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# The Emergent Italian Communist Party Elite: The Challenge of a Younger Generation

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A Research Paper

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# The Emergent Italian Communist Party Elite: The Challenge of a Younger Generation

A Research Paper

This paper was prepared by [redacted] of the  
Office of European Analysis with contributions from  
[redacted] of the Office of Central Reference.

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## The Emergent Italian Communist Party Elite: The Challenge of a Younger Generation

### Summary

*Information available as of 15 October 1985 was used in this report.*

The Italian Communist Party (PCI) has undergone a process of generational change in recent years that will inevitably affect its internal structure and its domestic and foreign policies. Large numbers of younger people have entered the party hierarchy and now hold a majority of lower- and middle-ranking posts as well as a growing share of the senior posts. Their views are likely to have a major impact on the balance of power among the four contending factions in the senior leadership: the dominant centrist faction, led by Party Secretary Alessandro Natta, and the social democratic, orthodox Marxist, and radical groupings.

This "emergent elite" differs markedly from the senior leadership in terms of its social background, political experiences, and values:

- It is much less "proletarian" and tends to be considerably better educated and more likely to hold white-collar or professional positions. In fact, members of the iconoclastic "new middle class" that has also emerged elsewhere in Western Europe in the last decade now overwhelmingly dominate the ranks of the PCI elite.
- It has fewer members whose sole political experience has been within the confines of the PCI subculture. Fewer of today's predominantly young elite were born into "red" families or belonged to the PCI youth federation. Many more were involved in freewheeling student and other leftist movements prior to joining the party.

Although evidence about its specific views is still skimpy, this emergent elite appears to be by no means monolithic. We believe its unique traits and experiences have predisposed its members to favor freer debate within the party, to oppose any PCI move in the direction of either orthodox Communism or social democracy, and to have a jaundiced view of both superpowers:

- The most recent authoritative survey of PCI officials suggests that the emergent elite is less inclined than earlier ones to go along with the PCI's policy of "democratic centralism"—which calls for all key decisions to be made at the top. Already, lower- and middle-ranking officials have forced through significant changes in party rules to require greater openness in debate and have been more willing than their predecessors to challenge and even publicly criticize the senior leadership. Although emergent elite pressure is not likely to make the party truly democratic, it will lead to a greater measure of open debate.

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- In domestic policy, the available evidence indicates that the majority of emergent elite members are comfortable with the policy favored by the party's dominant centrist and particularly the radical groupings. This combines professed acceptance of democratic principles and pragmatic short-term economic and social programs with a continuing commitment to long-term radical change. Despite some recent setbacks, this policy has kept the PCI the second-largest party in Italy, with about 30 percent of the vote in recent years. In our judgment, the emergent elite is not inclined to challenge it—if only for opportunistic reasons.

In the foreign policy area, the younger elite—which matured politically during years of declining Soviet popularity within the Italian left—is reinforcing the senior leadership's current tendency to keep its distance from Moscow. At the same time, many younger members have an affinity with the general aims of the peace movement and a general disdain for US policies. They are thus likely to exert pressure on senior party leaders to reverse toleration for Italian membership in NATO in favor of a more independent West European defense effort or even nonalignment.

We believe that, over the near term, the senior leadership will be able to retain its policy of tolerating Italian participation in NATO and working to enhance the party's image with the United States. However, emergent elite opposition may eventually cause the party to adopt a more questioning and confrontational approach to Italy's membership in NATO and to US links. This would be especially likely if the skepticism leftist parties and even some governments elsewhere in Western Europe have exhibited toward NATO and the United States continues to grow and if the Soviet Union under Gorbachev develops a less threatening image.

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## The Emergent Italian Communist Party Elite: The Challenge of a Younger Generation

### Introduction

The political fortunes of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) have taken a tumble after years of steady advance. The party suffered a major defeat in the May 1985 administrative elections when it failed to outpoll the Christian Democrats, as it had done in the previous year's elections to the European Parliament. Indeed, because the PCI's vote sagged while Christian Democratic and Socialist totals advanced, the party was ousted from the ruling coalitions of several major cities including Rome, Milan, and Turin. This setback was followed by the defeat of the PCI-sponsored referendum last June that was aimed at reversing the Craxi government's restrictive wage control policies.

Italian press observers agree that these setbacks have dashed any hopes within the PCI of assuming national power in the near term. The setbacks, combined with the power vacuum created by longtime Secretary General Berlinguer's death last year, have reignited a debate within the party's senior leadership about the wisdom of the basic philosophy that has guided party decisions in recent years:

- The dominant centrist faction led by Secretary General Alessandro Natta contends the party should continue its generally moderate domestic and international policies, which it has combined with some more traditionally Marxist elements such as a continuing commitment to long-term radical change in Italian society and the principle of democratic centralism in the party's own decisionmaking process.
- The minority social democratic faction, headed by Giorgio Napolitano and Luciano Lama, argues that the party should explicitly opt for social reform rather than transformation, as well as for greater internal democracy, a complete break with Moscow, and closer relations with Socialist Prime Minister Bettino Craxi.

- A small radical group led by Pietro Ingrao favors greater internal democracy combined with a strong commitment to a radical social program, while a Stalinist remnant led by Armando Cossutta would like the party to restore orthodox Communism and close ties to Moscow.

We believe that future debates about the party's direction will involve lower- and middle-ranking party officials to a much greater degree than in the past, and that their participation will inevitably affect the balance among these four factions. Traditionally, the PCI has been a centralized party in which policy has been determined almost exclusively by the Secretary General acting in coordination with the most senior leadership organ—the Directorate. In recent years, however, and particularly since Berlinguer's death, a growing number of party officials below this level—ranging from members of the party's nominally powerful but traditionally obedient central committee, all the way down to section chiefs—have begun to demand for themselves a bigger role in the party's decisionmaking process. We believe this development reflects in large part the appearance of an emergent elite of lower- and middle-ranking officials that is middle class and far more educated and youthful than its predecessor—and more vocal and independent minded.

This paper will examine the changes that have taken place in the ranks of party leaders below the Directorate level in recent years. It will focus on the emergent elite's social background, political socialization, and values, and the impact these will have on internal and external PCI policies in the post-Berlinguer era.

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### The PCI and the Youth of Today

The PCI's appeal to younger people has declined substantially in recent years. Membership in the PCI youth federation, for instance, fell from about 130,000 in 1976 to only about 45,000 in 1984. The decline in youthful support for the PCI was also reflected in a sharp drop in voting support by people under 30, beginning with the 1979 election. This trend has led to a gradual rise in the average age of PCI members in recent years and has contributed to a substantial decline in overall party membership, from about 1.8 million in the mid-1970s to about 1.6 million today.

Most observers believe that the decreased attraction of the PCI for young people stems from the party's efforts of the late 1970s to gain power by cooperating with the Christian Democrats. This led young people to view the PCI increasingly as just another power-hungry party rather than as a force for change. Moreover, according to academic and press commentary, they viewed the PCI's often ambiguous policies on issues of concern to young people in the late 1970s and 1980s—environmental preservation, civilian nuclear power, and nuclear disarmament—as inadequate. Younger Italian leftists have increasingly devoted their energies in recent years to one-issue "new politics" protest groups and have voted in increased

numbers for political parties focusing on these issues, such as the Radicals and most recently the "Greens."

In an effort to attract more young people into the party, the leadership of the PCI youth federation (FGCI) decided in 1985 to adopt a more independent, youth-oriented stance. At the federation's national conference earlier this year, the FGCI leadership openly criticized the PCI position on a number of issues of concern to younger leftists. These included its waffling on nuclear energy, its alleged lack of concern for disadvantaged groups such as homosexuals and women, and its failure to vigorously oppose US deployments of additional nuclear weapons in Western Europe. They also decided to transform the youth federation from a training ground for future PCI elites to a federation of groups focusing on issues of concern to youth.

The PCI senior leadership has grudgingly accepted these changes in the youth federation's structure, viewing them as steps necessary for bringing new blood into the party. Their hope, according to diplomatic reporting, is that, once inside the party, the recruits brought in by "one-issue politics" will be inculcated in the broader PCI ideology.

### A Profile of the Emergent Elite

The emergent elite, which now dominates all but the highest organs of the party, differs from the senior party leadership in terms of its social background, formative experiences, and political values:

- According to data produced by the PCI itself, lower- and middle-ranking leaders are much better educated than in the past and more likely to have white-collar or professional rather than proletarian backgrounds.
- Survey evidence indicates that the younger PCI members also are considerably less likely to have matured within a purely Communist subculture.

Fewer of them, for instance, have parents who belonged to the Communist Party, or were members themselves of the Communist Party youth organization.

The differences in social background and political socialization, we believe, partly account for survey results showing that the emergent elite—like other members of the "new middle class" in Italy and throughout Europe—is more independent minded and participation oriented than its predecessors who now occupy the top party posts.

### Growth in Influence

Attracted by Berlinguer's charisma and the apparent success of his efforts to transform the PCI into a party of government, large numbers of people in their twenties and thirties joined the PCI in the early-to-mid-1970s. Indeed, the proportion of people under 40 in the party as a whole increased by 5 percentage points even while total party membership was rising sharply. The numbers dropped off again in the late 1970s as younger leftists, according to academics and press analyses, came to view the PCI increasingly as an "establishment" party because of its efforts during this period to form a coalition government with the Christian Democrats (see inset [redacted]).

According to academic and press analyses, the PCI leadership made a special effort in the 1970s to incorporate many of these young recruits into the ranks of the hierarchy. The leadership saw this effort as one way to blunt the leftist youth rebellion of the late 1960s, which had threatened the PCI's dominance over the Italian left. The party also needed a large number of replacements for party officials who, because of the PCI's spectacular advances in local and regional elections during this period, left their full-time positions in the party to assume posts in public administration [redacted].

The effects of this influx on the overall composition of the hierarchy became evident in the late 1970s and early 1980s. As table 1 indicates, the proportion of those under 40 who held lower- or middle-level positions in the party rose substantially throughout the 1970s, especially in the higher ranking of these positions. A 1979 survey of PCI congress delegates found that about three-fifths of the sample had joined the party only since 1970 and that the vast majority of these delegates were at the time of the survey under the age of 35. [redacted]

To a lesser extent, rejuvenation has also taken place in the upper reaches of the party hierarchy—the party's Central Committee, Directorate, and national parliamentary delegation. Within the Central Committee,

[redacted] survey, whose results were published in 1983, is the most in-depth study of the attitudes and characteristics of PCI officials. It was prepared by the Center for the Study of Political Behavior (CSPE), which is linked to the PCI. [redacted]

**Table 1**  
**Proportion of Under-40s in Various Leadership Categories**

*Percent*

	1972	1979
Federation secretaries	48	82
Members of federation central committees	56	71
Full-time federation officials	57 (1973 figures)	67 (1978 figures)
Delegates to national congresses	56	64
PCI elected local councilors	40	59 (1977 figures)

Source: Official PCI data.

[redacted] for instance, the proportion of "under 40s" rose from just over a quarter in 1972 to over a third in 1983. There was a similar increase in the PCI delegation in the lower house of parliament, where the proportion of those under 40 rose from 16 percent in 1970 to 23 percent in 1983. Even the party's highest decision-making organ, the Directorate, has experienced an influx of young leaders. In 1972, for instance, only three of the 34 members were under the age of 40; in the Directorate elected in 1983, eight of 33 members were in this category [redacted].

### A "New Middle-Class" Complexion

A great many of the young people recruited into the PCI during the early 1970s were well-educated professionals with middle-class backgrounds. Their entry into the party significantly altered the social composition of the party membership and, eventually, its leadership as well. As table 2 indicates, the proportion of professionals, intellectuals, white-collar employees, and university students in the party as a whole has increased from 4 percent in 1969 to 11 percent, after remaining fairly constant in the previous two decades. A disproportionate number of these new recruits found their way into the PCI's leadership ranks, causing significant change in its overall composition.

**Table 2**  
**Social Composition of the PCI Membership**

Percent

	Industrial and Agricultural Workers	Traditional Middle Class <sup>a</sup>	New Middle Class <sup>b</sup>	Housewives	Others <sup>c</sup>
1956	58	21	3	14	4
1960	55	23	3	13	6
1966	51	21	4	13	12
1969	50	19	4	13	14
1973	48	17	6	13	17
1975	45	14	11	11	18
1979	45	15	11	11	18
1982	44	12	11	8	25

<sup>a</sup> Artisans, small farmers, and businessmen.

<sup>b</sup> White-collar professionals and students.

<sup>c</sup> Primarily retired workers.

Source: Official PCI data.



Although educated professionals and white-collar workers have always been overrepresented at the top of the party because of their generally superior administrative and political skills, the influx of the 1970s has given professional "new middle-class" and white-collar workers unquestioned dominance in lower- and middle-echelon leadership posts as well:

- White-collar and professional workers and students comprised three-fifths of the national congress delegates and federation committee members in 1979; they held only about half these posts 10 or 15 years earlier (see table 3).
- Among full-time, paid officials, those whose original profession was of a white-collar or professional nature or who had been university students before joining the party staff rose from 45 percent in 1972 to 56 percent in 1978. This trend was accompanied by a sharper rise in the educational attainments of these officials: by 1978, 55 percent had finished high school or college, compared with 38 percent only five years earlier. Among federation secretaries—one of the highest ranking categories of paid

officials—both of these trends were magnified: about 75 percent of them in 1979 had "new middle-class" backgrounds, compared with about 53 percent in 1972. Three-quarters also had completed high school or college as opposed to less than half seven years earlier.

The 1979 survey of PCI national congress delegates provides clear evidence that in the case of full-time officials the influx of young people into the hierarchy was largely responsible for the growth of new middle-class influence. Among those officials who joined the party during 1970-74—now comprising nearly a third of the current lower- and middle-echelon leadership—55 percent had attended or graduated from a university, compared with 35 percent of those who had joined in the 1960s and less than 15 percent who had joined prior to 1960. About two-thirds of the "class" of the early 1970s had white-collar, professional, or student occupational backgrounds, compared with about one-third of those who entered the party in the 1940s or 1950s and about half who entered the party in the 1960s.

**Table 3**  
**Social Composition of the PCI Elite**

Percent

	Industrial and Agricultural Workers	Traditional Middle Class <sup>a</sup>	New Middle Class <sup>b</sup>	Housewives	Others <sup>c</sup>
1956 <sup>d</sup>	44	10	40	3	2 <sup>e</sup>
<sup>e</sup>	46	14	35		7
1960 <sup>d</sup>	44	9	39	3	5
<sup>e</sup>	NA				
1966 <sup>d</sup>	40	8	51	1	1
<sup>e</sup>	NA				
1969 <sup>d</sup>	44				56 <sup>f</sup>
<sup>e</sup>	NA				
1972 <sup>d</sup>	42	5	49		4 <sup>e</sup>
<sup>e</sup>	36	9	51	2	3
1975 <sup>d</sup>	36	5	56	1	2
<sup>e</sup>	27	7	62	1	4
1979 <sup>d</sup>	33	4	61	1	1
<sup>e</sup>	26	5	65	1	4
1983 <sup>d</sup>	29	3	61	1	5
<sup>e</sup>	NA				

- <sup>a</sup> Artisans, small farmers, and businessmen.
- <sup>b</sup> White-collar professionals and students.
- <sup>c</sup> Primarily retired workers.
- <sup>d</sup> Delegates to PCI National Congress.
- <sup>e</sup> Members of the central committees of provincial federations.
- <sup>f</sup> Includes housewives.
- <sup>g</sup> This figure includes all categories other than workers.

Source: Official PCI data.



**Differing Path Into Politics**

In addition to being younger and belonging to the new middle class, members of the emergent elite are less likely than their predecessors to have matured politically within the tightly knit world of the Italian Communist "subculture." For instance, considerably fewer of them have roots in "red" families. As table 5 (foldout) shows, only about half the full-time officers and elected public officials who entered the party during the 1970s had fathers who were PCI members, compared with three-fifths to three-quarters of those in these leadership categories who joined earlier. Younger officials were in most cases also less likely

than their older counterparts to have even emerged from families strongly sympathetic to the PCI: far fewer enjoyed parental approval of their decision to enter the party, and more provoked open conflict with their parents by this decision

Perhaps the most striking difference between the current and emergent elite, however, concerns their early political experiences. Many of the party's senior leaders experienced political repression under Fascism and even during the early postwar period, while

**Table 4**  
**Attitudes on Party Involvement**

Percent

*What, in your opinion, are the most important qualities of a good Communist cadre?*

Year of Inscription in Party	Rigorous Application of the "Line"	Spirit of Political Initiative	Capacity for Original Ideas
Prior to 1949 *	38	50	40
	NA	43	46
1950-59 *	40	48	49
	NA	44	45
1960-69 *	26	56	53
	NA	48	55
1970-74 *	21	58	58
	NA	52	54
1975-76 *	19	57	55
	NA	55	57
1977-79 *	23	52	48
	NA	58	59

*Among the following things, what would give you greater pleasure or satisfaction?*

Year of Inscription in Party	To Have That You Are Interested and Appreciated by Your Friends and Colleagues	To Have Contributed Seriously to the Revolution of our Country and the Peoples of the World	Making New Friends
Prior to 1949	38	54	8
1950-59	32	61	7
1960-69	23	71	6
1970-74	19	73	8
1975-76	22	72	7
1977-79	13	70	17

*Would you maintain the same relationship with a friend who abandoned the Communist Party?*

Year of Inscription in Party	Officials Answering "Yes"
Prior to 1949	39
1950-59	43
1960-69	52
1970-74	57
1975-76	60
1977-79	71

\* The top row are answers from officials; the bottom row are answers from non-officials.

Source: 1979 survey of PCI congress delegates

younger leaders matured politically in a more democratic milieu. Moreover, those who joined the party in the 1950s and 1960s were far more likely to have received early organized indoctrination in PCI beliefs through membership in the PCI youth federation (FGCI) than those who joined during the 1970s (see table 5). The outbreak of the student rebellion and the flowering of the "new left" beginning in the late 1960s also had an impact on the shape of the PCI elite. Younger PCI officials are several times more likely to have been involved in student or other extraparliamentary movements before joining the party than any of the older groups, according to the 1979 survey of PCI officials [redacted]

Finally, due to the PCI's electoral successes of the 1970s, substantially more members of the emergent elite have had a hands-on political education apart from work within the PCI itself. During the mid-1970s, the PCI scored dramatic gains in local and regional elections, achieving office in half the provinces, two-thirds of the largest cities, and 40 percent of the communes. Many younger PCI leaders gained administrative or policymaking positions as a result. According to a 1979 academic study, about 80 percent of the approximately 7,000 commune seats won by the PCI in 1975 went to candidates in their twenties. The party's lower and middle leadership ranks thus contain many members who from a fairly early age have had experience in addressing day-to-day political problems, and who have had to deal with officials of other parties on a regular basis [redacted]

**A More Activist and Independent-Minded Bent**

In our judgment, the differing social and political background of the emergent elite has led them to develop views that differ from those now at the top. More members of the emergent elite are likely to place emphasis on free self-expression, individual achievement, and active participation in decisionmaking—values long shown to be positively associated with higher educational levels and socioeconomic status. Such differences in outlook are reinforced by the fact that fewer members of this group experienced Fascist repression or have had strong roots in the Communist subculture—experiences that have tended

to inculcate unity and discipline above other considerations. We believe the emergent elite's broader political experience has also encouraged independence, confidence, and outspokenness [redacted]

Data from the 1979 survey of the PCI leadership lend support to these judgments (see table 4):

- Younger full-time officials and members of PCI governing committees at various levels were generally more likely than older ones to emphasize independent initiative and judgment in describing in general terms the characteristics of a "good" Communist official.
- Among full-time officers—whose main job is to transmit party policies to party members and supporters—younger ones were considerably less likely than older counterparts to place emphasis on the rigorous application of the party line.
- Younger officers were more likely to indicate they would maintain contacts with a PCI "renegade"—indicating a generally more relaxed attitude about duty to the party [redacted]

#### Impact on Party Decisionmaking

The unique backgrounds and behavioral patterns of the emergent elite have had a growing impact on internal PCI politics. Lower- and middle-ranking party officials have in recent years increasingly asserted a right to participate in PCI policymaking. Indeed, the PCI national congress in 1983 even saw a challenge—albeit a limited one—to "democratic centralism" the basic principle of party governance that limits debate and centralizes decisionmaking authority at the top:

- According to [redacted] press accounts, the Central Committee, reacting in part to pressure from below, has held several vigorous debates on party electoral strategy and foreign policy—although in the end it has followed the traditional practice of lining up unanimously behind the Directorate [redacted]

- Several elected local PCI officials have taken the unprecedented step of publicly criticizing the party's performance in local government. Most recently, the PCI youth federation, which previously had been under the close control of the national party leadership, publicly took issue with some key PCI policies, including the very sensitive question of tolerance for Italian participation in NATO.

- In local party conferences held prior to the 1983 congress, PCI federations rejected candidates for seats who had been proposed by the party hierarchy. Many federations decided these questions through a secret ballot rather than through the traditional show of hands. During the same pre-congress meetings, virtually all PCI federations passed by overwhelming margins a proposal by Ingrao to ease democratic centralism by requiring the Directorate to put majority and minority reports before the Central Committee for debate whenever the Directorate was divided substantially over an issue [redacted]

The PCI's senior leadership has given some ground to pressures for increased internal democracy. In recent years, official policy documents have spoken of "democratic centralism" as a "method" of governance, rather than as a basic "principle" of the party as they had in the past. And, during the process to select a replacement for Berlinguer, the Directorate engaged in an unprecedented consultation of the members of the Central Committee before making a choice. Nonetheless, the leadership appears unwilling as yet to accept any fundamental change. Natta and the Directorate have essentially kept policymaking within their hands, and some key leaders, including Natta himself, have spoken publicly in favor of retaining "democratic centralism" in broad form. According to press accounts [redacted] most senior leaders are alarmed about the growing lack of discipline among lower- and middle-level officials. Indeed, according to press accounts, the party's Directorate has ignored repeated requests by Ingrao to establish a commission to examine PCI governance procedures [redacted]

### Domestic Policies

Under the leadership of its centrist faction headed formerly by Berlinguer and now by Natta, the PCI's strategy for obtaining national power has vacillated sharply in recent years. In the 1970s, the party, while not renouncing its traditional long-term objective of transcending capitalism, made a major effort to establish its democratic credentials by consistently professing its loyalty to the Italian constitution and by supporting moderate economic theories such as wage restraint. It also provided parliamentary support for governments led by the Christian Democrats (DC) and sought to enter into a national coalition government with that party. Because its courting of the DC failed to yield results and proved unpopular within the party, this strategy was dropped in 1980 in favor of a vague line known as the "democratic alternative." In theory, this called for the PCI to seek an alliance with the Socialist Party (PSI) and leftwing Christian Democrats in order to oust the DC from its dominant position in Italian politics—and then to start down the path toward the "third way," which would be more democratic than Soviet-style socialism yet more egalitarian than Western-style capitalism. In practice, however, because Craxi is allied with the DC and his policies are market oriented, this strategy has involved harsh attacks against Craxi, attacks that culminated in the unsuccessful PCI-sponsored referendum in June 1985 aimed at overturning the government's wage control policies [redacted]

The minority factions within the senior leadership each have a distinct perspective on the appropriate domestic political strategy for the PCI, according to press and academic analyses. On the extreme left, Cossutta's small Stalinist faction wants the party to abjure democratic values in favor of Marxist-Leninist formulas. The left-of-center Ingrao faction basically supports the "democratic alternative," but takes more seriously than the Natta group the need to move decisively and quickly toward the "third way." It also is even more adamant in rejecting cooperation with the Socialist Party under its current moderate leadership, preferring that alliances be formed with radical social groupings such as the peace and environmental movements. On the right of the party, the "social democratic" wing led by Napolitano and Lama wants the party to return to the more moderate line of the

1970s. This group would like the party to abandon its pretensions to achieve long-term radical social change and seek an alliance with the PSI on the basis of a purely reformist program [redacted]

[redacted] younger officials will be less of a force for change in domestic policies than in internal party governance. These leaders, who matured politically within the "new left" movement of the 1960s and early 1970s, do not appear drawn either to orthodox Marxism or to social democracy. We suspect that, for the most part, their hearts at least are with the Ingrao faction, which most closely approximates new left views in the senior leadership. Because the Ingrao faction's disagreements with the dominant Natta group are more a question of emphasis than direction, however, the emergent elite usually finds itself aligned with the Natta-Ingrao groupings in opposition to the Stalinist and social democratic factions in the party:

- According to press accounts, "social democrats" figured prominently among those removed from lists of delegates to the congress in voting before the 1983 congress. Even Napolitano, the leading social democrat and one of the PCI's best known figures, barely survived a vote at his local Naples federation. At the same time, Cossutta's proposal at the congress that the PCI declare itself a "fighting revolutionary party" received negligible support.
- In his bid to succeed Berlinguer, Directorate member Achille Occhetto received surprising support from lower- and middle-ranking party officials. Occhetto is a protege of mainstream leaders such as Berlinguer and Natta, but in his younger days was close to Ingrao and the PCI left [redacted]. Occhetto has also been a leading opponent of cooperation with the Craxi-led Socialists.
- Unlike the controversy over internal governance, the policy of the "democratic alternative" and the stance toward the Socialist Party did not provoke any significant negative reaction from lower levels

of the elite at the 1983 congress. Indeed, according to press accounts, the most popular figure by far at the congress was the "purist" interpreter of the "democratic alternative." Ingraio [redacted]

Finally, we see no indications of widespread social democratic or orthodox Marxist tendencies among the most successful and ambitious younger members of the elite—those who have already achieved important positions in the middle and upper levels of the hierarchy. Most of the prominent PCI leaders in their thirties and early forties [redacted] have been associated in press [redacted] reporting with the party mainstream or with the Ingraio group to the left. This is not surprising since the "rising stars" within the PCI have been chosen by the senior leadership. It nevertheless means that these individuals are most likely to obtain senior positions and will have a disproportionate influence on the party's future policies. [redacted]

**International Perspectives**

The most striking features of the PCI's current foreign policy are its relative independence from Moscow, its professed support for Italian membership in NATO, and its concerted effort to convince Washington of its Western credentials. We believe that the growing influence of the emergent elite is reinforcing the party's move away from the Soviet Union, but it may also bring into question at least some aspects of PCI support for the Atlantic Alliance and the efforts to ingratiate itself with US policymakers. [redacted]

Although it has not by any means broken its ties to the Soviet Union—even internal critics of PCI policies toward the Soviets only speak of a "wrench" in relations—the PCI senior leadership has since the mid-1970s increasingly criticized Moscow, especially for human rights violations at home and abroad. Criticism of Moscow peaked in 1981 when, in the wake of the invasion of Afghanistan and the military takeover in Poland, the PCI leadership issued a statement claiming that the October Revolution had lost its "propulsive force" and that the Soviet Union no longer served as a model for other countries. [redacted]

Younger party officials came to political maturity when the Soviet Union's image had been damaged by

its invasion of Czechoslovakia. Moreover, far fewer of them learned reverence for the Soviet Union in the confines of the pre-1970s PCI subculture. The reserve of this group toward the Soviet Union was illustrated in its negative reaction to efforts by Cossutta's orthodox Marxist faction<sup>2</sup> to eliminate from the 1983 party program a reference to the loss of the "propulsive force" of the October Revolution. At PCI federation congresses of that year, however, this reference was almost invariably approved by large margins, and Cossutta ultimately withdrew his objection at the PCI National Congress. [redacted]

At the same time that the PCI has moved away from the Soviets, it has made cautious yet persistent efforts to improve ties to and its image in the United States and the Atlantic Alliance in general. In the mid-1970s, Berlinguer reversed the party's previous opposition to Italy's participation in NATO, saying that in the context of detente the Alliance was an essential shield for Western democracy. The PCI has continued to tolerate NATO membership since then despite the deterioration in East-West relations. It also has voiced only muted opposition to INF deployment in Sicily. Some PCI officials have privately even asked US diplomats for detailed information on the Strategic Defense Initiative, although the party has opposed it publicly. We believe that the PCI's overtures toward the United States and the Atlantic Alliance are in part a tactical ploy to increase the party's legitimacy because links with the West enjoy broad support among Italian voters. They also reflect, in our judgment, a genuine concern among some party members about the Soviet threat. [redacted]

<sup>2</sup> Although few senior party leaders count themselves among this faction, a 1983 survey indicated that some 15 percent of PCI members—generally older ones, we suspect—supported Cossutta's faction, and almost half agreed with its view that the October Revolution had not lost its "propulsive force." [redacted]  
<sup>3</sup> PCI attitudes toward the superpowers are deceptively mixed. [redacted]

[redacted] In a 1983 survey of PCI members, on the other hand, about half the respondents said that the United States was the major threat to world peace. Only 4 percent pointed to the Soviet Union alone, but 40 percent thought both superpowers threatened peace. [redacted]

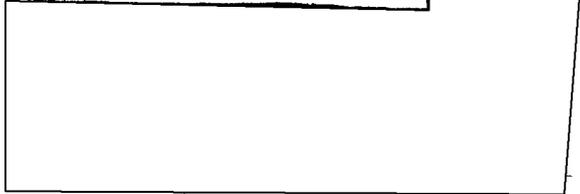
Although most emergent elite members seem to accept, if only grudgingly, the senior leadership's rationale for tolerating NATO, we suspect that many of them favor, at the very least, a more independent defense role for Italy and Western Europe either within or outside the Alliance, and possibly even a move toward nonalignment. Because of their relative youth, most matured politically during the Vietnam era and thus probably learned to take a very dim view of US foreign policy. Moreover, many probably sympathized with the West European "peace movement" if only because of their earlier involvement in broadly similar student and other extraparliamentary protest activities. There have, in fact, been scattered indications that at least a significant minority within the emergent elite are prepared to challenge the party's toleration of Italian links to NATO:

- Against the wishes of the national leadership, many local federations considered resolutions calling for Italian withdrawal from NATO during meetings held in the runup to the 1983 National Congress. These resolutions passed in scattered federations—principally in the south—and in total obtained the support of nearly a fifth of the participants.

[redacted] a PCI older members of the PCI Central Committee differed about NATO and the "peace" issue in general. Older members—including some who were pro-Soviet—maintained the PCI had to accept the reality of opposing power blocs in Europe and should therefore limit itself to opposition to INF deployment. Younger members of the committee maintained that opposition to missile deployment in Sicily should be viewed as a first step toward setting Italy on a nonaligned course aimed at withdrawal from NATO. We believe the stance of the younger committee members mirrors the views of many of their contemporaries in the PCI elite generally.

- Most dramatic of all was the Communist youth federation's call earlier this year for Italian withdrawal from NATO and the dismantling of all missiles in Europe. The federation also criticized the national leadership for its muted response to the

Strategic Defense Initiative. PCI leaders have insisted [redacted] that the youth federation's extreme neutralist views—which they attribute to the naivete of very young party members—do not reflect the views of the party as a whole.



### Prospects

The emergent elite will have its next major opportunity to influence PCI policy at the party's 1986 congress. This meeting has been called to help resolve a bitter debate in the wake of the recent electoral setbacks. We think that the emergent elite will press hardest for increased internal democracy. We do not expect the emergent elite to favor any dramatic moderation in the party's basic domestic line, but it may successfully insist on changes in leadership or in political tactics to restore the party's momentum. There may also be a challenge to the senior leadership's efforts to improve ties to the United States and the Atlantic Alliance, although we do not expect this will be strong enough to force a fundamental change in the PCI's international policies in the near term.

### The Renewed Debate Over Policy

The PCI's recent setbacks have ended a brief moratorium on internal party bickering designed to give Natta a chance to establish himself. Leaders of the PCI's social democratic faction in particular have begun to speak out against the line pursued under Natta's leadership. Lama and Napoleone Colajanni, for instance, have publicly reiterated that the PCI should present itself as an explicitly reformist party and seek alliance with Craxi and his party [redacted]

Radical faction leaders such as Ingrao, on the other hand, have reiterated strong opposition to cooperating with the Socialists under Craxi, and again have raised

the alternative of working more closely with the various protest movements [redacted]

Although members of the dominant faction, including Natta, have admitted that their strategy of seeking an alliance with the Socialist Party while attacking the policies of its leader is contradictory, they have shown no inclination to modify the PCI's line. They recognize that the party's chances in the next general election in 1987 depend on its ability to project unity and purpose, however, and have moved up the date of the party's next congress from 1987 to April 1986 to promote an early resolution of the internal debate. The senior leadership also appointed a 77-member commission to draft a new program for the party and a 16-member committee to supervise its work. Although all four factions are represented, press accounts suggest that the social democratic grouping has been allotted almost half the seats on the supervisory committee, probably as a conciliatory gesture by the Natta group. On the other hand, the Natta faction has sought to ensure continuity in the program to be presented to the congress by entrusting its drafting to a group within the commission heavily dominated by mainstream figures led by Occhetto. [redacted]

#### The Emergent Elite and the Party's Future

In our judgment, the emergent elite is likely to play an even more independent and critical role than in 1983 in reviewing the program presented by the senior leadership. The party's recent electoral setbacks and the current absence of an effective and charismatic leader are likely to reinforce the inclinations of members of this group toward involvement in decisionmaking and independence of judgment. We would expect, at minimum, strong pressure from lower leadership levels for the program to include provision for increased internal democracy and greater openness of debate. For their part, senior leaders may be more inclined than in the past to give ground both because their own self-confidence has probably been dented by recent blows and because the factional leaders may believe they can obtain an advantage by lining up support from below. Press accounts suggest, for example, that Natta supported a proposal by Massimo D'Alema, a leading younger PCI official, that debates at PCI Directorate meetings be made public. [redacted]

Although pressure from the emergent elite is in large measure responsible for the freer debate that will take place at the congress and pre-congress meetings, we think members of the elite will generally wind up supporting the Natta and Ingrao factions, whose policies coincide most closely with their new-left outlooks. Practically none will favor a shift toward Stalinism, in our view, and few will favor social democracy and cooperation with Craxi's Socialists, because recent events do not carry the unequivocal message that would force a change in the views they have held since their youth:

- They can attribute the party's decline in the local and regional elections to factors that do not call into question the validity of the "democratic alternative." They can argue, for example, that the electorate simply wanted a change after a decade of PCI participation in local government, particularly since a number of party officials were involved in municipal scandals.
- Moreover, the elections offered no clear-cut evidence that a social-democratic strategy would have worked any better. The party was defeated in Milan, where social democrats are largely in control, and won in Florence, where party leaders were hardline on cooperation with Socialists and had previously withdrawn from a leftist coalition.
- And finally, despite its setbacks, the PCI remains the second-largest party in Italy. The new elite, in our view, will be reluctant to support any move that would risk jeopardizing that position. [redacted]

In any case, press reporting since the May 1985 elections indicates that there has been no significant increase in sentiment favoring a shift toward social democracy—a move that, according to one correspondent, PCI officials in Rome criticized as "becoming like all the others," "suicidal," and a "blasphemy." [redacted]

We think that members of the emergent elite—particularly the more ambitious full-time and elected officials—are nonetheless concerned by the PCI's

recent loss of electoral support. In our judgment, younger leaders in this congress are likely at the very least to give serious considerations to changes in both the party's senior personnel and its short-term political strategy as ways of restoring the party's political momentum:

- We suspect that many lower- and middle-level officials share the view expressed by Italian press commentators that Natta's lackluster performance has contributed to the PCI's electoral slide. Although the PCI traditionally has not been inclined to punish national leaders for electoral setbacks, we would certainly not discount the possibility of a groundswell in favor of replacing Natta with a younger, or at least more personable, leader with similar ideological leanings. Occhetto or the popular Directorate member from Bologna, Renato Zangheri, are two of the people the emergent elite might support.
- Even if it does not rise up against Natta, we suspect that much of the emergent elite will be sufficiently emboldened to press for the inclusion of more members of its generation in the party's top offices.

[Redacted]

- We believe that many emergent elite members will conclude from the PCI's recent setbacks that the party's current strategy of simply resisting the government on economic policy is inadequate. They may thus press senior leaders to develop a more positive image for the party—for instance, by placing greater emphasis on short-term programs such as institutional and fiscal reform and stimulating economic growth, while continuing to highlight the PCI's commitment to long-term radical change.

[Redacted]

Even if the PCI were to become more democratic, youthful, and programmatic, however, we doubt that its electoral strength would increase. Although such changes might improve the party's appeal to middle-class voters, we think that they might have the

opposite effect on the party's working-class supporters. For instance, the antinuclear and libertarian policies approved recently by the PCI youth federation—which we suspect many older members of the emergent elite also favor—may prove unattractive to many workers. In addition, academic commentators have noted that many of the PCI's traditional supporters have been attracted to the party because of its image of unity and strength, which might be tarnished by the more freewheeling debate and more open factionalism that would inevitably accompany increased internal democracy [Redacted]

In the area of international policy, the emergent elite's jaundiced view of both superpowers will have mixed consequences for the party's effort to underscore its Western credentials by distancing itself from Moscow while professing fealty to Italy's NATO and US connections. We doubt the new generation of PCI leaders will question the policy of independence from Moscow—if anything, they probably believe in it with more conviction than many of their seniors. We expect, however, that there will be pressure at the congress and later from the emergent elite for a hardening in the PCI's attitude toward the Atlantic Alliance. The elite contains a substantial number of individuals who are attracted to the idea of reducing transatlantic links, and we think it possible that these individuals could mount a vigorous campaign against the PCI's tacit toleration of US INF deployments in Italy and possibly even against NATO membership.

[Redacted] We doubt that these pressures will be sufficiently strong at this congress to force the senior leadership to alter the party's policy toward the United States and the Alliance. We suspect that the dominant faction's judgment that the party must tolerate Italian participation in NATO will outweigh the ideological aversion to Italy's links to the United States and NATO. Over the longer term, however, support from the emerging elite for a reduction of transatlantic links could force a modification of party policy if the following two conditions developed:

- Growth of anti-Alliance sentiment within other West European leftist parties. The PCI has in recent years intensified its links to West European

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social democratic parties, the West German SPD in particular. Many of these parties have already taken positions on key security issues—INF, for instance—which are at variance with Alliance policies. Indeed, even some Allied governments have at best given only grudging support to INF deployment. To the extent that non-Communist parties and governments in other countries maintain or intensify anti-US and anti-NATO positions, many in the emergent elite will begin to question why it would hurt the PCI's legitimacy were it to follow a similar course. The upshot of this over the longer term is likely to be a greater PCI willingness to question NATO security policies along with a less solicitous and more confrontational approach toward the United States.

- Perceived Soviet moderation under Gorbachev. Given their early memories of Soviet adventurism and their maturation outside the PCI subculture, we doubt that the emergent elite will ever have a very favorable view of the Soviet Union, whatever its future behavior. Nevertheless, should the Gorbachev regime project a more moderate image at home and abroad, its view of the Soviet Union as a dangerous self-interested superpower could fade, thus prompting many born this generation to question whether NATO, or at least a strong US military and especially nuclear presence in Western Europe, is needed as a "shield" for Italian democracy.<sup>4</sup> [redacted]

<sup>4</sup> For a discussion of Gorbachev's likely impact on West European Communist parties, see DI Intelligence Assessment EUR 85-10163 [redacted] October 1985, *Western Europe: The Decline*

to Eurocommunism [redacted]

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Pages: 15-18

Exemptions: (b)(1), (b)(3)



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Percent

Members of Local and National Leadership Bodies				Activists				Elected PCI Local and National Officials				
Prior to 1950	1950-59	1960-74	1970-76	Prior to 1950	1950-59	1960-69	1970-76	Prior to 1950	1950-59	1960-69	1970-74	1975-76
NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	62	65	66	49	48
NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	70	58	49	43	35
NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	10	15	16	21	27
70	56	37	45	34	43	58	34	42	72	55	35	32
6	10	21	45	8	5	7	10	8	8	7	18	8
7	19	43	10	3	3	10	23	6	6	14	35	50