

tionwide general strike, and Slowik (like workers in Lodz) supported the action.

But Lech Wałęsa and the moderates prevailed, and Slowik denounced the compromise as a swindle. In an interview several months later, he said that none of his colleagues seemed conscious of the nature and methods of the adversaries they were up against, nor could they anticipate what was in store.

Until last August Slowik had belonged to the Polish United Workers Party (PUWP). The PUWP's 9th Congress had convinced him that the party was incurable and never could be anything but an instrument of bureaucratic rule. He quit in disgust. Like Slowik, many other members have reportedly resigned from the party since last summer.

After the Dec. 13 coup, Slowik escaped from Gdansk back to Lodz, where he was arrested while urging workers to strike. He has reportedly been sentenced by a military court to four-and-a-half years in prison.

Obviously, the Polish government's fundamental provocation was that it refused to govern. Nothing worked, and those in charge refused to do anything about it. In its efforts to negotiate, Solidarity encountered what seemed to be a power vacuum at the top and naturally, it felt sucked into it. When those who are supposed to run things can't or don't, those underneath decide to take over. That's a revolution.



The government allowed Solidarity to control food distribution in the city of Lodz, but not nationwide.

## ITALY



# Communist Party scraps Soviet model

By Diana Johnstone

P A R I S

**T**HE ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY (PCI) has formally taken leave of the "international Communist movement," judging it an "outdated idea." Military repression in Poland has proved that Eastern European societies based on the Soviet model are incapable of "democratic renewal."

In a 6,000-word statement published in the Dec. 30 issue of the party's newspaper, *Unità*, the PCI repeated the comments made just after the Dec. 13 coup by its secretary-general Enrico Berlinguer: an historic phase has come to an end since "the propulsive thrust originating in the October Revolution is exhausted."

The PCI declared its intention to play an "autonomous and positive role" in open debate with the Soviet and other Eastern European ruling parties, and to maintain "normal relations with all Communist parties in the same way as with every other Socialist, revolutionary and progressive force, without special or privileged ties with any, on the basis of absolute autonomy of thought and political action without ideological, political or organizational links."

The Italians expect the Kremlin to counterattack, perhaps by backing efforts to split the party at the base, where many workers are reluctant to abandon the mobilizing myth of "real-life socialism" in the East. The PCI leaders' clear condemnation of the Soviet system is necessary, but also courageous considering the trouble it seems sure to bring them.

Looking ahead, the PCI said the failures of the Communist movement and the inadequacies of social democracy made the search for a new "third course" all the more imperative. Humanity is facing tremendous new problems—including its own survival—that capitalism clearly cannot solve.

Most of the long statement—now being debated in local PCI meetings throughout Italy—was devoted to an analysis of what went wrong with the Soviet

bloc in general and Poland in particular. No spur of the moment switch, the analysis drew on years of study of Eastern European societies, notably at the party's Gramsci Institute.

The statement said Eastern European countries are regressing, undergoing "involutive processes, recurrent and dramatic crises that challenge the monolithic conception of power, the lack of representative institutions, the closed hierarchical relations within the 'socialist camp' and the idea of socialism as a model and not an historical process developing on a world scale in the most diverse ways." The Eastern countries are suffering from a "system which does not allow any real democratic participation either in production or in politics. All that ends up not only stifling freedom and creative energies, but also puts a brake on the economic, technological and cultural dynamism of those societies, feeding constant conflict between reformist impulses and authoritarian impulses."

The PCI said the Polish crisis that exploded in 1980 could not be attributed to "maneuvers of reactionary forces, hostile to socialism" (as Moscow claims), even though it obviously offered opportunities for subversion. Rather, the causes lay in "an economic policy...which did not correspond to real possibilities and which increased inequalities," but even more to a bureaucratic, corrupt, undemocratic political system that rigidly resisted change. The chance for change came in the "tumultuous eruption of the Polish working class onto the political stage" through the "birth and enormous growth of the Solidarity union," which replaced the old, discredited unions. Other forces pushing for change were the Polish Catholic Church and "intellectuals with rich democratic cultural traditions." What was needed, in the PCI analysis, was to give the workers "full total responsibility, along with all the fundamental components of Polish society, in a joint effort of reform and renewal." This required making the system democratic and pluralistic.

Efforts by party members to push the Polish United Workers Party in that direction were defeated by "dogmatism,

conservatism, inertia and vacillation," the PCI noted.

The Italian Communists stressed that the "negative attitude of the USSR and other Warsaw Pact countries weighed heavily in this crisis." There were "grave pressures, undue interference." A "political and ideological campaign hammered away against the effort at renewal which had been undertaken by an important part of the PUWP, Solidarity and the Church. All that made it harder to isolate and defeat the various extremist tendencies, which appeared in both the Solidarity union and the party, heading for a showdown."

The PCI said that some "extremist demands" from Solidarity "going far beyond the country's economic and productive means" were the result of years of keeping workers and youth far outside politics. The root of all this, the PCI found, was the damage to Eastern Europe by the imposition of the "Soviet model" for the economy, "but especially for the political system." The PCI argued that this was not the inevitable result of the Yalta accords, since right after World War II, Communist leaders began to discuss the "original character the people's democracies were supposed to have."

But with the Cold War, the Soviet model was imposed on the "people's democracies." The PCI believes great hopes were raised by the 1956 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party, but Khrushchev's "renewal process" got bogged down. One shortcoming, from the very start of the de-Stalinization begun at the 20th Congress, was that by "concentrating criticism on the so-called 'personality cult,' it did not succeed in getting down to basics in analyzing the structure of the Soviet political system." The PCI promised to carry forth such analysis.

The Italian Communist statement said that Soviet bloc faults could not be blamed on outside enemy pressures, encirclement, threats and Cold War. The blocs should not be considered changeless, immobile "ideological-military camps governed by big-power logic," nor should peaceful coexistence be a means of preserving blocs but rather of creating conditions that make them superfluous. "And peaceful coexistence itself cannot be merely the expression of a diplomatic relations and understandings between states but requires the active intervention of peoples and first of all, of a vast peace movement."

The PCI cautioned that criticism and condemnation, however sharp, should not get in the way of disarmament talks or be used to create a Cold War climate. This would not help the Polish in any way. Their chances of recovering some

democratic freedoms depend on the development of detente in Europe and the world.

The Dec. 30 document echoed a statement made by Romano Ledda criticizing Soviet power politics. The statement, adopted by the PCI's central committee last Oct. 5, said Moscow was partially responsible for the current international tension. It claimed Moscow used military force to try to expand its sphere of influence, neglected opportunities to work for peace after the American withdrawal from Vietnam and weakened the non-aligned movement. Ledda also criticized Moscow for exploiting third-world struggles for its own ends as a great power.

The "Soviet model" has long since lost whatever appeal it may have had. But some Communists in Italy and elsewhere still see the USSR as the only anti-imperialist power capable of preventing

## The PCI criticized the Kremlin. It expects Moscow to counterattack.



the U.S. from crushing liberation and revolutionary struggles around the world. The "last ditch" argument of the Soviet Union's only defender left in the PCI's leadership, Armando Cossutta, is that Soviet aid is necessary to third-world emancipation struggles.

The Dec. 30 statement said the PCI did not underestimate the USSR's world role, which "sometimes converges with the interests of countries and peoples fighting against imperialism and reactionary regimes for liberation and national independence, and sometimes goes against those same interests, when it does not openly violate them as in the case of the military intervention in Afghanistan."

The PCI repeated its longstanding call for a "new internationalism" between all revolutionary and progressive forces in the world. This is primarily a bid for cooperation with the parties of the Socialist International.

While social democracy appears "blocked" by the current economic crisis, the PCI noted with obvious approval that "from France to Greece, from Scandinavia to Germany, the search is on for new ideas and programs. The current crisis of capitalism requires, more than ever, that all the forces of the European working-class movements get to work on a new way to socialism."



# Revenge of th

It's one thing for a black to win an election in a small Southern town. It's another to use the power of the office.

By Sheila D. Collins

**T**HE PASSAGE OF THE VOTING Rights Act of 1965 did more than open up the political process for blacks in the Deep South. It created, at least for a brief moment, the possibility of political democracy for both blacks and whites. With thousands of new voters going to the polls for the first time in 100 years—voters who had not been in anyone's hip pocket—it was just possible that leaders could be elected who were genuinely interested in that ever-elusive constituent, "the common good."

The challenge of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party to unseat the Mississippi regulars in 1964 provided the first test of this possibility. Despite the ultimate failure of that challenge, the Voting Rights Act was, in at least one respect, a revolution for blacks in the Deep South. Before the Act only 20,000 blacks were registered to vote in Mississippi. After it was passed, that number jumped to 320,000. Today, Mississippi has the largest number of black elected officials in the nation—300.

But black political power was not easily won, nor has it been safely consolidated. According to John Quincy Adams, head of the political science department at Millsaps College in Jackson, a black candidate in Mississippi still cannot expect to muster more than 5 percent of the white vote in any election. Adams maintains that to elect a black candidate there must be at least a 65 percent majority in the candidate's district.

Making it past this hurdle has been no guarantee of black political success. Blacks elected to public office have frequently had to carry out their duties under a barrage of harassment, ranging from no or negative publicity to unfounded criminal accusations, unnecessary audits, FBI surveillance, mysterious burglaries and career disrupting activities by intelligence agencies as documented in Mary R. Warner's *The Dilemma of Black Politics: A Report on Harassment of Black Elected Officials* (National Association of Human Rights Workers, 1977). By late 1978, attacks on black political figures had become so serious that the National Conference of Black Mayors called for a special meeting with the FBI in an attempt to get the Bureau to correct some of the abuses.

Since Reagan's election, racists have begun to recoup the losses they suffered in the wake of the civil rights movement. In cities such as Atlanta, Los Angeles and Detroit sizable black middle classes have managed to hold a measure of political, if not economic, power. But in the counties, small towns and moderate-sized cities of the Deep South, where in many cases poor blacks are in the majority or near majority, the Bull Conors are coming back.

In Wrightsville and Johnson County, Georgia blacks who have tried to vote or demonstrate for equal rights and services have been faced with official intimidation and violence led by local law enforcement officials, violence of the type encountered by civil rights demonstrators during the '60s. Mayor Richard Arrington, the first black to head the city of Birmingham, Ala., is currently under intense attack in the news media, the courts and from the white Fraternal Order of Police and County Personnel Board. In one of the saddest cases of the season, two older women of rural

Pickens County, Ala., Julia Wilder and Maggie Bozeman, have been sentenced to five and four years respectively in the state penitentiary for alleged "voter fraud" in connection with their efforts to get elderly black residents to vote. Arnett Lewis, Director of the United League of Holmes County, Miss., recently described the situation in rural Mississippi as a state of "civil war."

The stakes to the Deep South's white power structure, and its allies in the boardrooms in Texas, Southern California and the federal government are high. Just how high is exemplified in the story of Eddie James Carthan, the first black since Reconstruction to be elected mayor of a biracial town in the Mississippi Delta. Elected in 1977 on a reform platform, with a promise to serve "all of the people" of the town of Tchula, Miss., Eddie Carthan today finds himself embroiled in a Kafkaesque tangle of false charges, public disgrace and court convictions that could put him in jail for several years.



I first heard Eddie Carthan speak at a rally in Jackson, Miss., last spring, shortly after he had been convicted of assaulting a police officer and sentenced to three years in the state penitentiary. To hear Carthan speak about freedom, justice and the responsibilities of citizenship in the simple, eloquent manner characteristic of many rural southern blacks, was to feel once again, the spirit King evoked during the heyday of the civil rights movement. But Carthan—elected mayor at the age of 27—was a child when SNCC workers moved through the Deep South, living with the poor, registering people who had never been allowed to vote and conducting Freedom Schools for the children of poor black sharecroppers and farmers like Eddie James Carthan.

"I was only 12 or 13 at the time of the civil rights movement," Carthan recalled at the Jackson rally, "but I would drive my grandfather to meetings. I attended the Freedom Schools." He thought getting elected was one of the benefits of the civil rights movement. "I thought I could represent those who had come through slavery, knowing nothing about voting, about going to a motel, sitting in the front of the bus or eating in a restaurant."

His election as mayor of Tchula presented Carthan with just such a challenge. Like many a southern town, it is divided down the middle by railroad tracks that separate the manicured lawns and colonial style homes of the white minority from the roach-and-rat-infested dwellings of the blacks. Ruled for over a century by white planters and their political lackeys, Tchula's population—70 percent black—suffers an "official" unemployment rate of 30 percent. Two-thirds of the population is on welfare, 81 percent of the housing units are classified as "deteriorating" and 47 percent of all family dwellings lack some or all plumbing facilities. Holmes County, in which Tchula is located, is one of the 10 poorest counties in the nation. When Carthan took of-

fice there were no public recreational facilities. The town possessed but one tractor, an old fire engine and an inoperable squad car.

Mayor Carthan began to turn the town's grim statistics around. CETA programs employed local residents in weatherization programs, a housing rehabilitation program was undertaken and a child care program for welfare and working mothers was begun as was a nutrition program for the elderly and handicapped and a medical clinic. Two new squad cars provided 24-hour police protection, and a traffic and sign construction program was begun.

By the third year of his term Carthan had secured financial support for a new water system—which included plans to drain swamps to prevent flooding—and a mini-bus system. Plans were underway to construct public basketball and tennis courts, initiate door-to-door mail service, develop a cable TV system and construct a library. Three million dollars in federal and private monies were funneled into Tchula under Carthan's leadership.



By May 1981, however, the largely black town government (four black aldermen were swept into office with Carthan's election) had once more become almost

Eddie Carthan believed his election was proof of the gains won by the civil rights movement.

