that there can be a third way, a fourth way, a fifth way and many new ways to socialism, according to the different historical, economic and geographical conditions, always having in mind as a necessity the creation of a broader international solidarity of all the forces which, in different ways, strive for socialism.

In fact, the tendency which prevails in too many cases, maybe almost always, is that when a party has made a revolution it has always had the desire to affirm that such a revolutionary process was the only one possible. Sometimes they insist on this idea, trying to influence, even heavily, other partisan groups to follow this idea. This has created many difficulties and has sometimes paralysed and sometimes divided the working class and the revolutionary forces.

Of course, if this tendency to export the model of revolutions which have already been made, completely or incompletely, is dangerous then it would be even worse for us to try to export to other countries a model of a revolution that we have not yet made.

Therefore, I do not want to devote the second part of my introductory speech to explain to you in Australia how to put into practice euro-communism. It would be a little difficult also for a geographical reason. But more precisely I want to say what is our policy, our strategy and experience.

I want to underline four main points, in a necessarily short summary, which characterise our action and our strategy.

**Transforming the state**

The first one is the tendency to transform the state. This is, to a certain extent, different from the traditional thesis that is found in Marx: that the new classes should break the state, smash the state. In our opinion and experience the state is no longer only a management committee of the bourgeoisie. It has many functions that correspond to the general interest while the power of the bourgeoisie over the state remains dominant.

In Italy, in particular, the state is the result of struggle — including armed struggle in the period of the resistance against fascism — and is therefore characterised by the strong presence of the working class movement, and of domestic forces. I’ll mention just two points about our experience. One is that in Italy we have won very great powers for local authorities and there is strong participation of the leftwing forces in municipal and regional councils. Many of the big cities of Italy are administered by leftwing forces and have a socialist or communist mayor: Turin, Milan, Venice, Florence, Bolgona, Rome and even Naples which is a very difficult city from the political and social point of view. As a result there are improved public services and there is also a very broad democratic experience for the population.

A second experience, which is quite unusual, is the attempt to democratise the police. During the years after the war there was a very strong attack on the working class movement. You have lived the same experience — during the Cold War. In strikes, the police fired against the workers — many were killed — and this lasted until the 1960s. The spontaneous tendency of workers and of youth in the 1968-69 student movements was to say that the police were fascists.

Our party opposed this definition saying that the police were directed towards repression but called on the policemen, who came mainly from the poorer classes of society, to unite with the workers. Gradually, with the greater development of democracy and the weakening of the repressive tendencies of the state, a democratic consciousness developed within the police. They began to form a union; after many years of struggle, they obtained a law according to which there now is a police union with all the usual rights except the right to become members of the central trade union and the right to strike. The workers of all other categories say that if the police need to strike then they will do it for them.

It is also a big point to have a police force of which more than two-thirds are members of
This is quite significant because this can help co-operation between the population, the workers and the police. This was one of the key points for the success Italy obtained in the struggle against terrorists. Such success would have been impossible without co-operation between the population and the police.

Of course this is not sufficient: local power, police and other sectors I haven’t mentioned are not sufficient. It is also necessary to participate in the leadership of the government. And this is the problem we face now. Without participation of the Communist Party in the leadership of the government, the transformation of the state, even the maintaining of a full democracy is becoming difficult. And it is not sufficient even to have communist ministers, because there are problems of the transformation of the state apparatus, of raising the consciousness of the employees, and of changing the daily work of the state apparatus which is a very difficult task.

Nationalisation

My second point concerns the economy. You know that the French government carried out many nationalisations and this is in the program of many communist, socialist and labor parties. In Italy, the situation is quite different because the main enterprises are already public property — the banks, energy, transport, the steel industry, a great part of the chemical industry and so on belong to the state either directly or through shares.

The problem we have now, to use a simplified formula, is to nationalise the nationalised enterprises. This means transforming what is being used for private interests or for the interests of the dominant parties into an instrument to solve the problems of the country, to develop the economy, and also to lead the other sectors of the economy in a mixed economy which should include a private sector. In Italy, there
is a very important development of middle and small enterprises which constitute the greatest part of Italian economic life, and there is a growing sector of co-operatives. The National League of Co-operatives, which is a leftwing organisation, with communists, socialists and so on, has the fourth largest budget of all Italian enterprises. This is also an instrument to solve problems, to develop the economy and to educate people about democracy.

My third point concerns alliances. In the marxist tradition, alliances were always interpreted as alliances of productive forces. The general scheme is, as everybody knows, that when new productive forces are hampered in development by the old social relations of production they have to break this cage and go through in order to ensure new development. It was like this in the bourgeois revolution and in the proletarian revolution in Russia. New experiences were added to marxist theories in this field.

First of all was the Leninist experience of alliances between workers and peasants. Then other countries, particularly in the third world, spoke of alliances with sections of the bourgeoisie. But now there are new problems in the field of alliances — two in particular.

The first is that there are forces which are not productive but are very important and necessary for the development of the society. Let us speak of education, health, scientific research, public administration and so on. These forces tend to be as numerous as the working class and sometimes more numerous. What should we do? How should we consider them?

In our opinion, we should consider them as potential revolutionaries on the same level and together with the working class, because there are a lot of contradictions in their own activity, in their own conditions. Not only in material conditions - because in the present era it is not necessary to be hungry, to have many children or to be proletarian to become revolutionaries. There are many, many new reasons to become revolutionaries. We should understand this and appeal to those
forces on the same level as the working class. Of course, the working class has tradition, organisation, needs which we should put in the forefront of our attention.

Marginalisation

The other point is that modern capitalism produces marginalisation and confirms and broadens certain forms of oppression, which does not mean exploitation. Oppression is not only economic exploitation. Let us take women, for example; even if they are not exploited they are oppressed. And the position of male workers vis-a-vis women themselves is sometimes ambiguous; they are oppressors while being exploited. We should understand this situation.

The traditional attitude of marxists and the communist parties was that such problems would be solved after the revolution. In fact, they must be solved during the revolutionary process, otherwise the revolution will not come or will be an incomplete revolution. And the position of marxism towards the marginalised groups of the population was even worse, was even more negative. If you read Engels, for example, the proletariat should never be in contact with the lumpen proletariat which is always an instrument of the bourgeoisie, available for any form of provocation or any adventure. Indeed, we have the experience that the alliance with the lumpen proletariat is possible.

Let me use a rhetorical expression: one of the political miracles in Italy is that the Communist Party has 40 percent of the vote in the city of Rome where there is not one single big industry. The greatest factory in Rome is the Vatican. There are some industries of two, three or four thousand workers out of a population of three million, and there are building workers, transport workers and so on. There was, particularly after the war, an enormous mass of the population marginalised: lumpen proletariat and persons who had come from different regions of Italy just to live there because Rome was an open city and they could escape from the bombing. They were without food, without homes, without anything.

One of the tasks of the Communist Party was to work to improve the living conditions of this population: to find homes, water hygiene, a job for them. Through such struggles an alliance was created. Many of them supported the Communist Party, became workers, voted for us. And this is why in the city there is a very strong communist organisation and leftwing local government.

There is another theoretical problem about alliances, but I want only to cite it. Capitalism does not only hamper the development of productive forces, but sometimes it helps their development. It is not always a limitation. But what is new today is that capitalism is developing and compelling other countries to develop an enormous disruptive force which is exactly the contrary of productive forces. We see the disruption of life, the arms race, the disruption of the environment, the disruption of human rights.

If we consider the peace movement, the environmental movement and others, we see that they are not working for the development of productive forces. They are against the disruptive forces which capitalism has created in the modern world. So the problem of alliances becomes much more complicated. The forces which are interested in the struggle for peace, for the environment, against marginalisation, for human rights, can contribute, together with the working class, to the struggle against capitalism and for the transformation of the society.

Struggle and organisation

Finally, the fourth point I would like to underline is the relationship between struggle and organisation. In this case, the experiences are very different from continental Europe to Great Britain to the United States to Australia and so on. Class struggle exists everywhere. Political struggle exists. In the United States there is class struggle, political struggle. It is mainly political struggle on single issues and it has sometimes tremendous positive effects. I am reminded of the
enormous contribution the population of the United States made to the struggle against the war in Viet Nam. But after the issue is closed the forces are abandoned and everything finishes. New issues are raised and new committees are created. But the leadership of the bourgeoisie is not interrupted. Therefore it is necessary that the revolutionary classes, the progressive forces, create one or more organisations which go through the various problems, have a general program and can lead the struggle for democracy and socialism.

In our experience this organisation is a mass party. But I would like to underline — in order not to be criticised by anybody for being a party superpower, because there are not only states but also parties that can have the same attitude — that this problem of a mass party is not only a problem of the number of members. It is more a problem of the quality of work. It means a party which tries to be present in any situation and in any group of the society. A party which tries to be open not only to very, very active members but also to those who cannot be very, very active members. A party whose approach in the Anglo-Saxon terminology is called "problem-solving". Not only making propaganda, and education, but also problem-solving. This is why we try to co-ordinate mass action and social struggle with the work inside the institutions through our representatives and our work to organise and educate. Education means experience, information, and counteracting the negative actions of the mass media, a presence in the mass media, and the party having its own contacts with the population.

These experiences may be very different from country to country. I have had only the opportunity to present some of our own experiences.

But despite the fact that we do not consider our policy as a model to be adopted elsewhere, we think that there are two principles which may be necessary to take into consideration everywhere.

One principle is that each party, organisation or movement should be autonomous and independent. For two reasons. Firstly, to adhere much more to the national and local reality. And, secondly, to build international solidarity on a more concrete and broad basis.

The second principle is that, in capitalist countries, democracy is not only the most favourable ground on which to struggle for socialism; it is also intrinsically of value to be kept and broadened before, during and after the victory of socialism. Maybe we adopted this principle because Italy was the country which created and, unfortunately, exported fascism. Therefore, having lost our freedom for twenty years, we are very careful to keep it by all means. But there are also principled reasons to adopt this course.