

much more important things; there were high hopes that the events of that year would change the PCI, maybe not completely but enough to shift it to the left – it was a living organism, it wasn't like the PCF, and what was happening outside would affect the party internally, it would react. The party did well in the 19 May elections – the student protests brought in a lot of votes.

Not that the students cared that much about the elections; they were indifferent to politics rather than against them and were simply using their votes to help out their weak parents. The PCI would capitalize on the votes of groups, including those in the seventies that were much more controversial, for a long while. It never thought it owed anything in return. Who on earth was there to the left of the PCI? I voted in a hurry – I don't know who replaced me in the Chamber – then rushed to Paris to see the revolution.

People ought to talk seriously about the May events in France, almost solemnly, in fact, because whether you approve of or whether you detest what happened, it cannot be denied that it was a historic watershed. What had surfaced in Italy over the previous year and sparked off protests from Paris right across the world became a symbol and produced its own symbols, and on the walls of the city slogans blossomed that still echo in our minds as those of no other movement in the century have done – language and intellectual tradition played a very important part in the way different forms of self-expression came together. In the seventies, or the early eighties, the Paris city council had all that wonderful written history erased from those walls. The last quip that I saw, after all the walls had been whitewashed, was a pathetic 'Good god, say something!' But this came later.

Meanwhile Lucio Magri, Filippo Maone and I, like many others, went to visit the barricades. Our incursion had its comic moments. The first was in the timing: the elections in Italy had been held on 19 May, so we had completely missed the build-up to the protests. When we set out on our journey in France the transport system was still on strike, trains were idle, planes were grounded, there was no petrol and the filling stations were all closed. Our friend the editor Diego De Donato took the risk of lending us his Giulia, and we packed it with cans of petrol and hoped we wouldn't have an accident, because we would have gone up in flames. Lucio Magri was a very good driver, but he had returned from his exile spitefully deprived of his driving licence, so whenever we saw the traffic police on the horizon, in a flash Filippo Maone had to take over at the wheel. Maone, on the other hand, had no passport, a confession he only made to us as we were about to enter the Mont Blanc tunnel, just past

Entrèves, so that he wouldn't be left out of the expedition. Two metres from France, which was then at boiling point, I could only stammer some idiocy to the border guard – I'm a deputy (I was already no longer one), I am expected in Paris (I don't remember by whom), this man (Maone) is my secretary. I don't think they swallowed my story, but they let us through because chaos is chaos, and on the other side the French border guard had gone missing, on strike. A little later we discovered that the Exxon pumps were open again, making our flammable cargo an unnecessary nuisance: we had to pour it in can by can, and it lasted us until the return journey.

We set up camp in Karol's house and rushed off to the Latin Quarter, which was on edge but far from terrified. Everyone was talking to everyone else. There were still some clashes with the police, but unlike what happened in Italy in the decade that followed, there was no bloodshed – a few paving stones were thrown. No revolt was ever less sinister than 1968, or more decisive or more joyful, as if the protesters felt that everything was within their grasp, or more precisely had already been achieved. We spent the first evening at the Odéon, packed in like sardines, and it was moving to see how everyone stood up to speak, not just as part of a group but singly: people who had never done anything like this before talked about themselves to the world, often finding it difficult. 'Let them speak' came the cry in support of those who took their time or stumbled, as they struggled to express their problems and their sense of loneliness. The pain of being alone, and their astonishment at finally being together with others, with everybody. There was no theme to the evening apart from this telling and listening, and whenever a well-known face (after queuing up) took up the microphone she or he was listened to with neither more nor less attention: the object of the demonstration lay in the act of demonstrating, objectives were achieved in the act of putting them forward, for the system, authority, rules and regulations had already all been done away with. We were beyond the reach of any prohibition. Quotations were greeted impatiently. There were no teachers; the crowd of young and not so young people felt no need for them – because everybody was allowed into the Odéon, even passers-by, even the lowliest down-and-outer. Whether France is silent or shouting, asleep or at the barricades – and the movement that evolved in 1996, almost thirty years later, would rediscover this for several weeks – there is the same sense of fraternity, something that I have never encountered in Italy.

Over the next few days, we witnessed the beginning of an implicit turn in the tide; the streets were still crowded but the atmosphere was different. Not just because the workers had gone back when the strike ended but also because the students weren't ready for the long haul. The need

for a common objective, even if it was only to work out together how to go forward from the point they were at, was rejected as soon as it was mentioned. Any organization was feared as a new form of authority. So the country had started to function again not by quashing the flood of protesters but by pushing them aside. Even so, social relations had been changed everywhere. In the workplace, in newspapers, in the electronic media, in many housing blocks there was a blossoming of grassroots committees. The government waited for things to subside and accepted a sort of passive revolution⁸ in higher education.

The PCF also waited for the tide to ebb; a couple of days later, I went to the Bourse du Travail at Billancourt, but they wouldn't let me into the factory; no student had any hope of talking with the workers, and even less than none with the union leaders. It was something of a concession that the Bourse itself, the camera del lavoro next to the Renault plant, didn't turn me away, and I was a member of the Central Committee of a fraternal party; they answered a few questions, but were distinctly chilly. A few flames were still flickering: at Flins the struggle lasted much longer and claimed a victim, the workers' self-management system at Lip lasted for years, but otherwise the events of May ended as quickly as they had started. They left in their wake the extra-parliamentary groups, but those had an even shorter life than ours did.

In June, we set off back to Italy. France, having climbed down from the barricades (outside Paris not much had gone on), was showing off its gentle peaceful countryside. We suddenly stopped in our tracks when we saw parachutes landing, but that was just some sort of sports activity. As we gripped the security fence around the airfield Lucio Magri and I didn't talk; our heads were full of troubling questions, and we turned and went back to the car in silence, so wrapped up in our own thoughts that we didn't notice that Filippo Maone hadn't slipped into his usual place on the back seat. It wasn't until several kilometres later, when we started talking again, that we realized that no one was joining in from the back; we turned round and it was a good half hour before we found him fuming at the side of the road. That evening, with Maone silently raging and the car stinking from the cheeses we had bought for De Donato, we drove back into Milan.

The following day we took part in the first joint rally of the Italian student movements, at the University of Venice. I don't remember who organized it, but it was an attempt to form links that until then had been

⁸ Gramsci uses the term to describe political change that doesn't involve a fundamental reordering of social relations, 'a revolution without revolution', such as the Italian Risorgimento.

rejected. The main lecture theatre in the faculty of architecture was bursting at the seams; it looked enormous to me and I was supposed to speak. I was scared. What should I say, what would be the right thing to say, what would that seething cauldron, certainly less fraternal than the assembly in Paris, find acceptable? I had to stop myself from running away from the applause that greeted me. Go on, go on, the comrades encouraged me. I am always scared and I always go on. And always I am apparently well received. That time, too, I was apparently well received. But I realize, months or years later, that I've been left empty-handed. I doubt whether I was ever able to take charge of anything, not even an assembly in June 1968.

We reached that summer convinced that no one would be able to close the page that had been opened and that we could make the PCI, at least in part, take up the challenge, legitimize the movement's demands and change the internal balance of power. Everything was up in the air: Longo had met with a delegation of Roman students, and Oreste Scalzone and *Rinascita's* report on the meeting, though cautious, seemed to strike a completely new note. The war in Vietnam continued, but things in Prague were on hold, and Botteghe Oscure was clearly worried. There was change in the air, in the atmosphere, in people's behaviour. Or so it seemed to me. How could the largest and most articulate communist party in Western Europe not be consulted? Whatever the PCI decided during these years, for good or ill, one thing seemed clear: never say that reality is wrong, never cease to engage with it, never just wait and see. There was no social movement that wasn't also ours, there were no enemies on the left – that's how we had been brought up. And now this fissure was opening up in the bourgeois formation, and the key issue of education as social discrimination was being raised, challenging the idea of the transmission of culture as the domain of the ruling class – and weren't these exactly the arguments we had used to fight for and obtain the unified Middle School? There was a lot of noisy discussion, with people taking our part and asking us to take theirs. I had seen other people withdraw, perplexed, cold, suspicious, and in Milan I heard some of them say that a slightly risky demonstration 'will be a provocation'; the Milanese edition of *L'Unità* published this, and we protested. I wondered what Gramsci would have written, and what Togliatti, who was so interested in the young people who were mad about Celentano and rock and roll, would have done. Wouldn't he have realized above all else that the hereditary ties that had bound generations of the bourgeoisie together were beginning to loosen? Wasn't that what we were pushing for? Hadn't we spent years working hard so that the young would act? Now they were

acting and we were watching them with distrust, waiting for them to make a mistake? This had never, ever happened in post-war Italy – not even with the red Resistance, when there were a few extreme fringes in the north but they were always in the minority. This movement was anything but a minority. I knew that the leadership was divided – the disagreements had emerged in the March meeting. But since then Longo had made his trip to Prague, and then the events of May had exploded. Everything was in the balance, all you had to do was read the press to observe the embarrassing predicament that the powers-that-be were in.

One evening in June, or at the beginning of July, Ingrao drove me home after a meeting that had finished late. There was a meeting of the Central Committee coming up which would inevitably have to deal with the huge issues that lay before us, and the party would have to decide how to respond to the situation. It seemed obvious and to be expected that we should decide what position to take regarding the cautious response of the USSR to the Tet offensive; it was equally important to discuss the split with Czechoslovakia and finally, after Paris, consider how we might establish a different relationship with the students. I and my companions in France had talked with Ingrao for a long time: he had asked us a lot of questions about Paris and we'd talked about a number of issues and he agreed with our judgement of the PCF and also with Longo's opinions about what was happening in Czechoslovakia. Between the two of us there was affection and trust, even though we weren't that close and I didn't know what he intended to do at the impending Central Committee meeting. What did he think? What would we get from the discussion? 'Not much,' he replied. The Directorate had closed ranks and decided to put off any decisions that would cause splits: the party wouldn't accept them. 'What do you mean, put off?' 'Put off: they won't make any final decisions just yet.' That's what they had decided.

We walked up and down the steep street where I lived. I couldn't make head nor tail of it. He reiterated that the party was not unanimous in the way it saw the student movement and it was very worried about the Czech situation – it was wise not to be explicitly divided; we would pay too high a price. But if the party didn't intervene now with the students and over the autonomy of Czechoslovakia, the danger was worse, I stammered: we would lose the students, and assuming that there was an extremist fringe among them, it would only grow as a result. And if the USSR ever intervened in Czechoslovakia as they had in Hungary, what would become of us, of communism, and maybe even Berlin, Cuba? Who would be able to halt the ensuing crisis? Just when events were proving us right, how could we remain silent? 'The party isn't ready. It's not mature. Not enough for

a major shift in position, nor for a split.' We carried on arguing for a long time.

What could I say in response to the accusation that the party was immature? That keeping it in the dark over every difficult issue was precisely what ensured that it would remain immature forever. And there was no guarantee that just because the undivided party was so big, it would remain unassailable. (Not that I could have imagined how easily such a massive organization would be demolished twenty years later; all it needed was for Achille Occhetto to have a bright idea.) And, I persisted, even if Ingrao was right in judging the party ill-prepared to face up to certain realities, those realities wouldn't wait in the wings: they were here. Wasn't prolonging the hesitation and the silence taking too big a responsibility?

Maybe, he admitted in that serious voice of his, but nothing would be achieved if the party didn't act together. It was one thing to bear witness, but quite another matter to engage in politics. In any case, there would be no shift in the Central Committee. He spoke from past experience, including the previous congress; he knew how the majority would act if they wanted to oust you. Now wasn't the time, it wasn't the right moment. He wouldn't open hostilities. He didn't think anyone could. When we separated, I knew he wouldn't approve of any intervention from me or my close comrades, Natoli and Pintor, with whom I was still in touch. But we would speak out, whatever the outcome. The level of receptivity of the party was one thing, the threat posed by the extent of the problems was another matter. I don't know if I recited for him the words of the Taiping,⁹ which were dancing around in my head: 'If we fight, we will die. If we don't fight, we will die. So, let us fight.' A few of us, a very few, thought that we had no choice. He was still trying.

⁹ Taiping: rebels, led by a Chinese Christian convert named Hong Xinquan, fighting a civil war (1850–1854) against the ruling Qing Dynasty in China.

Chapter 17

At the Central Committee meeting where everything was supposed to be up for discussion, nothing was – just as Ingrao had predicted. Relations among the leadership were not visibly strained. I don't remember whether I said anything, and if I did I wasn't exactly running the risk of being shot – by then I was eaten up with anxiety if I spoke out, and with shame if I didn't. My loyalty to my party origins caught me pincer-like between two mistakes, and I had thought I was immune to this.

This session of the Central Committee took place at a time of apparent truce. The pressure from the student movement was slackening because of the summer vacation, and swarms of young people rushed around from city to city, in Italy and the rest of Europe, seeking each other out across the Continent in a curious sort of International. They exchanged addresses and contacts, turned up on each other's doorsteps while their parents escaped to their holiday resorts. They were sure that what they wanted was right, but there wasn't yet a vindictive streak to their protests, except for the Uccelli¹ in Rome, who I think emerged at that time, but even they were pretty mild. The young people were distracted and happy; they would often show up at someone's home with a guitar and leave without making their beds. They didn't seek out the PCI, and the PCI was relieved at not having them underfoot. The party thought that 1968 had all just been a brief storm that had blown over, and was happy to see the end of it. It was over, in France.

The Soviet threat seemed to be receding as well. Two surreal engines, one Czech and one Russian, were trying to pull the same carriage. Leaders

1 Literally 'Birds': a student group at La Sapienza in Rome who occupied part of the university for thirty-six hours. They were an irreverent, creative group formed in the faculty of architecture who met in the university's gardens and mocked the intellectualism of the extreme left-wing groups.

sniffed each other at the border between the two countries; they talked to each other without either of them shifting position and they reassured each other: I'm not leaving the socialist camp, I'm not going to invade you. We took this impasse as a good sign, so great was our desire to avoid the issue and put off making decisions. But it was only a truce, even if the various documents that were published at the time tried to present it in a more positive light. We not only wondered what the USSR would do but also what kind of a party we were becoming as we constantly avoided facing up to the issues. We had worked so hard, so that our country wouldn't give up, and we had hoped so much that the situation in Eastern Europe would improve. But the minute these objectives seemed within reach, there we were, paralyzed, unable to act. The PCI was only able to respond to threats from the right; challenged by its own side, it tried to hold off, put the brakes on, back away from what it didn't want to deal with. What could be more serious than such a retreat? I knew the communist instinct for self-preservation, but up until then I had wanted to convince myself that if we were retreating it was because we had in mind a more effective plan of action – *reculer pour mieux sauter*. But we had been recoiling so long we had forgotten how to jump.

We had already lost the students. It was all too easy to see how fragile the younger generation's rebellion was; unlike us, they were not against 'reactionary forces' but the whole architecture of the capitalist system. Our slogan was 'The right to study', and they attacked the school system as a site where consensus was built; our slogan was 'The right to work', and they wanted an end to wage labour; we wanted a fairer distribution of goods and services, and they couldn't have cared less about consumer goods. The world had suddenly appeared to them as it really was, as anyone who had even had a whiff of Marx knew it was. They were the first wave of protesters to challenge the idea of progressivism.

We should have been pleased about this. True, they knew little about past class struggles and how far they could go before the balance of power turned against them. But if we who had had far too much experience of the long haul didn't tell them, who would? They would have listened if we had stood with them, alongside them, taken their side. Our presence or absence changed the scenario. I knew this for certain: you didn't have to look very far; you only had to read Gramsci, whom the party evoked only when it suited them.

The truth that I still grappled with was that we no longer understood the issues that had once been ours; we had internalized a paralyzing knee-jerk desire for order after the fifties, when we were neither in nor out of the centre-left. You began a campaign of struggle with a clear and limited

objective (we were still capable of this) or not at all; you played by the rules not only so that you didn't frighten others but because the communists were the most upright citizens of all: dedicated to study, work and family. Our credo was the very opposite of the 1968 slogans denouncing the regulatory function of the present social order. So far, and no further: Amendola had said this in 1960, but why make him shoulder all the responsibility? He had just been the most sincere. If the communists had looked at the parabola of the USSR, in its crudeness they would have recognized the same retreat, but either they thought it was inevitable or they had learned to look away. They had become the most honest of the socialists but the least audacious of the reformers. They were respectable. They must have retained some of this respectability if in this age of corruption they were among the rare few who were neither corrupt nor corrupting.² From a superficial reading of Gramsci, we had taken on board the idea of an ordered society, without paying much attention to what kind of society this meant, and had gradually slid into a fear of disorder. And everything that we had not predicted we saw as disorder. In any case, making a lot of noise just to feel part of a group was not our thing; we usually got together to pursue a particular objective. Back then, who would have dreamed of talking about the primacy of relationships for their own sake, of taking to the streets simply to stop feeling alone? No one. Certainly not me, not then and not now. But, in our efforts to be reasonable, we had lost even our sense of curiosity regarding the unprecedented youthful insurgency of our own rebellious offspring. Not only had the old fools of the PCF retreated, so had we, the most intelligent communists in Western Europe.

A few days after that deadly dull Central Committee meeting the storm clouds gathering over Prague became more menacing. Luigi Longo made an unusual gesture: he sent a letter to the CPSU in which he warned them that if the USSR used force against Czechoslovakia, he, Longo, would condemn it, whatever position the PCI Directorate took. He wouldn't have put this in writing if he hadn't been extremely worried and hadn't thought the Directorate was vacillating. I don't know who he thought would have doubts on the issue, certainly Secchia and Sereni, maybe Pajetta and maybe Amendola. In any case, he, Longo, was sticking his neck out and he let it be known: I am a man of the International; I know you and you know me. I will condemn you in no uncertain terms. Think about it.

If they thought about it at all, the CPSU must have concluded that a disagreement with the PCI, and they already suspected there would

2 A reference to the Mani Pulite (Clean Hands) campaign by magistrate Antonio Di Pietro during Tangentopoli, from which the PCI emerged well.

be one, would not do much harm. Maybe someone from the PCI had suggested, and some of the more obtuse members of the CPSU believed, that the Italian communists would be split between those who were loyal to the USSR and those who were not, and that the disloyal ones would come off worst. They'd tried something like that in Spain but it hadn't worked. In any case, Longo must have been given reassurances that nothing would happen; otherwise he wouldn't have left for Moscow as a guest on one of those health-based holidays that were a hangover of the fraternal relations between the parties. There, as far as I know, he had no contact with Brezhnev. Almost everyone in Botteghe Oscure had gone off for the holidays, leaving behind a few comrades at every level of the hierarchy to look after things. Reichlin had remained to represent the Secretariat. Karol and I were in Rome and we only went away for a few days to meet Ralph Miliband on Elba; he was a delightful comrade, a socialist member of the Labour Party. He reproached me for being too soft on students who supported the Chinese Cultural Revolution: '*Vous tissez du mauvais coton*'³ he repeated to me and Karol; we were interested in the Cultural Revolution not because we were unaware of how rough its cotton was but because the higher quality material of communism and social democracy hadn't got us very far.

Towards midnight on 21 August Alfredo Reichlin rang me: Soviet tanks were rolling into Prague. The Secretariat was recalled urgently. Karol and I rushed to the Cuban Embassy; Castro had railed against the inability of the USSR to understand its brothers and allies, and the ambassador was expecting any minute to receive a declaration of condemnation from Havana. The minute lasted the whole night. Next morning, Reichlin rang me again: Your friend Castro has not condemned the invasion.

The days that followed were febrile. In Prague the Soviet tanks had been greeted with astonishment; unlike in Budapest, there was no resistance and when the Czechs challenged the Russian soldiers who stuck their heads out of their turrets, asking them 'But why are you here? What have you come to do?' the soldiers didn't know what to say. Dubcek had been arrested and taken to Moscow. A certain part of the CPC, led by a certain Bilak – about whom I knew nothing before or after – had apparently called the USSR in to defend socialism from the 'new direction', which was leading them straight into the arms of the Germans. Nobody believed this. The comrades that I admired most, such as Smrkonský and Hayek, had convened an extraordinary Congress in a factory at Vysocany on the outskirts of Prague. There was no bloodshed, but things were very tense. President Svoboda

3 'You are weaving with bad cotton.'

had flown to Moscow to fetch Dubchek and they had brought him out in handcuffs, and he refused to speak until they took them off.

The Central Committee of the PCI was convened a few days later. Svoboda had just brought Dubchek home, but the leader of the government was now Gustav Husák; who could possibly have any misgivings about such an eminent, dignified figure of the Resistance? Pajetta was waiting for us at the entrance to the room where portraits of Gramsci and Marx had pride of place – they had been hanging there since 1956 to keep them safe. ‘Things have ended well in Prague, haven’t they?’ he asked us, full of confidence. The situation was back to normal – ‘normalized’? This was the first time I heard that phrase. ‘What do you mean, well? Have we all gone crazy?’ But a lot of people seemed relieved. Some because anything is better than bloodshed and others because they believed that the ‘new direction’ had social democratic overtones, from people like Ota Sik and Richta, which the USSR had rightly repressed. At some point Gigi Nono rang me – he always rang me at night, scaring an aunt who thought that all telephone calls after a certain hour heralded disaster – to complain that we were not attacking Prague strongly enough (‘But what’s Pietro doing, what’s Pietro waiting for?’) – and he was completely dumbfounded when I told him that the invasion was unacceptable. So was 1956. What did he think socialism was? He was totally confused: But what did I mean, and what about Fidel, and Vietnam? Gigi was a serious person but he oversimplified things; he detested Zhdanov and realism, but he still hoped it was just a temporary phase. As we all had done in the past. He wasn’t the only one.

I never found out who was the author of a telegram signed ‘Rome student movement’, but it said something like ‘In front of the Soviet tanks, not behind them’. At the time, everyone denied sending it, but I remember it well. It’s true that anyone could send messages that were not checked. There was a public campaign against the USSR, but nothing compared to what there had been in 1956 – it was as though governments now took for granted that everybody could do what they wanted in their own camp. A few days earlier, Luigi Longo, who was not exactly someone you went for a coffee with, had stopped me in the corridor, his face drawn and his grey eyes full of anger: ‘Do you know, they didn’t even let me know.’ The morning after the invasion he had found a short note from the CPSU on his breakfast tray informing him that they had entered Prague. Beneath his calm exterior he was fuming, if you can say that of a man who was so restrained.

But he must have swallowed his anger somehow, because he managed to deliver a measured report to the Central Committee. He censured what he called ‘the tragic mistake’. What the devil did he mean, ‘the mistake’,

let alone calling it tragic? A misunderstanding? An unintended guilty act, like manslaughter? An oversight while following the correct procedures? Some of us thought this was unbearably hypocritical, or maybe we had had enough of understatements that bordered on silence. And, for the first time, several people actually left the party. This had been no mistake: it was part of the logic of what the socialist camp had become – a bloc of states which only held together because they had limited sovereignty. They could have replied: But it has always been like that. And we could have responded that it hadn’t been like that up until 1949, and we shouldn’t have accepted it even then. If there had been a mistake, it was our refusal to talk about it. And let’s not bring the Cold War into it, which the accusations of betrayal and the hangings had only exacerbated. And the fact that in 1956 we had swallowed Hungary. Keeping quiet had been and continued to be wrong.

I don’t remember whether we managed to say all of this from the platform, I know that it was the first public outburst by Pintor and Natoli, and I don’t remember whether it was mine, too – we had all been feeling very het up at the time. A few other members cautiously took a similar line. But no one from the Directorate did. I don’t know whether they had already torn into each other in the Secretariat and then reached a compromise with that phrase ‘tragic mistake’. Maybe for the usual reason: ‘*ne pas désespérer Billancourt*’.⁴ The leadership’s response was that we were ‘anti-Soviet’ – we had unforgivably gone further than the party had earlier when it distanced itself from the USSR. That was the beginning of the end for us, or rather this was the pretext for it. Thinking it over, I’d say that the most serious mistake the PCI made wasn’t throwing us out but accepting the process of so-called ‘normalization’, which it wasn’t obliged to do simply out of loyalty to the USSR. We had already had Togliatti’s memorandum stating the PCI’s right to autonomy. In Prague, there had been a congress of communists, not of the little-loved dissidents but of comrades who belonged to the Czech Communist Party, which in the post-war elections had become the largest in Europe, with 38 per cent of the votes, and on 21 August they hadn’t gone away and hadn’t taken up arms against Moscow – and yet the PCI disowned them. When the Czech party continued to suffer from repression and internal exile and some of its members tried to make contact, Botteghe Oscure didn’t meet with a single one of them. Only Bruno Trentin had the courage to welcome to the CGIL a man from Eastern Europe, not a Czech but a Pole, Adam Michnik, who in any case

4 ‘In order not to upset [the workers in the Renault factory at] Billancourt’, that is, the party grassroots: an expression used by French communists as a justification for their silence over the repression in Eastern Europe.

wasn't a communist. The Czechs, Reimann, Smrkonský, Hayek, Frish – the names surface with their faces – had gone silent. Not even the scholars, such as Goldstücker and Liehm, whom Husák eventually allowed to leave, ever set foot in Botteghe Oscure – and he'd let them leave because he was sure no other communist party would help them. The socialists did what little they could, which wasn't much. And by the time these countries had left the fold of 'real existing socialism', one by one, everything had been destroyed, even whatever half-hearted elements of social democracy there had been. The exile of Eastern Europeans – not just Czechs but a lot of Poles and a few Hungarians – was heartbreaking.

The 1968 movement didn't get involved. It had already left behind the world of communists, states and parties. It wasn't interested; it knew nothing about such things; the behaviour of the PCF during that May in Paris and the defence of extremism against Lenin⁵ – which Daniel Cohn-Bendit would no longer write today – had been enough. The news of fresh disasters that every now and then came out of Eastern Europe defined these social formations as little more than vast military barracks. The 'sixty-eighters' were libertarian, anti-bourgeois, anti-system, anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist. They occasionally acclaimed Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg (a few), Ho Chi Minh and Mao (many more), but these were simply nice symbols. Their own task was to overthrow the existing power, or powers, of the state, and it seemed within their grasp – it would follow as a result of the consciousness-raising process and was already inscribed in that process. They didn't ask themselves what building a different kind of society would actually involve. Their passions and their condemnations were fiery but not properly thought through, and apart from the anarchists, who attracted them, political forces were not an important part of their thinking.

In the autumn of 1968 the students were back in their universities, intent on wearing down the university system rather than taking to the streets. They were not wrong. They opened up a debate around the methods and schedules of university teaching, and the lecturers didn't know how to cope. They weren't all like Claude Lévi-Strauss, who boasted that when the events of May exploded he had simply removed the carpets from his study. Most of them were hurt, offended, upset and they defended themselves badly. And being stigmatized as a hated and in any case defunct academic authority didn't exactly encourage them to at least go and take a closer look at what the students were saying. A few lecturers cleared of the

5 That is, the rejection of accusations of extremism. (See Lenin: '“Left-wing” Communism, an infantile disease of communism', written in April 1920.)

accusation of collusion with the system were allowed to hold courses, but it was hard and they were often interrupted by hecklers.

Forms of self-management were widespread and muddled. The essay that had lit the fuse, 'Against the University' by Guido Viale, published in *Quaderni Piacentini*, still makes convincing reading, but the questions it raised as to what a different kind of transmission of knowledge might look like, what knowledge to include, why, and how, remained unanswered because the parties involved were incompetent. Later on, the demand that all students be awarded 30/30 in their exams excited the students, horrified the teachers and didn't change a thing. In the winter of 1969 groups that called themselves extra-parliamentary began to organize.⁶ They were a response to the strongly felt need to come up with some sort of analysis, a thesis and a line of action that went beyond mere demonstrations. But as education was an integral part of the system, reforming it or revolutionizing it – depending on what language you used – became a secondary issue. The groups were extremely political. Avanguardia Operaia was the most reflective, Potere Operaio the most cultured, and Lotta Continua the largest exponent of 'rejectionism', of demanding 'everything now'. The Sinophilic Marxist-Leninists soon split in two: there was a 'red line' and a 'black line'. In this seething cauldron of proposals, a lot of people moved around from one group to another and a lot of others, who didn't feel represented or who considered any sort of organization anathema, debated among themselves in the self-run counter-courses. *Counter* was the common denominator of the course titles, and for very good reasons.

The extra-parliamentary groups were unable to develop a practice that was much different from that of the traditional parties, except to elect a new charismatic leader of a fluctuating grassroots. The counter-courses floundered over what bits of past culture to accept and what to refuse: this problem was never more passionately posed, or to so little avail. Relations between one group and another, and between all the groups and the assemblies, soon became bitterly antagonistic. Nothing would ever be the same for that generation, and then suddenly it found itself outside the lecture theatres, where it nurtured the rancour of defeat rather than attempting to change course and find a better way forward. Few people reflected with lasting effect on their once-upon-a-time desire to totally change the world; others were humanized by it and took that quality into their profession or voluntary work, becoming more attentive to others – but completely cut off from politics. The connection to the twentieth century was broken

6 For accounts of the extra-parliamentary groups, see L. Castellina in *NLR* 151, 1985, pp. 32ff, and T. Abse in *NLR* 153, 1985, pp. 28ff.

forever. The boiling lava cooled into stone, and still today the 1968 student movement is more damned than explored.

For the whole duration of that movement, the PCI never once opened its mouth. ~~It crept off into a corner, arching its back like a cat during a storm.~~ When, a few years later, it witnessed the emergence of the violent minority fringes of the movement, it asked itself no questions, it didn't reproach itself for not having done anything; instead, it congratulated itself and became part of the prosecution. Its absence during that time was theorized as having been critical, but it was an absence and nothing more. An attempt in the autumn to galvanize the high school students didn't last long – they were younger and more strictly supervised in the classroom; they didn't have the freedom of university students. But in the autumn of 1968 I didn't really follow them closely. The invasion of Czechoslovakia weighed more heavily within the PCI than it did among the students. It overshadowed them, reviving our 'they're all attacking us' complex, and the massive political organism that was the party was crushed under the weight of the USSR.

We were in turmoil as we approached the Twelfth Congress in 1969; the theses drafted by the Directorate were reticent about everything – the students, the situation inside the party, the invasion of Prague. In the meeting of the Central Committee that was convened to ratify them, Natoli, Pintor, Massimo Caprara, Eliseo Milani and others among us openly rejected them. A number of comrades must have interpreted this as a warning shot, because, if my memory serves me right, the text was not put to the vote but sent in draft form to the district congresses. And the federations were split over it, some more than others.

At the previous congress, the Directorate had been able to muddy the waters by insinuating that the right to dissent requested by Ingrao was 'objectively right wing', but in the lead-up to the Twelfth Congress there was no misunderstanding – the leadership denounced what it called left extremism. From the left, we voted against the theses and rubbed salt into two wounds: the party for the first time was cut off from an impressive social movement, losing a lot of young people, and the party had tolerated military action by the USSR that hadn't even had the justification of the dramatic events of Hungary. In our 'no' to the theses we were intent on criticizing their proposals, rather than putting forward our own, unlike Ingrao at the Eleventh Congress. We simply argued that the time had come to break with past policies, and in the federation congresses we had substantial minorities on our side and one or two majorities.

So when the time came to elect the delegates to the national congress, the organizational machinery was set in motion; the party leadership knew

full well that in order to guarantee a safe list of delegates, all they needed to do was elect a safe electoral commission at the beginning of proceedings – when most comrades are not concentrating.⁷ Natoli and Pintor were extremely popular in Rome and Cagliari, as was Caprara in Naples and Lucio Magri, Eliseo Milani and Giuseppe Chiarante in Bergamo, and Luciana Castellina among young comrades and women, but none of them was elected as delegate to the national congress. Which just went to show that if there had been elections in the countries of 'real' socialism, the selection process would have worked the same way. In Eastern Europe, the communist parties hadn't even heard of repressive tolerance. I was the only one to be elected as a delegate, by the Milan federation, not because I was particularly popular there – on the contrary, my speech was harshly rejected by Cossutta – but because in high places it had been decided that one dissenting voice should go to the congress properly accredited. So I was able to take part not only in the plenary sessions – in which every member of the Central Committee that was standing down had the right to speak, and meaning even Natoli and Pintor could – but also in the closed sessions of the Political Commission and the Electoral Commission (though not having the gift of ubiquity, I would not be able to go to more than one of these).

Having assured themselves of the mechanism, the PCI focussed on a less scandalous management of dissent – this was the first time since the expulsion of Cucchi and Magnani⁸ that they had encountered dissent in the Central Committee – and they succeeded. Before the national congress, the usual formalities were followed, and to my embarrassment and that of the others present, I was actually sent to chair a district congress in an 'impartial manner'.

Those of us who were minority voices tried to link up with each other but were always careful not to allow ourselves to become an organized faction, a damning label – and not just because it could be used against us. So we arrived in the autumn of 1969 in the hall in Bologna where the congress was being held having only discussed the speeches that would definitely be allowed, Natoli's, Pintor's and mine. The congress took place

7 Delegates to the national congress were nominated and elected by the federations. At the national congress, the electoral commission nominated candidates for executive positions.

8 Two Communist MPs, expelled in 1951, who were disparagingly named 'Magnacucchi' (loose translation: 'fool-eaters'). Togliatti declared: 'even in the mane of a noble race horse you can always find two or three lice'. See *L'Unità*, 28 February 1951.

in a sort of stadium; outside it was snowing heavily and it was terribly cold. In my hotel room near the station, I went through all the notes I had prepared for a speech that was not supposed to last more than twenty minutes; in it, I had to capture the attention of the delegates and the invited guests, and not forget that hundreds of journalists had come to witness our execution. We kept our distance from them, out of an ingrained habit of not talking to the enemy and out of the hope that our impeccable behaviour would win over the congress participants.

And they applauded us enthusiastically. Nothing rouses a communist assembly more than listening to an expression of opposition which captures their sentiments without involving them and which is destined to fail, so that the unity of the leadership is preserved. Natoli, Pintor and I were assigned to speak, one of us each day, all of us in the morning, after the first or second speech of the day, which served as a sort of warm-up act. It was a good time to take the podium: there was a full hall and the press were obliged to be there instead of waiting as usual until midday, which was the time traditionally given over to the party leaders.

'The Left Dies at Dawn' was the wittiest newspaper headline. Those days have not stuck in my mind as being particularly nerve-racking – I had suffered more over the past few years whenever I spoke in a Central Committee meeting, uncertain whether I was doing the right thing or not. In Bologna everything had already been settled; not that I was so sure that I wasn't making a mistake, but the Secretariat certainly was. The die had been cast; this was just the public *mise-en-scène*. I was the first of us to speak and I began: 'We are gathered here while the army of a country that calls itself socialist is occupying another socialist country', and wham! the entire Soviet delegation got up and walked out, led by Ponomariov, who had been a guest in my house in Milan several times. All of the other delegations except for the Vietnamese followed suit – we thought this was really significant until we discovered that they were having a problem with the simultaneous translation service. The silence on the platform was glacial, but there was huge applause from the floor. The same thing happened with Aldo Natoli, who was much loved, and Luigi Pintor, who was very much loved. I had attacked our ties with the USSR, Natoli had criticized the overcautious approach towards social struggles and our lack of presence among the social movements, and Pintor had attacked the inertia and authoritarianism of the party. We had divided up these tasks. We made no mistakes. We were used to speaking to our own people. When he bumped into me behind the platform Berlinguer dropped his guard for a moment: 'You were wrong to talk like that. You don't know what they're like. They're bandits.' 'They' were the Soviets.

By the end of the third day, we knew that we had strong support but we also knew that if we put forward a motion attacking the theses very few would vote for it: so as not to split the party, to avoid sticking their own necks out, and because in any case we would still have been in a minority and therefore ineffective – all the usual reasons. I was the only one who had a voice in the Political Commission; I put forward my motion there and it was rejected, but I was given permission to put it forward again in open assembly. I warned Ingrao that I would do so; in a photograph taken of us at that very moment we still look young and full of smiles – he looks unconvinced and I seem very jolly, goodness knows why. The ensuing ritual didn't hold any surprises and I knew I would only get a few dozen votes, a derisory figure.

And then, at the end of the Congress, Berlinguer spoke, beginning his *de facto* leadership of the party. He referred in passing to several of the problems we had raised, but ignored the issue of the USSR. The congress took this to mean some sort of shift in position, though Longo – already ill and suffering – had not hinted at this in his opening report; on the contrary. The few comrades who would have liked to vote for my motion gathered round me to express a particular worry; that is, they wanted to show faith in the new party leader. Even Lucio Magri, who also didn't expect much and had followed the congress perched morosely among the guests, came down from the upper tiers, still hoping as always that there would be some sort of opening up towards our position, that our views would be legitimized, that something would change. I was very unhappy about not putting my motion to the vote. It mustn't look like a retreat, but what else was it? I presented the motion and explained why I was not putting it to the vote. It was not my best moment. My uneasiness was increased by the applause and sudden warmth of feeling that enveloped me because I was declining to open up a rift in the party. I got down from the platform, took my bag and left without voting.

Aunt Luisa, my mother's sister, one of the few people left of my family, was dying in a clinic in Milan. My sister had rung me at six in the morning. When I got there she was already dead. She had died contented, having seen her niece on television. A long time beforehand she had decided on the lovely long dress and veil to wear for her burial. She wanted to be buried in a little hamlet in the Dolomites, next to the husband who had tormented her and the mother she had looked after, a long way from Venice where they had lived. As if she were resuming her old life, but in a different place.

Two days later, Mimma and I followed the funeral hearse up the snow-covered roads. *Nunc dimittis* your servant Luisa, the priest had hurriedly

recited. We doubted whether she would have liked being referred to as a servant, even if it was in Latin and before god the father. When we arrived at the little church with the tall spire, typical of those mountain parts, we found it closed. In the little cemetery next to it a somewhat drunken gravedigger was digging the grave in the snow, muttering that the lady was lucky to be laid in ground where no one else had ever been buried, while at the same time flinging over his shoulder the reddish bones struck by his spade as he dug. The dark earth fell onto the still elegant body of which she had taken so much care, while she allowed her spirit to be crushed. During the night, Mimma's car seized up from the cold and I don't remember whether we managed to get back down to the valley the next day. We hadn't let anyone know; we had suffered too many deaths and no longer had the heart to tell our friends and listen to their condolences. My sister, who as a doctor had had to deal with all of the family deaths, was totally exhausted. I couldn't have been any further away from the congress in Bologna.

Anyone who had had any illusions about Berlinguer's speech soon lost them. Natoli, Pintor and I were re-elected to the Central Committee – the others weren't – but excluded from holding office. I don't know what we would have accepted if we had been offered anything, but the dilemma never arose. After a few weeks, we realized that, as had happened after the Eleventh Congress, we remained well-known figures but nothing more. Luigi no longer counted in Cagliari, nor Natoli in Rome, nor did either Magri or Eliseo Milani in Bergamo.

The following two months were unbearable. Czechoslovakia was 'normalized' and everyone had already stopped talking about it; a few emigrés such as Jiri Pelikán tried to reconnect. Chou En-lai declared the Cultural Revolution over. The Tet offensive was winning. The universities were concluding a long slow retreat, having resolved nothing. And so far nothing seemed to be happening in the factories, except for Marzotto in Valdagno twelve months earlier. The last two or three years had been hard, and the struggles of the early part of the decade seemed a long way off, just a few flickerings. I had lost touch, caught up as I was in the Roman circle – I had become a proper little politician and a losing one at that. If I had returned to Milan, where there was nothing of mine left, I would not have been given any work, and I knew that I would be listened to with suspicion even by the grassroots: how could the party be completely wrong? The same was true for Luigi, Aldo, Lucio and Eliseo – all of us were fish out of water. The thousands of comrades who had looked to us with hope in the run-up to the Congress were now embarrassed by us.

What mistake had we made, where had we gone wrong? Our only mistake had been that there were too few of us and we'd spoken up when it was too late. I couldn't stop thinking about the Communist Party's retreat, which couldn't be blamed solely on the USSR – in any case, what USSR? After the death of Stalin, it had simply divided up its powers and was incapable of reforming the party or of playing a positive role in the world. It couldn't even keep its own camp in order without the use of force. It offered no ideas about what should be done in the huge ex-colonial countries, and limited itself to supporting a rather dubious progressivism in the Middle East. It was no longer encircled and yet it was exhausting itself in the arms race as if it were about to be attacked, whereas it was really being undermined from within. In 1969 you could expect nothing from the USSR unless something drastically changed in its leadership; for some time the masses had been anaesthetized, more from scepticism than terror.

But how could the PCI have become so moderate, precisely at a time when a changing world meant a different outcome was still possible? Because its particular obtuseness seemed only recent, so it was not inevitable that the PCI should have responded to 1968 by retreating into its shell, and in fact at the beginning it had been troubled by it. This living body to which I had bound myself since 1943, which had accompanied me all these years, what stage of suffering or desire coupled with impotence had it reached? I had become used to moving around inside this body, playing it like a huge keyboard that responded to my touch and sent back messages in return. Now this keyboard had been taken away from me. And I wasn't very interested in the mental space I had always set aside for myself: that garden of my youth had remained secret and now it was overgrown with weeds running wild.

And then I was overcome by the feeling that we were guilty, that for too long people everywhere had been calling out to us and we had never replied. And now we also carried the guilt of being punished: we had gained nothing and weakened Ingrao, to whom we were linked *ex origine*. He was right to reproach us: what's the point of simply bearing witness? Politics is more than that. Yes, but what kind of politics? What did the PCI demonstrate if not the inability to understand, let alone put forward and develop, the explosive need that was coming from deep inside society? Or rather from its brain, from the best part of it? The student movement had been anything but a *jacquerie*.

Or maybe it was already too late either to bear witness or to engage in politics, but I couldn't know this. In any case, we hadn't even been able to leave our mark on the party. It was impossible to have a clear conscience and in any case what did we care about easing our own individual consciences?

It never occurred to us to act as an organized faction and to go around sounding out in secret the people who we thought were close to our positions. We would never have infiltrated our own party as if it were someone else's house – maybe out of pride, or because it would have been too much trouble, or maybe (but this only occurs to me now) because we were tired. It's likely that we still held a little spark of hope that we had lost the battle but not the war, that the PCI wouldn't continue this way for long. The crisis in real existing socialism was plain to see. The centre-left had reached an impasse. Society had sent out signals in our favour. Why not start again? Give Botteghe Oscure a fright? We had nothing to lose. So the idea, dear to all intellectuals, of starting a journal was born, a monthly journal, explicitly partisan, which wasn't provided for in the party's rules and which it wouldn't be easy for the PCI to ban now that it cared about appearances; after all, it had allowed us to speak at the congress and even re-elected us to the Central Committee instead of throwing us out onto the street.

It was mainly Lucio Magri's idea; he was the most enthusiastic and put his heart and soul into it. Not everybody was convinced at the beginning, but Pintor, Natoli, Castellina, Milani and I certainly were. Others joined us once it started circulation. Valentino Parlato left *Rinascita*, where he had been working, and so did Lisa Foa. Luca Trevisani, who had been part of Luigi's team, joined us from *L'Unità*, and so did the trade unionist Ninetta Zandegiacomi. And there was an army of people willing to collaborate with us. Our blood began to beat again. We found a small publisher in Bari, to whom we were grateful – other, bigger firms had sent us packing, either because they didn't trust us, since journals in Italy were not very popular, or because they didn't want to get on the wrong side of the PCI. We undertook to give our *barese* editor, free, each issue made up and ready to print, in return for five thousand subscription copies, which we would find ourselves and which would pay for rent, telephone, and the few other things we needed; he would keep any money made from sales above that number. As a matter of courtesy, we would have to let the party know.

I was sent to speak to Berlinguer: 'We're starting a monthly journal. I'm not here to ask you for advice because I know you would say no. I'm here just to let you know.' He didn't blow up, partly because he rarely lost his temper and partly because, or so I thought, although he was anxious about the affair he was also interested. He knew that debate within the party was being suffocated, he knew who we were and that we would get a hearing; he also knew that we would not be a threat to the leadership, and in the end he knew he couldn't stop us. 'Tell me what you intend to do.' So I did. He advised me against it somewhat half-heartedly, because he knew we had made our minds up. Before I left, I asked him: 'Do you think there

will be any disciplinary measures against us?' 'Absolutely not.' I took my leave, promising I would let him see the first proofs. We were out in the open; our relationship was a loyal one. Ingrao vehemently advised us not to go ahead. He not only refused to be involved in the journal – as we knew he would, just as he hadn't approved of our behaviour at the congress – but he had no illusions; when I said to him, 'Berlinguer excludes the possibility of disciplinary action', he shook his head: 'They'll kick you out.' He didn't approve of us breaking the rules in order to put forward our ideas; he was listening to what was going on outside the party and he thought that it was wrong to burn our boats like this.

We put the first issue together in excellent spirits. We met every afternoon in a crumbling old apartment in which we had installed Lucio; we had lively discussions about what to write about and how, and we all read each other's pieces – except for Valentino Parlato's, which arrived just as Luca Trevisani (whose brilliant brother had designed the journal for us) was about to get on the train for Bari, to make up the first issue ready for printing. This is the only journal I feel I have created, apart from an attempt I made years later with my feminist friends (who quite rightly had misgivings about me) which we called *The Little Bear*, for there were seven of us and the firmament didn't scare us. I say it was the only one, because it really was a collective effort, with no need for false diplomacy, by a group that shared a common analysis and had the same priorities – we had chosen the score together and each player was developing it in his or her own register, like a cantata. On other occasions, I have taken part in initiatives that were no less ambitious but were less organic, since left-wing thinking has become more and more the work of soloists.

We spent hours discussing what to call the journal; we came up with some presumptuous ideas, such as *Reason*, or obscure ones like *The Arms of Criticism* (Marx had encouraged people to engage in 'criticizing arms'), and I don't remember what else; finally, from sheer exhaustion, we settled on *il manifesto*. The 1848 one. The reference to Marx was deliberate. Even though we knew that if a paper doesn't fail straight away, no one thinks about its name for long, it's just taken for granted. We all contributed to the first issue. Pintor's first editorial, in the spring of 1969, turned out to accurately predict the future when he wrote that what was happening between the PCI and the DC was 'A dialogue without a future'. There's also a piece, by me I think, criticizing the International Conference of communist parties.

I sent the proofs to Berlinguer, who rang me straight away: 'And you call this a journal dedicated to research and analysis? The whole thing is nothing but political opinion.' 'They are the same thing.' Again he didn't persist or

threaten. He asked me to delay publication for a couple of weeks; he was going to the international conference, which had been put off for more than six years, and he intended to attack the invasion of Czechoslovakia and the last thing he needed was for the CPSU to be waving a copy of the journal in his face. I agreed. There was no great upset at the Moscow conference. China was condemned, but this had not been an issue for a long time. The Cubans had come back into the fold. Berlinguer criticized the intervention in Czechoslovakia, which neither endeared him to the CPSU nor condemned him to be burned at the stake. The first issue of *il manifesto* came out at the end of June; at first it sold thirty-two thousand copies, then double that and more; it reached a total, I think, of eighty thousand copies, making us deliriously happy and making a small fortune for our publisher.

We were revived like a shrub after rain. A few days later, Karol and I met up with Gilles Martinet – under Mitterand he later became France's ambassador in Rome – who addressed me with a jovial 'So, they're kicking you out of the party? Amendola told me.'

We had received no news of this. We knew that there had been a meeting of the Fifth Commission of the Central Committee, which consisted of a bunch of old fogeys; up until then we'd had no idea it even existed; it was a sort of Holy Office without authority.⁹ But on this occasion it made itself heard. The Central Committee was convened, while Paolo Bufalini denounced us in *Rinascita*. The least you can say about Natta's report is that it was extremely critical and asked us to reconsider, but there was no ultimatum. In the debate that followed, no one explicitly supported us and few explicitly condemned us.

Enrico Berlinguer called me two or three times in August. He didn't want to kick us out, this was clear, and he suggested a series of compromises: the journal could carry on but with someone else beside us on the editorial board – he suggested Trentin, without speaking to him first, I think. Bruno hadn't been on our side at the Twelfth Congress, so that wouldn't work. A journal is not an anthology. So then he made a number of flattering proposals, the most interesting of which was to make me head of the Istituto Gramsci – I doubt whether he had talked this over with the interested parties either, or indeed that they would let it happen, even though a few members of the Directorate advised me to accept. In fact, it was quite an offer. But what about the others?

That August, Berlinguer and I talked things over properly, at length and

⁹ This was a permanent commission that dealt with internal party affairs and reported to the Commissione Centrale di Controllo (Central Disciplinary Commission).

with great sincerity. We both knew what was at stake, and right to the end he doubted whether it was a good moment to force us to close the journal. And maybe he wouldn't have minded a couple of tendentious journals; he himself was asking questions about the PCI's political strategy and he only arrived at the turning point of 1973 after much thought and the coup in Chile. But he was worried that someone, with the support of the CPSU – Secchia maybe, or Cossutta, he didn't name names – would take advantage of the precedent we would be setting to launch a pro-Soviet paper which could do a lot of harm. He never worried about us doing any harm, which wasn't a compliment. As for the harm a philo-Soviet paper might cause, that was very unlikely, as we had seen in Spain. The presumed loyalty of the party membership to the USSR arose more from the need for some sort of reference point than from a sentimental attachment to the October Revolution. This was clear when the PCI changed its name and its position. Berlinguer died before this happened and I doubt whether he would have acted in the same way that Occhetto did. However, Berlinguer didn't hesitate to challenge the USSR by dropping his opposition to NATO. It was easier to get them to swallow NATO than any criticism of real existing socialism. Maybe *il manifesto* was entirely and exclusively an issue within the party leadership. A couple of years ago, when I went to visit Natta, who was very sick, I asked him, 'Why did you kick us out?' 'Because you were splitting the party.' 'And would things have gone any worse than they actually did?' I objected. But this was cruel. Even Berlinguer died defeated, and Natta died alone and bitter, after a brief return to his studies – in Arcadia, as he later came to write.

The PCI of the 1980s and 1990s had a more devastating effect on those who had remained loyal to it than on those it had excluded.

The *manifesto* affair came to a head with our September 1969 issue, which marked the anniversary of the Czech invasion with an article entitled 'Prague Is Alone'. Magri had written it, though it was unsigned. And Prague was indeed alone: the 'new direction' had proved too much for Moscow and too little for Washington. The sky fell in. A meeting of the Central Committee was again convened which formally requested that the journal be shut down, leaving it up to the federations to decide. And that's what happened.

And here we have the paradox: the *autunno caldo* was kicking off, and instead of throwing itself into backing the struggles, from July to November the PCI was embroiled in the *manifesto* affair. They devoted all their energies – in public, anyway – and at least three meetings of the Central Committee to dealing with us instead of with what was happening elsewhere. The holidays were over and when the workers returned they began occupying the big factories one after the other, Fiat included, or more precisely

with Fiat leading the way. This occupation should have posed the PCI a completely different set of problems than the student movement had. Did they examine these things in secret? I don't know. Not even we, who were for the most part ex-northerners obsessed with industry, managed to realize straight away the enormity of what was happening. Because the workers were not only occupying the factories, they were managing them. At Fiat, the production line was run by the Mirafiore plant workers' council, *il consignore*, instead of Agnelli's management team; the only difficulties arose in sales and distribution, because these couldn't be left to the factory workers without completely overturning the social order, and not just in Italy. People didn't yet talk about globalization, but the multinationals were appearing on the scene, making a great show of crossing national borders; they became unmentionable after they were later pointed to, and rightly so, by the Red Brigades.

The industrial struggle of 1969 was the largest and most sophisticated working-class campaign since the war. It is important to understand what such insubordination meant for the workers: this was not withdrawing your labour during a strike, this was going in and taking over the whole of the production process, dislodging the hierarchy and making the factory work yourself. And the occupiers were risking more than just a few blows from the *celerini* or revenge from their university lecturers; at stake was their work, their wages, their very livelihood. And these were not the brave survivors of the decades of repression: these were young workers, many of them without qualifications but acculturated in the chaotic acculturation processes of society. And what the unruly student movement had disseminated the year before, they made their own, though I don't know how conscious of this they were; later people debated whether the 1968 student movement had been the fruit of the early worker insubordinations of the sixties, or whether the *autunno caldo* of 1969 was the end product of 1968's youthful hurricane. The sixties are full of unspoken echoes.

I didn't take part in any assembly, I wasn't there, but I heard and saw it in the news clips shown on television and later destroyed – so I don't know, because I wasn't there, whether as they climbed over the gates in the morning and guarded the shop floor at night those workers had revolution in mind; they were certainly revolutionizing factory management. The decision must have spread like a spark from plant to plant. This was not the poor and the oppressed, this was the 'class' that was taking shape and growing, showing it was capable of guaranteeing an even smoother running of the whole production process, disconcerting the bosses and upsetting the usual order of things. I don't know if they wondered how it would all end. It was their workplace, they were fighting in order to change it and to keep

it, not in order to abandon it – few were thinking of giving up work, but all of them were shaking off the habit of obedience. I saw them talk in assemblies, where even the trade union leaders had to queue up to speak, just like the lowliest manual worker, just as they had at the Odéon in Paris the year before, but I felt that here there was less solitude and suffering. They weren't coming together by chance, they didn't arrive as atomized units from the city, they were in their own familiar place and they spoke feelingly and knowledgeably about what they did, what they could no longer put up with, and how things might be done differently. This was what communism was, as someone said: the simple thing that was difficult to put into practice – and here they were, doing it. And from where they stood they could see a different world. The leaflets they produced, and which seeped into the culture long afterwards, demonstrate their desire to manage collectively, not to take it easy. There was no boss, none of his managers, and tomorrow would not be like today. The stakes were extremely high: there could be no greater challenge to capital.

The media realized this; just as the coverage of the student occupations had initially been sympathetic, at first they were pleased that the factory occupations were outflanking the PCI and the union, but then they became frightened. This was not just some act of rebellion by our own beloved sons and daughters, this was a refusal to accept production methods, capital, the very way that industry worked, the only way it worked, for we were incapable of imagining anything different. It scared people to think that Fiat could be managed by its workers, that they could discuss production quotas on each single shop floor and that they would all tally and that the production cycle could be maintained and run smoothly. It scared them to think just how little knowledge, or none at all, was added by the engineers and managers to what the manufacturing workers already knew. At the Ivrea plant, Olivetti had already worked this out, but it's a different matter if it's the owner who decides to change roles, not the workers. If the 1968 movement has never been forgiven for its mockery, the *autunno caldo* has never been forgiven for having laid bare the crude mechanics of power that govern industrial production.

What was equally frightening was that the workers had provided themselves with a platform, and they were not afraid to organize themselves, they didn't take long to decide how to delegate, they elected the delegates themselves and decided on their functions, they decided things with them and even the most heated discussion never halted production. In some plants, such as the Montedison at Castellanza, this state of affairs continued for years and productivity increased so much that the owners had to slow it down just when it was thriving.

I think it was the only time since the war that the potential for a struggle right at the heart of the productive system seemed to have, and for a moment really had, unlimited outcomes. Europe was still shaken by the events of 1968, the United States by the movement against the war in Vietnam, and echoes of the Chinese Cultural Revolution and the Shanghai working-class struggles still reverberated. On the other side of the world, Latin America was in turmoil from guerrilla movements and military juntas, and in Mexico City the students who had occupied Three Cultures Square had been shot at. We were at a serious crisis point, in an unplanned shared climate, as a shiver passed from one section of society to another and left the bosses and the states dumbfounded. Only the Soviet Union remained untouched by 1968 or 1969, proving just how sclerotic it was.

No one has measured how deep and how far-reaching the effects of the 1969 movement were. While the media gave the workers less coverage than they had the students, the workers' self-management system had an electrifying effect on editorial boards, and then hospitals, and then it seemed to spread everywhere. The economic and political powers—that would never forget it. At the beginning they gave in as they had never done before. In 1972, they signed contracts which would have been unthinkable before, including the right to 150 hours of paid study time,¹⁰ which continued for a few years before disappearing. After that, contracts included agreements on workplace regulations, and these rankled with the bosses more than wage demands. The agreement clearly handed the factories back to the bosses — and how could it have been otherwise in a society that was already isolating the workers? — but it also recognized the fact that the struggle of 1969 had been such a show of force that they hadn't dared to repress it. The 1972 contracts had two opposing effects: the extra-parliamentary groups were disappointed and the PCI benefited, gaining a huge popular vote, bigger than they had ever had before. Right up until the 1980s, the PCI managed to garner votes from a movement of ideas and practices that it had neither solicited nor approved of. The timing of elections doesn't keep up with what is happening in society; there's a time delay; the elections become a symbol and then suddenly they call parties to account, as happened when millions of citizens in 1987 threw the political map of Italy into disarray, preceding and facilitating

10 *Lo Statuto dei diritti dei lavoratori* (The Statute of workers' rights), Law 300, passed in 1970, was a progressive law, the fruit of long struggles; it included the rights of the individual worker, the right to organize in a union, the right to hold assemblies and to establish delegate councils, and the right to 150 hours of paid study leave.

the *dies irae* of Tangentopoli. The PCI was absent from the occupations — at least as a party it was. The union was there, but as individuals, and it made considerable gains as a result. But the politicians downplayed what had happened, and they waited for the workers to end it — an outcome even more likely than with the students, for they would have to earn a living somehow.

Only ten years later, in 1979, Berlinguer went to Turin to show his support for another Fiat occupation, against the first massive use of the *cassa integrazione*.¹¹ The occupation lasted for forty glorious days but ran out of time; the resistance was heroic and solid but it ended in defeat. Ten years earlier, before the swing to the right had been consolidated, with Thatcher and then Reagan at the helm, and everything for a short time was in the balance, Berlinguer had not shown up. Neither he nor the PCI understood that the extraordinary working-class sequel to 1968 in Italy signalled the transformation of a generation that had to be seized or it would be lost. And people writing the history of those years don't understand that, either, so desperate are they to forget them.

The students rushed to hand out leaflets at the factory gates, and as at the Renault plant in Billancourt the year before, they were met with mistrust, even though the gates were never actually shut in their face. They were the children of the other class, and they could come and go without running any risks. And don't let them try and teach the working class how to fight! The extra-parliamentary groups tried to radicalize the struggle; they didn't listen much and understood even less — couldn't understand that the working class, with its all-out, well-argued challenge, wanted victory, not skirmishes with the police. Most of the vanguard groups, as they called themselves, did not believe that changing the power relations on this treacherous terrain through mass action was subversive; no, you had to push more, separate the true revolutionaries from the false, demand everything and now, not get tricked into fatal intermediate objectives and end up as prey to the union. And what if Agnelli had accepted them? They turned up at the gates to urge the workers on and to recruit; they shouted 'We are all delegates' in a polemic with the workers, who were actual delegates. They soon convinced themselves that the process of Americanization of the proletariat — which they knew nothing else about — was complete even here in Italy. You couldn't start a dispute and then end it. Fortini also wrote that each strike that ends is a failure. In 1969 the occupied factories stood

11 *La Cassa Integrazione Guadagni* (Wages Guarantee Fund): A state unemployment insurance, providing a partial salary to workers who lose their jobs or are on reduced hours.

alone: the PCI did not fully understand them, nor did the radical students. ~~Society had risen during the course of those two years like puff pastry.~~ Then when the factories had been cleared and the 1972 contracts had been eroded, the metalworker would become the icon of the whole system, and the factory would be the model for schools, hospitals, prisons. In 1977, everything was up in the air again, and young people in low-paying temporary jobs would bitterly reproach the workers in blue overalls: 'You can afford a show of force, you lot, you're guaranteed a job.' But they weren't guaranteed a job at all. Not even the most thoughtful part of the 1977 movement understood much about capital's power and capacity for change; the workers seemed strong because they had a contract, a trade union and a party which was part of the state and seemed powerful. The party in turn looked on in 1977 with suspicion, and even accused the workers of *diciannovismo*.¹² Today, in hindsight, the PCI and the CGIL in their penultimate decade of undisputed existence are like a frightening spectre – frightening, but a spectre, nevertheless. They were already losing everything, industrial plants were already being displaced, industry was already being restructured, and soon they would be asked to pay an unthinkable price.

Despite the isolation of the workers, it took several years for the bosses to take back complete control. It did so on the terrain where capital is unbeatable – through the reorganization of labour; the use of technology which was pulling the rug out from under the feet of the working class; the restructuring of ownership and the labour market – all of which the PCI only noticed late on and then treated as inevitable laws of economics. The political dismissals came after the game was already up, and a disappointed, furious working-class rank and file looked for a short time to the Red Brigades, but without getting too involved. No one, apart from a minority in the union and the cartoonist Altan defended Cipputi¹³ from the advancing counter-offensive by the bosses, and ten years later the right would have forgotten about him and the best part of the left would have dismissed him as the last remnant of Fordism, which was already dead.

What was happening in the autumn of 1969 showed that *il manifesto* was right and went even further. The PCI would not have been able to control the insurgency – it was no longer even able to reflect on what was happening in the world, the Third World, the formations of national bourgeoisies, or OPEC and the 1974 energy crisis – without tackling the increasingly

¹² That is, of trying to emulate the factory occupations in Turin in 1919–1920, the biennio rosso.

¹³ The fictitious metalworker hero of one of Altan's comics.

complex mode of production and the best way to take decision-making powers away from the bosses without driving capital abroad.

Those years explain our present. It wasn't an easy task, and no attempt was made to perform it; there was no new thinking, not even one step forward in the then Keynesian circle in which the PCI and the CGIL had also grown up and which would itself be overturned. Maybe even in the sixties Botteghe Oscure was afraid that there would be a fascist backlash, when there was less reason to fear one than there is now. But this opens up a much wider discourse, in which we, *il manifesto*, were just a tiny speck. The leaders who put us on trial in October and November maintained that the worker revolt was an illusion: it didn't exist and even if it did it wouldn't last – hadn't a similar movement in France in 1936 ended with the Grenelle agreement?¹⁴ If you give them a bit of money the workers will fall into line; at most they are good trade unionists but they know little about politics. Togliatti, too, had mentioned the same thing to me once: the incurable economism, easily satisfied, of labour struggles. The populism and anti-worker bias of the PCI were so embedded in its culture that they seemed almost innocent.

In short, we were falling into an extremist trap. And so, paradoxically, *il manifesto* served as a distraction: the federations had to decide our fate when they should have been focussing on the workers' assemblies. Yet the atmosphere was different from that of the Twelfth Congress, and a lot of comrades hesitated to demand our expulsion. And Botteghe Oscure halted the consultation.

Whichever one of us said then, 'We will be to the PCI what Vietnam is for the United States', was wrong. On 24 November the Central Committee was convened in order to exclude us. But the formula used, *radiare*,¹⁵ meant that we were not enemies or corrupt or spies. But it was all just a change in style. Berlinguer told me that no time limit would be imposed on my contribution after the report. As we were going in, he took me to one side for a moment: 'You still have time.' 'To make a gesture of obedience?' 'No, a gesture of loyalty.' I spoke for about forty minutes. As did Aldo Natoli, the last to speak, and he was never forgiven for saying, 'You don't need a party card to be a communist'.

No, to be a communist you don't. But to shift a country you needed a

¹⁴ A reference to an agreement signed in 1936 between Léon Blum, the employers and the Confederation Générale du Travail (the left-wing French Trade Union) at the French Ministry of Labour, in Rue Grenelle.

¹⁵ Under this formula comrades were temporarily excluded from membership, not expelled, and could reapply, as in fact Magri did, in 1984. Expulsion was permanent.

mass party. And that wasn't, or was no longer, the PCI. At least Aldo and I never deluded ourselves that we would build another one. I don't really remember the debate in the Central Committee – the PCI published a book but I don't want to read it again just to search through the speeches for the signs of support or attack which must be in there. The Secretariat had set the tone: we had to be cast out, but not insulted or accused of betrayal.

Cast out, because we were different – and in that they were right. The Central Committee approved our exclusion; just a few comrades voted against it or abstained – Chiarante, Luporini, Garavini, Occhetto. I didn't look at Ingrao, Reichlin, the friends who raised their hands to exclude us. Trentin was not there. I haven't gone back over the votes to count them.¹⁶ I've learned to cushion blows. I wasn't resentful, nor, to tell the truth, was I upset. I just felt a sudden sadness when the doors that were usually out of bounds to photographers were flung open and we were, so to speak, thrown to the lions. I hadn't expected that. We were no longer one of them, one of us. The agency photos still exist: there are the three of us, Aldo, Luigi and me, stern and cold, standing next to each other.

That morning, I walked out of Botteghe Oscure and I wouldn't return until fifteen years later, when Pintor, Magri and I were invited in for a chat with Natta. He wanted to tell us, 'We won't be getting back into bed with the DC.' Berlinguer had been struck down while he was speaking at a rally in Padua against the abolition of wage indexing.¹⁷ He died, I still think, because he was worn out – his proposal for a historic compromise had hinged entirely on the indecisive Moro, and when Moro was killed he lost the tiny and, I think, illusory space left to him. I had never seen him again. As I no longer set foot in the Chamber, I never bumped into Amendola any more and, as for Pajetta, he cold-shouldered me. *We manifesto* comrades

16 Votes were as follows: three against (Natoli, Pintor and Rossanda); three abstained (Chiarante, Lombardo Radice and Luporini; Garavini indicated later that he would have abstained if he had been present); all the others voted in favour, including Ingrao. (See *La Questione del 'manifesto': democrazia e unità nel PCI*, Editori Riuniti, 1969.)

17 The *scala mobile* (escalator) is the mechanism used for linking wages to the retail price index; the application of a sliding scale means that some workers (e.g., bank employees and parts of the chemical sector) got a higher increase than others. (See Napolitano's interview with Eric Hobsbawm in *The Italian Road to Socialism*, Lawrence Hill and Company, 1977, p. 113.) In 1984 Craxi's government, with the agreement of the CISL and UIL, reduced the *scala mobile* payments. After worker protests led by the CGIL, a referendum led by the PCI to overturn the government decree was defeated.

didn't go off into the void, as most people did who left the PCI. We found ourselves in the thick of the university crisis and the workers' struggles. We hoped to serve as a bridge between the youthful ideas that were emerging and the wisdom of the old left, which had had its hours of glory. It didn't work out that way. But that's another story.