

Eurocommunism : a brief political-historical portrait *

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Polycentrism : a methodological premise.

Not so many years ago « international communism » was commonly regarded as a uniform and uncomplicated entity. Little or no attention was paid to differences between the several communist states or the many communist parties. The symbol for the totality of communist systems was an undifferentiated piece of rock — the monolith (1).

In recent years, however, the study of communist parties and communist polities has tended to concentrate more on the differences between them and the processes of interaction within them. As observers become more aware of the different elements within these complex structures communist parties are increasingly seen as « systems », thereby implying recognition of divergencies within — and differences between — parties once considered homogeneous and immutable elements of an « international communism ». The questions surrounding the nature of the Eurocommunist phenomenon reflect only the most recent example of the difficulty in determining what communism really is, or what persons, parties or polities should be called communist. This confusion in the West, of course, only mirrors the plural reality of the communist world.

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(1) This tendency was prevalent among many communist leaders as well, since, « each communist party was the child of the marriage of two ill-assorted partners, a national left and the October Revolution. That marriage was based both on love and convenience... The decision of revolutionaries to adopt the Bolshevik model was due to the evident failure of all other forms of organization, strategy, and tactics... Lenin had succeeded. It seemed sensible to follow the recipe of success, » E.J. Hobsbawm, *Revolutionaries* (London : Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973), p. 3.

The fortunes of non-ruling communist parties have widely fluctuated. Since the end of World War II few have significantly expanded their domestic base. The Italian Communist Party (PCI) is, however, widely recognized as the most successful non-ruling communist party in the Western world. And the post-war experience and strategy of the PCI may be considered as something of an inspirational forerunner of the contemporary Eurocommunist phenomenon.

Not only has the PCI's electoral success been exceptional, but it is, moreover, generally acknowledged as one of the pathbreakers in the evolution since 1956 of the international communist movement itself. From the outset of that metamorphosis in inter-party relations set in motion by the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU and the Soviet-Yugoslav rapprochement, the PCI has consistently opposed any form of centralized control over the communist movement and advocated autonomy in the search for national paths to socialism. The coining of the term « polycentrism » by the party's Secretary-General, Palmiro Togliatti, in June 1956 reflected this stance. Furthermore, in plotting its own path to socialism, the PCI sought to legitimize in contemporary international communist strategy the long disputed notion of a « transitional stage » between the decline of capitalism and the coming of socialism. The Italian Communists' post-1956 call for « structural reforms » of Italian society through parliamentary action was, accordingly, viewed as a means not only of attracting allies among political moderates but of advancing in concrete, immediate terms the cause of socialism. Indeed, this acceptance of a seemingly open-ended democratic transitional phase during which Italian society would gradually evolve in a socialist direction placed the PCI dangerously close to the brink of revisionist heresy. From the point of view, then, of both inter-party relations and domestic strategy, the Italian Communist Party rapidly moved to a more independent position along the international communist political spectrum (2).

Over the past few years, of course, such a posture has ceased to be unique. With the advent of Eurocommunism, the Spanish Communist Party (PCE) and the far larger but more orthodox French Communist

(2) In early 1962 Togliatti noted, during a press conference, that the Italian Communist Party had grown into a « communist giraffe ». He was trying to convince non-believers that the PCI was a democratic party in spite of its being Marxist. Those who deny it, Togliatti claimed, are « like those ignoramuses who could not believe that a giraffe was real when they first saw it because it was just too different from all other animals ». The quotation is paraphrased by Arrigo Levi, « The Giraffe », *Encounter*, 13, July 19, 1971, p. 84.

Party (PCF) have modified their policies in a similar direction (3). Nevertheless, the PCI was the first West European Communist Party to pursue this path, and its innovating efforts were doubtless at least partially responsible for prodding the more conservative parties into adopting a similar line.

Why this situation has come about is a question of more than historical interest. Non-communist scholars have frequently failed to anticipate developments in international communist affairs. The Soviet-Yugoslav break, the Hungarian Revolution, the public outbreak of the Sino-Soviet rift, the Rumanian and Czechoslovakian bids for autonomy, to cite the more striking cases, took Western observers by surprise and found them ill-prepared to offer any comprehensive explanation for these events. Similarly, the accelerating shifts and splits among the non-ruling communist parties were primarily the objects of contemporary journalistic observation rather than subjects of timely prediction or theoretical analysis among scholars. This record of failure can be partially explained by the methodological approach long prevalent in comparative communist studies whereby the common denominators are stressed and the « national peculiarities » of the parties or states are neglected. Western students of communism were, in effect, like the Stalinist policy-makers, concerned more with model-building than with reality. Monolithic unity was viewed as something intrinsically fundamental to the international communist movement rather than as an external uniformity imposed by Soviet power. Hence, the individuality of men and parties was obscured in the search for evidence of similarity. Western students of communism tended to adopt a general and poorly defined « model ». Like the Stalinists, they regarded actual variations from the model as aberrations. Thus, individuals and parties were seen as communist when they conformed to the model, and non-communist insofar as they differed from it. However, the general model was in fact not general at all but an actual or idealized representation of the Soviet Union. Any ideological and political creativity was generally interpreted as a defection from the communist cause when it differed from Soviet practices or wishes.

This preoccupation with Soviet precedents is particularly distorting in studying the Eurocommunist parties. Far it draws attention away from rich national traditions, intellectual as well as political. In the political atmosphere of the Cold War and Stalinist oppression of Eastern Europe,

(3) For many years the British Communist Party has closely maintained a « Euro-communist » position as well.

such an orientation for Western studies was somewhat understandable. Nevertheless, as a prevailing assumption, this view of communism as a « monolith » blocked the perception of national distinctions, led to the neglect of significant facets of the movement's history, and, most importantly, all but precluded the expectation of change.

The road to Madrid.

The official, public acceptance of the term Eurocommunism was won at the Madrid Conference (March 1977) of the Spanish, French, and Italian Communist Parties. Yet, not only the nature of the phenomenon but its ultimate definition remained subject to controversy. The broadest definition would include Yugoslavia, Romania and logically, any form of Communism expressing independence from the Soviet Union. The narrowest definition would restrict the concept to those parties working to create a Socialist Western Europe, who believe in a link between the struggles for democratic socialism and for a united Europe, or in the priority of the European over the national and the universal dimensions: this would include the Italian and Spanish parties but exclude the French. Finally, an intermediate definition — the one used here and the one which seems to be best since the Madrid meeting — insists on a pluralistic version of Communism; it is supposed to suit developed societies and pledges to maintain their complex social structure and liberal traditions and institutions not only on the road towards socialism but in socialist society itself. It is based on the convergence of the three Communist parties represented in Madrid (4).

The Italian Communist Party has, of course, long recognized that the Soviet Union could not be a « model » for change in Italian society. Other Communist parties in advanced industrial societies have also realized that the Soviet record in democratic practices, especially in relation to individual freedoms and a plurality of parties, falls short of what is acceptable in the West and is consequently a strategic liability.

Having set out after 1945 to achieve power through the ballot box, the most important Western Communist parties, those of Italy, France and Spain, have tried to present a responsible image while retaining

(4) However, by its emphasis on programmes and principles, rather than opposition to Moscow or a geographical framework as such, this definition would logically include other Communist parties of similar persuasion — for example, the Japanese Communist Party, the British Communist Party, the Belgian Communist Party and, more recently, the Mexican Communist Party. This definition, of course, excludes the Communist Parties of Romania and Yugoslavia, not to mention those of China and Albania.

revolutionary characteristics to avoid being outflanked on the Left (5). Within recent years, these three parties have emphasized their compatibility with the European liberal-democratic tradition. At the same time they have stressed that they do not wish to set a pattern for one another or anyone else or create a new « center » of Communism.

Since January 1974, West European Communist leaders have exchanged views and co-ordinated approaches mainly through bilateral meetings. When it became known that the leaders of the Spanish, Italian and French parties — Santiago Carrillo, Enrico Berlinguer and Georges Marchais, respectively — were to meet in Madrid on March 2 and 3, 1977, references were immediately made to a « Eurocommunist summit ». But in mid-February 1977, PCE sources were quoted as saying that the meeting would only be an act of solidarity with the Spanish party in its efforts to gain legalisation (6). In any event, the Madrid meeting issued a joint declaration which went slightly further than earlier bilateral party statements in spelling out the basic features of the Eurocommunist road (7).

The three-party declaration in Madrid said nothing about relations with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe ; it became clear before the meeting that there would be no joint attack on the Soviet Union over human rights issues. And the three parties' foreign policy, flowing from their vision of « building socialism within democracy and freedom », remained sketchy. Avoiding on this occasion any specific mention of the American presence in Europe, and NATO or the Warsaw Pact, they outlined the goal of a « peaceful, democratic and independent Europe, without foreign bases and with no arms race ». To reach this objective, they urged new steps on the path of detente and peaceful coexistence, full application of the Helsinki Final Act and the ending of military blocs in Europe.

The Madrid declaration's outstanding feature, therefore, was its internal section with the three parties' pledge to « work within the framework of the pluralism of political and social forces, and to respect, guarantee

(5) Smaller parties with practically no hope of winning power — such as the British (CPGB) and Belgian (PCB) Communist Parties — have also moved towards stressing the national character of their roads to Communism.

(6) *Mundo Obrero*, February 20, 1977.

(7) Statements by the three leaders at a Press Conference, however, revealed some of the persisting differences of view, particularly between Marchais and the other two. Marchais reiterated the need for class warfare and for international solidarity among Communists — points glossed over by Berlinguer and Carrillo. See *L'Humanité*, March 3, 1977 and *L'Unita*, March 3, 1977.

and develop all individual and collective freedoms » (8). These included freedom of the press, the independence of trade unions, the right to strike, inviolability of privacy, free movement of people within the country and abroad, and the right to change the government by the democratic vote of a majority. The references to a plurality of parties, without the usual accompanying warning that the Communist Party must assume a « vanguard » or leading role, and the right to strike and the democratic alternation of power constituted a move away from normal Communist Party programs.

Deriving from « national roads to socialism » and from Togliatti's concept of polycentrism, the term « Eurocommunism » came into use, mainly among journalists, during the preparations for the 1976 Conference of European Communist Parties in East Berlin (9). The search for a common approach by those parties operating within a democratic tradition had already brought the West European parties together on a number of occasions. By the time the West European Communist Parties met in Brussels in January 1974, the EEC had been accepted as a fact of life, at least by the PCI and the PCF, criticism of NATO was muted and the calls for united action with Leftist and Christian forces were accompanied by protestations of the Communists' belief in personal liberties, a plurality of parties, free institutions and religious and cultural freedom — even after the transition to a Socialist government (10).

One reason for the change of tone was Allende's overthrow in Chile four months earlier, which had particularly impressed Berlinguer, as a warning of what could happen when Socialists and Communists tried to rule without a consensus of support in the country as a whole. During September and October 1973, three articles by Berlinguer appeared in the PCI party journal, *Rinascita*, analysing the situation in Italy and advocating an « historic compromise » to include Christian Democrats alongside Communists and Socialists in a broad alliance. In Brussels, Berlinguer declared that the achievement of socialism in Western Europe called for « new ways different from those followed in other countries » which must take national conditions and traditions fully

(8) *L'Unità*, March 3, 1977.

(9) Several well-known journalists and politicians have alternatively been accused of and claimed credit for inventing the term « Eurocommunism » — among them Zbigniew Brzezinski, Arrigo Levi, William Griffith and Milovan Djilas. But it is probably Frane Barbieri, a Yugoslav journalist, who coined it.

(10) *L'Unità*, January 22, 1974.

into account (11). For the Spanish Communist Party, Carrillo said that the path must be « consistently democratic » with a multi-party system and the involvement of Christians as well as Socialists in a progressive front (12). Compared with the earlier West European Communist meetings, there were fewer declarations of support for the Soviet party and its policies — and Moscow's reaction was correspondingly cool. A joint statement by the PCI and PCE after their meeting in Livorno in July 1975 specifically endorsed democratic freedoms and rights after the transition to socialism (13).

As the final preparations went ahead for the Conference of European Communist Parties at the end of June 1976, the Italian and French Communists, anxious to stress their parties' freedom from Soviet tutelage, had taken the lead (among the non-ruling parties) in opposing any steps towards a reassertion of Soviet hegemony over the Communist movement. Berlinguer was the first Communist leader to use the word « Eurocommunism » in discussions with foreign colleagues, when he met the PCF leaders in Paris on June 3, 1976. Noting that it had been coined by the Press and not by the parties themselves, he remarked that its wide currency and the hopes and questions raised by it pointed to a general interest in the Western Communist Parties and their view of the path to socialism. Finally, at the 1976 Conference, Berlinguer added that the PCI and « some other » communist parties had « independently » come to similar conclusions about policy and that it was their new searching for the right road which had been referred to as « Eurocommunism » (14).

Thus, the road to the Madrid Conference was paved with the accumulated political history of each of the parties' need to cautiously assert their identity as Eurocommunist forces. That need also reflected the peculiarities of and differences between each parties' own history and present strategy.

(11) Enrico Berlinguer, *La politica internazionale dei comunisti italiani* (Editori Riuniti, Rome, 1976), p. 203.

(12) *Mundo Obrero*, January 15, 1974.

(13) *L'Unità*, July 23, 1975.

(14) Berlinguer, *La politica internazionale dei comunisti italiani*, p. 205. In a television interview in Paris on February 7, 1977, and again after his meeting with Carrillo and Berlinguer in Madrid on March 3, Marchais for the first time specifically linked the three Eurocommunist parties together by noting their « common basic problems ». The Eurocommunist parties were evolving a « socialist perspective strongly marked by the same democratic concern », he said on television, and it did not « bother » him if this was called Eurocommunism, though the Communists had not invented the word. See *L'Humanité*, February 8 and March 5, 1977.

A profile of the eurocommunist parties.

The Italian Communist Party.

By the late 1970's the PCI was in a category by itself among communist parties. Not a ruling party, it nevertheless could no longer be thought of as a party without state power. It took part directly in the government of six of the country's twenty regions, and indirectly in four more. Without counting the instances where it exercises indirect influence, by 1975 the PCI ruled in 2,715 of the country's 7,900 municipalities. Among these are 40 out of 93 provincial or regional capitals, including Rome (15). Thus, the party holds some official power over about half of Italy's population. Moreover, it controls a network of « mass organizations », labor unions, and cooperatives which are in themselves political and economic forces in Italian life. From the neighborhood to the factory, the Parliament, the board room, the judicial chambers or the diplomatic conference room, the PCI's representatives make their influence felt. Since the PCI has been financially independent for several years, it does little good any more to ask what the party's budget is.

The PCI's climb to its present position began during the period 1931-1943 when its then Secretary General, Palmiro Togliatti, served in the Moscow offices of the Comintern. The pragmatic, gradualist path of the PCI throughout the post-war period was to be a natural consequence of the strategic outlook of Togliatti who was Secretary General from the late 1930s until his death in 1964. And the political outlook of Togliatti developed as part of an Italian Marxist tradition whose principal creative expression was the career and writings of party founder Antonio Gramsci. From Gramsci the PCI acquired an identity of its own which enabled it to play an important part in the political and intellectual life of the country since the overthrow of the Fascist dictatorship in 1944. Indeed, Gramsci became something of an apostolic figure in the post-1945 history of Italian Communism, vitally important to the party when it set out to invent an «Italian road to socialism ». And the *via italiana al socialismo* became the pillar of a Eurocommunist

(15) For additional electoral data, see Howard R. Penniman, ed., *Italy at the Polls* (American Enterprise Institute, Washington, DC, 1977). Founded in 1921, the PCI has come a long way in its post-war parliamentary struggle. Over the past thirty years, the PCI has improved its electoral position by moving steadily upward from 18.9 % of the vote. In the 1976 general elections the PCI received 34.4 % of the vote and 228 out of 639 seats in the Chamber of Deputies, and 116 out of 315 in the Senate. In 1977, the party numbered 1 806 000 members. The Central Committee numbers 177 members, the *Direzione* 36, and the *Segreteria* 9 members.

strategy, respected and admired, if not always faithfully emulated, by other West European Communist parties.

Since the end of the Second World War, the domestic strategy of the PCI has been based on a very few cardinal rules. First of all, state power cannot be conquered with a classical Leninist strategy. Second, Communist forces can legally take power only by avoiding a frontal clash with the Christian Democratic Party (DC), the largest party in the country. Third, in favorable circumstances the PCI may present itself to the country as a « governing party » available for national responsibilities. The strategy of the PCI today is an elaborated and evolving version of these fundamental rules, the guideposts of the *via italiana*, which have guided PCI advances throughout the post war period.

Elaborated by the present Secretary General of the PCI, Enrico Berlinguer, and known as the « historical compromise », Italian Communist domestic strategy is attuned to the social and economic weaknesses of modern Italy. It is based on an ideological and strategic premise that is not new in the history of post-war Italian politics: the tendency for accommodation, in this case among Communists, Socialists and Catholics, in order to iron out a program of gradual transformation of Italian society within a democratic framework. Such a strategy is global and long-term in view. It is designed not to tolerate impatience, rather it bets on gradual advances. The aim is to mold together in the largest possible consensus, without violent disruptions, the aspirations of the working class with the demands of the middle classes. The political design, even urgency, of PCI strategy is new and well defined, however. It is a response to the acute crisis in Italian society owing to the suffocating weight of a parasitical state bureaucracy and the immobile state of affairs within the Christian Democratic controlled government. This largely explains the widespread interest the « communist question » has aroused in Italy and abroad during recent years.

Today, the PCI's immediate aim, whether expressed in the formula « historic compromise » or, more recently, a « government of national unity », is to exert pressure and « condition » the government policy choices taken by others. The party is less interested in cabinet posts than in two objectives: the acquisition of key posts in the bureaucracy and the economy, and the « conditioning » of the major non-communist parties.

The party's greatest difficulties stem from its being perceived by many Italians as dangerous. Hence, it has spared no effort to convince Italians and foreigners alike that it would not institute a Soviet-type regime, that it is not antireligious, and that its greater influence would not alter Italy's status as protege and beneficiary of the USA. Indeed, the

PCI currently claims that its aims are quite compatible with those of the most up-to-date elements of the Catholic Church and of the USA. It has eagerly cited any hint that either the Church or the US government might agree with it, and deplored manifestations of the contrary.

The PCI is well aware that the party's quest for power must be gradual and tenuous. Mindful of what befell the Allende government in Chile, the PCI wants to advance so that each step does not raise more opposition, but rather makes opposition less likely. Hence it is wary of taking governmental responsibility except as part of the broadest possible coalition of parties, even if this involves a « programmatic agreement » among the parties in Parliament to support a minority DC government — the kind of arrangement that governed Italy from mid-1977 until January 1979. The PCI trusts that each of its own advances will be accompanied by changes within the other potential coalition partners. Also, while it must continue to keep on good terms with the labor unions, especially the large party-dominated CGIL, the PCI aims to prevent the unions from plunging the nation into economic chaos.

But in order to be successful the historical compromise demands a stable political context on both an international and internal level. And, clearly, such a political context has not evolved in a way favorable to the strategic preferences of the PCI leadership, since the party provoked a crisis in January 1979 by withdrawing from the « programmatic agreement » that supported the minority Christian Democratic government.

Indeed, nearly three years after the PCI's advance in the June 1976 general elections and the subsequent admission of the party in the government majority, a process of reorientation is underway. At the domestic policy level after the 1976 elections, the PCI leadership seemed convinced that the accommodation and conciliation among heterogeneous political forces would allow the party to exert a real influence on the restructuring of Italian society. This strategy of self-legitimation by means of the historical compromise was weakened by the stalemate produced by the PCI's incapacity both to condition the DC's policy and to be accepted as a government partner. In this way the « image » of the PCI has undergone a process of gradual deterioration and, while not renouncing its strategic aim of « national unity », the party has embarked on a tactical reorientation and has recently begun to take its distance from the Christian Democratic party.

The French Communist Party.

The PCF was founded in December 1920. Except for a short period the party has operated publicly and legally, a record unique among major

non-ruling Communist parties (16). The PCF membership remains by far the largest and the most militant of all French parties, and probably is larger than the membership of all other French parties combined.

The PCF electorate today continues its post-1958 stability at more or less a fifth of the total vote. Since 1972 the PCF has been allied both electorally and programmatically with the Socialist Party (PS) and the small Movement of Left Wing Radicals (MRG). Until the parliamentary elections of March 1978 the PCF was committed to a « Union of the Left » strategy with the PS and the MRG. This strategy was to follow the « Common Program » signed in 1972, the aim of which was to move France towards socialism. But rising tensions between socialist and communists in mid-1977, owing to the strong advance of the PS in 1977 local elections and the displacement of the PCF as the dominant partner in the Union of the Left alliance, contributed in no small way to the defeat of the French Left in the parliamentary elections of March 1978. Since that point the « Common Program » has been « temporarily » suspended and relations between the communists and socialists have deteriorated. However, the PCF, which was last a governmental partner in the Tripartite governments of 1944-1947, still refuses to consider any other possibility of national governmental participation other than that of a Left-wing alliance with the Socialists.

PCF membership has grown significantly in absolute terms in the past few years. After stagnating around 300,000 in the 1960s, the total at the end of 1977 was approximately 800,000 (17). The intensification of PCF recruitment has been essentially a process of increasing membership within the Left Wing « world » itself: that is, mainly it involves getting voters and sympathizers to take out a party card. The counterpart of this is no doubt a reduced level of militant activities on a relative scale and serious problems of organizational integration — both of which are indicated by numerous articles in the party press and a certain level of intellectual dissidence (18). As to social composition, the PCF still insists on the absolute priority of workers in all party activities, although there has been for the past few years an attempt to shed the most dogmatic aspects of the party's traditional *ouvrieriste* ideology in order to attract more electoral and organizational support from other classes and groups. In 1966-1967 the PCF

(16) The PCF endured a period of illegality in 1939-1940 following its support of the Nazi-Soviet pact and also during the clandestine period (1941-1944) of the Resistance.

(17) *L'Humanité*, December 1, 1977.

(18) For example, the barrage of articles by communist intellectuals appearing in the non-communist press, especially *Le Monde*, after the 1978 electoral defeat.

claimed to be about 60 % working class in its membership, including housewives of workers and retired workers without which the figure was closer to 40 %. No global statistics have been given since 1966-1967, although the party's social composition has changed considerably. In 1977 it was estimated that new recruits were about 40 % workers (19).

The present national leadership of the PCF was elected at the party's 22nd Congress, 4-8 February 1976. The Central Committee numbers 97 full and 24 candidate members. The Politburo numbers 21 members. The Secretariat, which is the main directing organ of the party, consists of 7 members. The cell structure of the PCF has continued to show significant development along with the rise in membership. In January 1977 there were over 24,000 cells in the 97 party federations. A strong emphasis in the past few years on increasing the number and relative percentage of workplace cells has continued — partly to overwhelm the rather minor efforts of the Socialists in this direction, partly to foster the membership increase, and partly to reinforce PCF mobilization capacities.

The major mass movement controlled by the PCF continues to be the General Confederation of Labor (CGT). Still by far the largest union organization in France (approximately 2 million members), the CGT is, according to the results of professional elections and its mobilization capacities, the dominant union in all three sectors of the French economy — private, nationalized, and public.

The PCF Congress in February 1976 adopted the slogan « Socialism in French colors », a new wording of the older slogan, « the French road to socialism ». In general, the Congress marked a consolidation of the left-wing alliance option and an elaboration of the French Communist version of the peaceful, pluralist, and democratic strategy for a transition to socialism and for socialism itself. Therein, the Congress also marked a personal triumph for the party leadership of Georges Marchais. Most of the party leaders today appear on the whole unified in the belief that the PCF has no interesting alternative to a strategy of broadened political and social alliances, and a parliamentary conquest of power, although, to be sure, differences may arise over tactical questions. After the 1976 party congress, socialist electoral superiority was accepted as the necessary price for alliance with the PS, the only likely PCF access to national government. But during the months preceding the 1978 parliamentary elections, it became clear that

(19) Statement by Andre Vieuget in *L'Humanité*, February 8, 1978.

the PCF was less interested in playing the role of junior partner of a possible left-wing government. Thus, the PCF began an ideological campaign to « re-dimension » the balance of power between the two left wing parties producing, as a consequence, what most observers considered to be a deliberate electoral loss.

In recent years the PCF has elaborated its doctrinal commitment to a pluralist and democratic form of socialism and has extended its explicit and implicit criticism of the Soviet Union. In particular, the party voted at its 1976 Congress to drop the « dictatorship of the proletariat » doctrine, saying it no longer expressed the French Communist conception of political and social power in either the transition phase of « advanced democracy » or in socialism itself. Moreover, the party has also become more united and reconciled, especially since 1976, with a foreign policy of critical relations with the Soviet Union.

The spanish Communist Party.

The PCE is the third largest communist party in Western Europe. Founded in 1920, the party remained illegal between 1939 and 1977, the years of the Franco regime (20). Current membership of the party numbers approximately 200,000. The PCE is headed by a 17 member Permanent Commission of the Executive Committee, a 45 member Executive Committee, and a 160 member Central Committee. The President of the party is Dolores Ibarruri (« La Passionaria »), whose position is largely honorary. The politics of the PCE bears the strong personal imprint of the party's Secretary General, Santiago Carrillo. The main pillars of support for the party are the semi-autonomous Catalan Unified Socialist Party (PSUC) and the workers affiliated with or sympathetic to the powerful Communist labor union, the *Comisiones Obreras* (CC.OO.). The CC.OO. claims a membership of nearly two million after their first national congress, held in June 1978. The popular Marcelino Camacho is the leader of the CC.OO.

The results of the June 1977 elections for the first Spanish post-Franco Constituent Assembly gave the PCE 9 % of the popular vote. These results were strongly bolstered by the PSUC showing in Catalunya : 19 %, which helped to bring up the PCE national average.

A major concern of Carrillo is the projection of an image of a democratic, nationalist PCE, independent of the Soviet Union. The PCE has emphasized its alignment with the PCI and PCF in opposition to Mos-

(20) A rival group that splintered from the PCE in 1970 is known as the Spanish Communist Workers' Party (PCOE). Led by Enrique Lister, and heavily funded by the Soviet Union, it favored continued close alignment with the policies of the Soviet Union. As a political party, the PCOE has been ineffectual and not very active.

cow's repeated calls for « international solidarity ». Carrillo has compared the Eurocommunists' resistance to Moscow's dominance to the heretic Martin Luther's rejection of Rome: « We also had our pope, our Vatican... But as we mature and become less of a church, we must become more rational, closer to reality » (21).

A major drama for the PCE was its April 1978 Congress where the party was redefined as a « Marxist revolutionary » party, dropping the Leninist label. This was accomplished not without a considerable amount of infighting, bargaining, and high-handed authoritarian methods used by Carrillo. The issue of « Leninism » presented a special problem for the PCE in Catalunya, the most wealthy and industrially progressive region in Spain. Moreover, the CC.OO. is strong in Catalunya and the union is influenced by traditional Leninist sentiment, which led the PSUC to adopt a pro-Leninist stance at the PCE Congress. Spanish Communism in Catalunya is represented by the PSUC, which is not just the Catalan section of the PCE but an independent « equal » of the PCE. (Leaders of the PSUC also sit on leading organs of the PCE, but the PSUC is run only by Catalans.) The major problem confronting the PSUC leadership was to satisfy the Leninist base of their party while adopting the more moderate Eurocommunist policies of the PCE, policies favored by a majority of the leadership. The « Leninist position » of the PSUC was essentially a « warning » to Carrillo, a warning that he was proceeding too fast in his goal of Eurocommunizing the PCE. The PSUC Leninists are perhaps the realists of the party, not necessarily the guardians of orthodoxy. Thus, Leninism in the PSUC represents a kind of unnatural marriage between the exponents of Leninism and classical Leninist theory (22).

Under the astute leadership of Carrillo, the PCE — emerging from the years of clandestinity — is clearly writing its significant history today, as remnants of Franco's regime wither away, in the same way in which the PCI began writing their history with Togliatti's arrival in Italy in the distant spring of 1944. Otherwise said, the demise of authoritarian regimes (in Spain today, in Italy and France more than thirty years ago) offers Communist parties an unprecedented opportunity to ride the

(21) *El País*, June 29, 1977.

(22) The leaders of the PSUC and the CC.OO. tend to believe that without the doctrines of successful revolutions elsewhere there is the danger of apoliticization on the part of the workers, who were taught to nourish a vision of revolutionary change during the clandestine years. Now that this clandestine period is over there is a general problem of worker disenchantment with the moderate policies of the PCE. Many party members tended to identify the struggle against Franco with the struggle against capitalism; the fall of the former was supposed to mean the eclipse of the latter.

wave of democratic hopes, to refurbish, if necessary, their often tarnished credentials, and to gain widespread acceptance among democratic parties. If the opportunity is well used, as seems to be the case with the PCE, the credit built may be invaluable currency for the harder times that almost unavoidably will come.

The PCE's most recent « legal » history begins at a very recent date, spring 1977. The preceding forty years is a rich, often moving, chapter of the history of the party from the tragedy of the Republic and the Civil War to recent times — through defeat, clandestinity, Russian exile, internal splits, realignments, frustrations, uncertain relations with other oppositions, and its prospective role in the post-Franco years. Many of the events that make up the clandestine period of the party, from the spring of 1939 to the spring of 1977, will probably be forgotten in a few years if Spain's evolution continues its democratic turn. There will remain on one side the indelible image of a party that was a protagonist in the eventful years of the besieged Republic. Those years symbolize the well-known mixture of collaboration and blackmail, moderation and bloody repression that guided the actions of the Spanish Communists and the Comintern representatives in the Republican government, in the army, and in their relation to bourgeois and radical parties. There will remain on the other side a more immediate attention to what the party is doing today to overcome that image and almost forty years of illegality.

Everything indicates that the PCE, coached by its Italian comrades, is embracing an Italian-inspired strategy to confront a set of domestic conditions in some ways similar to those of Italy at the end of the war. There are some differences. On the point of PCE disadvantages, the responsibilities of the PCE in the Civil War go way beyond Communist mistakes in the crucial years of Mussolini's takeover. Nor can the Spaniards, given the different circumstances of transition, whitewash memories of their earlier behavior by a patriotic record like the one accumulated by the PCI during the Resistance. Further, the fact that Franco died in his bed, should guarantee if not *continuismo* at least the survival of a strong and backward-looking Right closely tied to an entrenched and traditional state apparatus. On the point of the advantages, there is the fact that Cold War anticommunism is a thing of the past, that the tutelage of the Soviet Union over international communist parties is fading, and that the example of Eurocommunism can be a greater asset to the PCE than the more foreign and divisive example of the Soviet Union was to the Italian and French Communists at the end of the war. There is also the fact that a prolonged

period of peace, and the peculiar mixture of repression, indifference, and tolerance adopted by the Spanish authoritarian regime toward oppositions, have allowed some Communist cadres to operate to some extent in civil society and to obtain respectability. Italian Fascism, though not totally repressive, left lesser room for its enemies. Now that the party operates as a fully legalized political force, it seems that, like their Italian comrades, the Spanish Communists will become an opposition force — by no means insignificant — for years to come. They should continue to respond to the monopoly of government by the Center, in a country with strong religious and conservative traditions, strong regional imbalances, and a state not alien to clientelism, with the same strategy of *presence* and *compromesso* used by the PCI.

An observer of Spanish Communist politics can be unduly impressed (23) by the difficulties, the isolation, the internecine conflicts, and the bureaucratic narrowness of a party with forty years of experience in clandestine conditions. Though these are there, the present season of hope in the Iberian peninsula could do wonders to dispel their effects for a party that knows how to live it.

Thus, while the Eurocommunist parties may be facing towards power, power's face is different in all the countries concerned. But in most other ways, the similarities between the Eurocommunist parties are what distinguish them from *other* political movements. All were founded in the 'twenties, and so are much older than any European party of the Right. The fact that each of them was for a time illegal (PCF 1939-1944 ; PCI 1922-1943 ; PCE 1939-1977) gives them a common past. All were, between 1920 and 1930, the local sections of an international movement run from Moscow. All have, of course, once been in the governments of their respective countries (the PCE in 1936-1939, the PCF and PCI between 1944 and 1947). All have *gauchiste* opposition from movements who regard them as traitors, sold out to the petty bourgeoisie, interested in the extension of their grasp over the « good things of life ». All are opposed by far left feminist groups who accuse them of « male chauvinism ». All of them have new memberships : a majority of the members of the PCF and PCI joined since 1968, the vast majority of the PCE in 1977-1978. All have similar organizational structures — secretariats, political bureaux, central committees, congresses, party committees, front organizations, cells and sections. The organization is run in very much the same way and each

(23) As is the case with Guy Hermet, *Los comunistas en Espana* (Ruedo Iberico, Madrid, 1972).

party is now serviced by scores of full-time functionaries (there may be 80,000 on the PCI payroll, 15,000 on that of the PCF). All employ the method of « democratic centralism », the phrase invented by Lenin to ensure that a « party line » becomes the rule for all, even though discipline is far less rigid than it was in the pre- and early post-war years.

Indeed, these similarities distinguish the Eurocommunist parties from non-communist parties. Yet, having said that it must be noted that there is very little in common among the three Eurocommunist parties, except that they are communist parties. There are considerable differences in the Eurocommunist parties' relations to national power. The PCI does exercise considerable influence over the Italian government and a near hegemony over some sectors of society. The PCE simply has no realistic hope of soon participating in government, much less of conquering power. And the PCF managed to fail in its attempt to win power in the March 1978 elections. Furthermore, the international policies of the Eurocommunist parties are not only influenced by their respective degrees of proximity to power, but also by different historical traditions, both national and ideological, which guides them through different processes of legitimation.

The international dimension : what future eurocommunism ?

The Soviet Union as well as the Western interlocutors of the Eurocommunists' parties consider the Eurocommunists' evaluation of the policies of the Soviet Union and, even more, of its socialist nature, as the main test by which to judge their own domestic strategies and foreign policies. And it is on this point where the PCE, and only the PCE (to date), has clearly accepted the challenge. Carrillo has affirmed that socialism will have a chance in Western Europe only if it is free of all identification with the East European party-states and acknowledges that the Soviet Union is ruled not by the proletariat but by a bureaucratic elite (24).

Furthermore, the attitude of the PCE towards the Soviet Union reflects a different interpretation of Eurocommunism. For Carrillo Eurocommunism appears to represent a regional center of communist politics, which should propose an alternative version to the Soviet one. In Carrillo's view the Eurocommunists should elaborate a common strategy and work for a united Western Europe that is capable of defending itself

(24) Santiago Carrillo, *Eurocomunismo y lo estado* (Laia Editions, Barcelona, 1977).

against the attempts of both superpowers to suppress it. The PCF, while sharing some of the PCE's positions, emphatically rejects its regional side: the PCF does not want to be part of any « international », regional or otherwise. All the PCF admits is a *de facto* convergence and an *ad hoc* cooperation, which has been developing among Western Communist parties anyway since the Brussels Conference of 1974.

The PCI, as usual, refuses to take sides too clearly. Their original hopes seemed to go in the same direction as Carrillo's, i.e., that of a common West European strategy which would have them as inspirers and a united Europe, based on the European Community, as its political framework. But both PCF resistance and Soviet pressure have made the Italian Communists disavow these ambitions (25).

Before and after the March 1977 Madrid « summit », the three Eurocommunist leaders adopted different attitudes towards Soviet ceremonies and were treated differently by the Soviets. Berlinguer is always in the most friendly or least unfriendly terms of the three: he did not, unlike Marchais and Carrillo, boycott the 25th Soviet party Congress in 1977, and he was warmly received by Brezhnev at the October anniversary celebrations where Marchais was absent and Carrillo was not allowed to speak.

The reasons why the PCE and the Soviet Union can afford to attack each other while relations between Moscow and the PCF and, especially, the PCI are full of precautions are related to party linkages and the other dimensions of Communist politics. The very fact that the PCI and PCF are, at least conceivably, approaching governmental power (while the PCE is not) imposes restraints on the behavior of these two parties and on Moscow's behavior towards them. Carrillo's search for domestic legitimacy dictates separation from the Soviet Union and allows him the freedom of not fearing to be deprived by Soviet maneuvers of an electoral victory which is beyond his reach anyway. In Italy and France, the potential state-to-state relations of governments with communist participation are beginning to project their shadow over the actual party-to-party relations of the PCI and the PCF, particularly with the Soviet Union.

The traditional distinction between party-to-party and state-to-state relations is reproduced within the relations between the Soviet party and the Eurocommunist parties: the latter are regarded *both* as bad pupils with dangerous ideological heresies whose influence, particularly

(25) See Donald Sassoon, « Vers l'Eurocommunisme. La Stratégie Européenne du PCI », *Dialectiques*, 18-19, p. 40.

on Eastern Europe, has to be checked, *and* as powerful political forces, whose role in government could one day be favorable to Soviet foreign policy goals. Thus, the mixture of ideological polemics and political deference shown towards the PCI.

Logically, however, the need for legitimation in front of non-communist domestic political partners and Western allies should pull the Eurocommunists more clearly in the direction of Carrillo's path. The brakes on this process probably come both from intra-party considerations (rank and file discontent encouraged by Soviet maneuvers) and from considerations of inter-state balance which leads the Eurocommunists to look for both US and Soviet protection.

Despite common and national constraints, the differences in style do, then, point to different options, which can be seen as differing proportions of combinations of the same basic ingredients. All three Eurocommunist parties combine a Western situation, a desire of national independence, at least a residual link to the East, if only under the form of a commitment to *detente*, and a sympathy for the Third World. But the proportions of these ingredients are so different as to amount to distinct, sometimes conflicting policies.

The legitimation of the Eurocommunists must eventually imply their reevaluation of international politics and inter-state balance. The extent to which, domestically, the Eurocommunists no longer claim to be the vanguard of the proletariat, and the degree to which, internationally, they no longer recognize the vanguard role of the Soviet Union, will lead them to emphasize a broader domestic and international unity. As the Eurocommunists must keep some kind of communist identity, they feel the need to remain identified to some kind of global solidarity and historical process — which may increasingly tend to blur inter-party and inter-state borders.

This may be the key for considering the evolution of Eurocommunism, and it is much more important than that of their relations with the Soviet Union. The real issue, then, is whether the Eurocommunist parties can produce a workable synthesis between their solidarity with the underprivileged in the world and a lucid acknowledgment of social-political realities, in both domestic and international structures.

Summary : « Eurocommunism : A Brief Political-Historical Portrait ».

This study begins by briefly examining the methodological premises underlying many post-war studies of communist parties by Western scholars. The analysis proceeds to consider the phenomenon of Euro-

communism and how many traditional studies of European communism have not allowed for the rich national and political traditions in Italy, Spain and France. The brief history of Eurocommunism — culminating in the events leading up to the 1977 Madrid « summit » — is seen as the accumulated need of the Italian (PCI), Spanish (PCE), and French (PCF) Communist Parties to assert their national identities and adapt to the changing demands of their individual national political contexts. The analysis continues with a resumé of the current strategies of the PCI, PCE, and PCF in the late 1970s, comparing and contrasting similarities and differences on domestic levels. Lastly, the relations between the Eurocommunist parties and the Soviet Union are examined.

