EUROCOMMUNISM AND THE SOVIET BLOC: CONFLICT AND CONCILIATION

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In June 1976 a Conference of European Communist and Workers' Parties was held in East Berlin that was widely heralded as signaling the end to Soviet primacy within the European Communist movement and the emergence of a pan-European coalition of autonomist CPs.¹ The members of that coalition included the Romanian and Yugoslav parties from the Eastern half of the continent and the French, Italian, and Spanish parties from the West—the so-called "Eurocommunist" Triad. And their accomplishments were far from negligible. Through joint pressure exerted over some twenty months they managed to wrest from Moscow a number of concessions on the declaration finally approved at the East Berlin Conference.² On the one hand, the document omitted any reference to two of the Soviet party's most cherished doctrines: the notion that there are "general laws" of socialist construction binding on all Communist parties, whatever their geographical locale or proximity to power; and the concept of "proletarian internationalism" defined as the subordination of individual party or national interests to the interests of the international Communist movement as a whole. On the other hand, the document explicitly spelled out that mutual criticism among CPs was not tantamount to anti-Communism, thereby legitimizing the ever widening trend toward European CP criticism of Soviet reality, a subject that will be pursued in some depth in this paper.

Nevertheless, less than three years after the East Berlin Conference, that same autonomist coalition proved incapable of toeing a common line on the outbreak of the Sino-Vietnamese border war. The Italian, French and Spanish CPs chose to back Moscow on what must be considered a cardinal tenet of Soviet foreign policy: condemnation of Peking and sympathy for Hanoi. Yet the Romanian and Yugoslav parties—ostensibly the ones most susceptible to Soviet blandishments—assumed a posture of strict neutrality, simply calling

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for the withdrawal of all foreign troops, the Chinese from Vietnam and the Vietnamese from Cambodia.

In view of this turn of events, my paper addresses the inter-related questions of the depth and the limits of the Eurocommunist confrontation with Moscow. The first section briefly describes the proposed Eurocommunist alternative to the Soviet model of socialist construction and international conduct. The middle, and most substantial, section details the Italian and French CPs’ respective critiques of socialism Soviet-style during the recent past, particularly the period since the 1976 East Berlin summit. The last section explores the countervailing tendencies in the Eurocommunist-Soviet relationship. It seeks to explain why the Western CPs have rejected an open rupture with Moscow in favor of a policy of conciliation that entails not only ongoing inter-party ties but staunch support for key Soviet foreign policy positions.

The Eurocommunist Alternative

During the period under investigation the Italian and Spanish Communist Parties (PCI and PCE respectively) set forth a vision of socialist pluralism and regionalism the very articulation of which was tantamount to a direct challenge to the domestic legitimacy of the single-party Soviet-oriented Communist systems of East Europe. For both Latin European parties the Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 acted as a catalyst in the evolution of their programmatic thinking. The PCI had a tradition of theoretical innovation and political assertiveness vis-a-vis Moscow dating back to the mid-1920s. Not surprisingly, therefore, it joined its impassioned defense of the Dubcek reform movement with the postulation of a democratic and pluralist alternative to Soviet-style socialism. In his report to the party’s Twelfth Congress in February, 1969, Luigi Longo, then PCI General Secretary, gave his official blessing to the notion of a socialist society in which “a plurality of parties and social organizations” would be “engaged in a free and democratic dialectic of contrasting positions, something qualitatively different from the experiences known till now.” Such a conception of socialist pluralism was antithetical to the CPSU’s “general laws for the construction of socialism,” foremost among which were the leading role of the Communist party and the obligatory incubation of Marxism-Leninism. Over the years the concept of socialist pluralism adumbrated in the wake of the Czechoslovak crisis was gradually broadened to include the notions of civil rights, competitive elections, and the secular, or non-ideological, state generally associated with the Eurocommunist vision of socialism that evolved in the second half of the 1970s.

Under the guidance of Santiago Carrillo the Spanish Communist Party

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seconded the PCI’s call for a pluralist model of socialism. But the Spanish party was more forceful in its support for socialist regionalism, that is, an entente of developed socialist states in West Europe distinct and independent from the Soviet bloc in East Europe. The concept of a regional mutuality of interests among CPs from similar national environments was not, of course, new to the Communist movement. It was popularized under the rubric of "polycentrism," the term coined by Palmiro Togliatti in his celebrated Nuovi argomenti interview of June 1956. Still, it was the PCE leaders who conveyed the impression the common, regional interests pointed in the direction of a united socialist West Europe rather than merely a congruence of strategic views on socialist revolution and construction. Moreover, in the early 1970s PCE spokesman Manuel Azzarate charged the CPSU with sacrificing revolutionary change in West Europe to the interests of the Soviet state and the preservation of the pan-European status quo, i.e., the division of Europe into Soviet and American spheres of influence. He thus provided a theoretical rationale for according primacy to regional solidarity among the West European CPs.

In November 1975 the French Communist Party (PCF) signed a joint com- munique with PCI, a step that was interpreted by many observers as signifying that the French party was also shifting to a more pluralist strategy. The communique, pointedly "Italian" in its rhetoric, was soon followed by the much vaunted PCF decision—formally announced at its Twenty-second Congress in early February 1976—to drop the slogan "dictatorship of the proletariat" from its party program. Given the sectarianism and militancy so characteristic of PCF cadres in the past (and exemplified by their support for the Portuguese Communists during Lisbon’s hot summer of 1975), the party’s new "Euro- communist" face met with considerable scepticism. Indeed, the shift in strategic orientation from Moscow to Rome was probably more the result of a calculated gamble than a genuine change of heart. By the autumn of 1975 the French Communists confronted three harsh realities: 1) their Portuguese comrades had failed in the attempt to seize power in Lisbon through minority manipulation and intimidation of the majority; 2) their PCI comrades had scored a striking victory in the June 1975 Italian regional elections by operating according to legal and constitutional procedures; and 3) at home the French Socialists posed a growing threat to PCF dominance within the Union of the Left. The PCF leadership thus must have reasoned that by adopting Euro- communist rhetoric they would increase their support among French voters.

When local elections and public opinion polls indicated that this was not to be the case, the French CP reverted to orthodoxy. In mid-1977 its doctrinaire intransigence on key domestic economic and political issues provoked a rupture with its Socialist allies in the Union of the Left and led to their defeat in the March 1978 parliamentary elections. But already earlier, as will be dis-

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cussed below, the PCF’s restraint in criticizing Soviet repression raised grave questions regarding the depth of the party’s commitment to civil rights and political pluralism.

**Eurocommunist Criticism of Socialism Soviet-style**

Since 1956 PCI spokesmen have publicly criticized the errors they perceived in Soviet-style socialism, albeit with fits and starts until 1968. Notable during this period were Togliatti’s allusions in 1956 to the possible degeneration of the Soviet system under Stalin and his remarks on the need for democratization of the USSR in his Yalta Memorandum of August 1964. However, following the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia prominent PCI members assumed a more critical posture toward Soviet reality, in both a positive and a negative sense. As an example of the latter, in 1971 Maurizio Ferrara—long-time party member and official Togliatti biographer—appealed in *Rinascita* for the implementation in practice of the Soviet Constitution of 1936, condemning Moscow’s violations of the civil rights guaranteed by that constitution. As an example of the former approach, in 1974 Central Committee member Adalberto Minucci stressed the Soviet Union’s potential for—rather than lack of—liberty, reasoning that the USSR’s high level of economic development made possible and necessary some degree of economic decentralization and political democratization. Four months later Minucci was advanced to membership in the PCI *Direzione*, or executive committee.

During the early months of 1976, concurrent with the final negotiations for the European CP Conference in Berlin, PCI spokesmen began ever more frequently to berate the CPSU leadership for its use of repressive, or “administrative,” measures in dealing with domestic dissent and for its pretensions to “Monolithic unity” in Soviet political life. For example, in February 1976 a two-part *l’Unita* series by Giuseppe Boffa deplored the failure of the CPSU to complete the process of destalinization. Boffa not only denounced the regime’s continuing recourse to “administrative measures” and failure to guarantee to Soviet citizens the civil rights promised them by their constitution. He also debunked the very notion of unanimity in a society as complex and highly educated as the Soviet Union, declaring that “at this point the need for the free expression of ideas, for their open confrontation, for the legitimacy of dissent cannot but make themselves felt with insistence. A society sure of itself derives from these battles of ideas a stimulus for more progress . . .” Boffa’s diatribe against Soviet insistence on monolithic unity was soon followed by an article by Adriano Guerra which underscored the actual degree of diversity among CPSU publicists. Guerra distinguished two groups—those who spoke in “monolithic and bureaucratic terms from a time past,” and those who displayed a more sophisticated and flexible grasp of contemporary political issues, both domestic and international. In the former category he placed *inter alia* Konstantine Zarodov, renowned as the sectarian editor of *Problems of Peace and Socialism*. In the latter group he included analysts from the Soviet Institute of World Economy and International Relations.
Guerra’s article appeared in L’Unita on February 19. Five days later Brezhnev delivered a report to the Twenty-fifth CPSU Congress which fell squarely into Guerra’s first category of “monolithic and bureaucratic terms from a time past” in its stress on “general laws” of socialist construction and “proletarian internationalism.” L’Unita correspondent Franco Fabiani’s coverage of the Soviet congress bespoke the PCI’s reaction. Fabiani reported with barely concealed irony the parrot-like reaction of the other CPSU speakers to Brezhnev’s report, especially on “proletarian internationalism.” He also described the infrequent speeches on Soviet cultural problems as “essentially routine and . . . bureaucratic.” He noted without comment various delegates’ rebuttals of Western charges regarding Soviet repression of dissidents. But on this score the PCI’s position was made clear on March 17 when L’Unita published a favorable commentary on Soviet dissident historian Roy Medvedev’s latest samizdat manuscript.\(^7\)

During the winter of 1976–1977 PCI commentaries on Soviet bloc systems entered a new phase. In contrast to the occasional criticism of 1956–1968 and even the more pointed jibes of the post–1968 period, L’Unita’s attacks on Soviet-East European restriction of freedom and civil rights now began to assume a systemic and systematic character. They were systemic in that they struck at the heart of the political system, arguing that the political dissidence and economic imbalances extant in that area could be overcome only by democratizing political and economic structures. They were systematic in that Soviet-bloc repression of dissent was regularly noted and denounced in L’Unita, form of editorial censure. That this dual approach represented official PCI policy was suggested in a late January 1977 article in L’Unita by Central Committee member and PCI historian, Paolo Spirano.\(^8\) Spirano differentiated between two types of legitimate criticism of socialist systems: “occasional, political” denunciations of individual cases of persecution; and “permanent social-historical” criticism of contradictions between, inter alia, the economic base and the superstructure. Spirano’s first category fit the PCI media’s coverage of the current dissent movement. His second category corresponded to my concept of systemic criticism.

Two examples of PCI systemic criticism were a late December 1976 front-page article in L’Unita dealing with the general problem of dissent in socialist systems and a Rinascita article earlier that same month dealing with the political-economic crisis in Poland. The L’Unita piece argued that dissent in the socialist countries was but the tip of the iceberg of intellectual malaise; that many intellectuals, while toeing the party line in public, lived lives that were in reality “fancastically, wildly ‘separated’” from official life; that this was caused by the party-state’s arrogation of full political control over the “totality of social relationships;” and that the solution was to “legitimize politics” by permitting the existing differences and contradictions in socialist society to surface, to go public as it were. The author concluded with the heretical notion that the “coexistence of ideas” was technically inevitable in modern society.\(^9\)

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\(^7\)For detailed references see my paper cited in note 4 above.

\(^8\)L’Unita, January 26, 1977, p. 3.

\(^9\)Ibid., December 29, 1976, pp. 1 and 14.
The *Rinascita* article focused on Poland in the aftermath of the June 1976 price-hike riots. It implicitly backed the dissident Workers’ Defense Committee; it stressed the mounting and broadly-based intellectual ferment; it called for political organization of the largely Catholic peasants *qua* Catholics, i.e., through their national representative, the Church; and it directly linked the resolution of Poland’s economic and political problems to greater participation in the decision-making process at all levels.  

On the level of systematic “political” criticism of the Soviet bloc regimes, *l’Unita* responded to the mounting dissident movement from mid-1976 onward (post-Berlin, not post-Helsinki) with the following pattern of coverage. First it reported the official regime charges against the opposition. It then juxtaposed to the official line, either in the initial report or in a subsequent issue, the dissidents’ views—giving direct quotations as needed to present their defense. Thereafter it proceeded to censure editorially cases of official harassment or arrest and to uphold the rights of political dissent and the free expression of all views, citing at times the Helsinki declaration in support of its position.

The prime targets of PCI censure during the winter of 1977 were the Czech, Soviet, and Polish regimes—in descending order of intensity. In the case of Czechoslovakia, “Charter 77” dominated *l’Unita* coverage. It will be recalled that the “Charter 77” document appealed to the Prague regime to respect the rights guaranteed to its citizens by the Czech constitution and international human rights covenants. For some weeks after its initial publication in the West on January 6, scarcely a day passed without some reference in the PCI daily to official harassment of its signers—for the most part former activists in the 1968 Dubcek reform movement. The first full-scale—and front-page—*l’Unita* editorial denouncing the Prague regime’s conduct came on January 12, but the paper’s editorial policy was already clearly indicated in a January 8 news report deploaring an official attack on the “Charter 77” signers as agents of “anti-Communist and Zionist centers.” The January 12 editorial was followed by a series of collective and individual protests by PCI members and organizations as well as further editorial commentaries when appropriate.

As for the Soviet Union, the cases of Orlov and Ginzburg elicited considerable attention in *l’Unita*. TASS was cited for the official charges. Orlov and Ginzburg was quoted in their own defense prior to their arrests. Medvedev and Sakharov were quoted in their behalf both before and after their arrests. *L’Unita’s* editorial censure came on February 6.

*L’Unita’s* treatment of the dissident issue in Poland differed somewhat from its coverage of the USSR and Czechoslovakia. The official Polish denials of police brutality toward workers arrested in June 1976 were juxtaposed to statements to the contrary by the Workers’ Defense Committee and larger groups of sympathetic supporters among the Polish intelligentsia. However, in the case of Poland *l’Unita* refrained from outright editorial censure, doubtless reflecting the PCI’s calculation (later proven to be accurate) that the counsel of moderation would ultimately prevail in the Polish regime’s treatment of political dissent.

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In contrast to the PCI, the PCF was restrained in its public criticism of Soviet bloc systems until the second half of 1975. However, from October 1975 onward the PCF assumed an ever more defiant attitude toward Moscow on issues of domestic disidence as well as Soviet foreign policy. Indeed, it began to argue that Moscow’s concern for maintaining close diplomatic relations with Paris served to reinforce the status quo in France and was, therefore, a violation of proletarian internationalism.

PCF-CPSU tensions over the nature of Franco-Soviet relations had probably been simmering for some time. Moscow’s eagerness to pander to the powers-that-be in the Elysee were evident ever since De Gaulle’s rupture with NATO in the mid-1960s. But only in the 1970s, under the twin prods of economic crisis and leftist electoral gains, did the contradiction between Soviet raison d’etat and PCF militancy come to the surface. For despite the growing clout of the Union of the Left, Moscow did not alter its line. During the Twenty-first PCF Congress in October 1974, Pravda compressed Marchais’s critique of President Giscard d’Estaing’s foreign policy into one terse sentence while waxing enthusiastic over the fiftieth anniversary of Franco-Soviet diplomatic relations. In the same vein, Pravda’s coverage of Brezhnev’s trip to Paris the following December for the annual Franco-Soviet summit was extensive and glowing.

A clear signal of French Communist displeasure at this attitude of business as usual came in May 1975 when the PCF issued a statement deploring those in the Communist movement who would “go easy on imperialism, for the sake of diplomatic considerations or domestic opportunities.” This appeared to be a two-pronged attack, first on the CPSU for its policy of detente qua status quo and secondly on the PCI for its late 1974 shift to qualified support of NATO. But just then the Portuguese crisis intervened, upstaging all other issues in international Communist relations.

Giscard’s visit to Moscow October 13–18, 1975 marked the decisive turning point in PCF-CPSU relations. By way of backdrop, on October 10 the PCF Politburo drafted a communiqué stating its resolute opposition to the political status quo in France, defined in this case as Giscard’s pro-Atlantic orientation as well as his domestic conservatism. The statement also chided Brezhnev for not publicly repudiating Premier Jacques Chirac’s reported appeal to him the previous March to help restrain the PCF’s militancy. Although the communiqué was dated October 10, it was not published in l’Humanité until October 13, the date of Giscard’s scheduled arrival in Moscow. The very same issue of l’Humanité carried an interview with Jean Kanapa, the PCF’s late international affairs spokesman, in which he insisted that French Communist support for detente in no way precluded the PCF from pursuing its “revolutionary struggle in France . . . against the Giscardian power of the monopolies, for democracy and socialism.” It would appear that both the Politburo communiqué and the Kanapa interview were timed to coincide with Giscard’s visit to Moscow, thereby throwing down the gauntlet to the CPSU. Pravda carried an abridged version of the communiqué, omitting the personal attacks on Giscard and Brezhnev. Then on October 15 Brezhnev unexpectedly cancelled a

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11Pravda, October 15, 1975, p. 4.
scheduled meeting with Giscard, to the consternation of Western newsmen many of whom assumed (once again!) that the general secretary was on his death bed. As Brezhnev reappeared in sound health the following day, it seems more than probable that on October 15 he was simply back at the CPSU Secretariat trying to cope with this latest challenge to Soviet authority.

The PCF protests notwithstanding, the Brezhnev-Giscard talks ended with their usual fanfare and the signing of a series of Franco-Soviet technical agreements. On October 25 l’Humanite resumed the offensive with an article condemning Soviet imprisonment of dissident mathematician Leonid Pliushch in a mental institution. Pravda replied the next day with a long unsigned commentary hailing Franco-Soviet state relations. Then came the PCF-PCI joint declaration of mid-November 1975 in which the French endorsed what was essentially the PCI line on a reformist revolutionary strategy and socialist pluralism in West Europe.

The nadir in PCF-CPSU relations came during the Soviet party’s Twenty-fifth Congress with Brezhnev, in a direct challenge to the PCF, not only declared that Franco-Soviet state relations and views on a number of foreign policy questions had grown closer, but also claimed that “this has met with widespread support from the French people and the majority of political parties in France.” Marchais, who had pointedly boycotted the congress, quickly informed the world that the PCF was not one of those parties. On February 26, the day after Brezhnev’s report appeared in Pravda, l’Humanite retorted with verbatim excerpts from the PCF leader’s scorching attack on Giscard’s foreign policy at the French party’s Twenty-second Congress earlier that same month.

On the other hand, during late 1976 and early 1977 PCF-CPSU relations appeared to stabilize at a point mid-way between the acrimony of 1975–1976 and the amity of the preceding years. The PCF viewed with equanimity, at least in its public pronouncements, the projected return visit of Brezhnev to Paris in early summer 1977, the first Brezhnev-Giscard summit since the catalytic October 1975 meeting in Moscow. The party daily l’Humanite regularly reported on Soviet domestic affairs in a sympathetic if bland manner (see the frequent “Letter from Moscow” column by Serge Leyrac)—in contrast to l’Unita’s sparse coverage of current events in the USSR. And in mid-January 1977 the PCF daily featured a lengthy analysis of Soviet-French trade, the gist of which was to underscore the vast untapped potential for the expansion of such trade on a mutually beneficial basis.

As for l’Humanite’s coverage of the post-Berlin Conference wave of disdissidence in the Soviet bloc, it contrasted rather sharply with that of l’Unita. The PCF daily’s approach to the repression of dissent was neither systemic nor systematic; it was instead selective and relatively superficial. In terms of in-depth reporting during late 1976 and early 1977, l’Humanite focused on the “Charter 77” case, dealing only cursorily with specific developments in the Soviet Union and Poland. Indeed, with regard to cases of dissent in the latter

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12Pravda, February 25, 1976, p. 3.
13L’Humanite, January 13, 1977, p. 3.
two countries, l'Humanite largely confined itself to reports emanating from official regime sources or international press services.

Only in the case of the GDR’s deprivation of dissident balladist Wolf Biermann’s citizenship did the PCF press follow l’Unita’s pattern of coverage. On November 17 l’Humanite reported the facts as stated by the GDR. On November 19 it described with lengthy quotations the declaration of solidarity with Biermann and protest against the GDR’s action signed by a dozen or so prominent SED writers and artists. Then on November 22 it published an article (not an editorial) by Claude Prevost denouncing the East German regime’s action and defending Biermann’s right to express his views even if they were dissident—and at times provocative.

By way of contrast, l’Humanite’s censure of the Czech regime’s treatment of the “Charter 77” signers was relatively mild and conspicuously belated. Whereas l’Unita denounced the Czech leadership in a front-page editorial on January 12, l’Humanite delayed editorial censure of Prague until January 25. Whereas l’Unita was systematic in its coverage of developments in Prague following the publication of “Charter 77,” including such sensitive issues as Zdenek Mlynar’s appeal to Western communist and socialist parties for support against the Czech regime’s mounting persecution of those involved, l’Humanite was selective and sporadic in its coverage, remaining silent inter alia on the Mlynar appeal. Whereas some of l’Unita’s reports cited the Helsinki declaration in support of the legality of “Charter 77,” l’Humanite implicitly denied its relevance in a statement by columnist Yves Moreau that insisted upon parallel progress on all fronts related to the Helsinki declaration, i.e., arms control, expanded trade, and human rights.15

Perhaps this brief comparison of the PCI and PCF press treatment of Soviet bloc dissent can best be concluded by pointing out that during the winter of 1977 l’Humanite published on article on the subject every 2–3 days whereas l’Unita published 2–3 articles on the subject almost every day.

One final note. In February 1977 the PCF came out with what appeared to be a flurry of commentaries on repression in the Soviet Union and East Europe. On closer inspection, however, they turned out to be restrained in tone, couched in generalities, devoid of systemic analysis, and brief to a fault. It is difficult to avoid the suspicion that their sudden appearance was geared to the forthcoming municipal elections in France (in which Socialist gains turned out to be more pronounced than those of the PCF).

To turn briefly to the Spanish Communist Party (PCE), it preceded the PCF in its public allegations regarding Moscow’s status quo orientation in Europe and went further than the PCI in its disapproval of Soviet political repression. As an organization that was itself outlawed and persecuted for some four decades, the Spanish party doubtless felt a genuine empathy for political dissidents in the USSR and East Europe. Accordingly, in the summer of 1976 the PCE paper, Mundo Obrero, described the Soviet political structure as “totalitarian.” In 1977 party leader Santiago Carrillo himself questioned the socialist credentials of the Soviet system, arguing in “Eurocommunism” and

15Ibid., January 17, 1977, p. 3.
the State that CPSU rule represented the dictatorship of one stratum over another. And Mundo Obrero published in full the “Charter 77” declaration.

Unlike the French and Italian CPs, the PCE commanded relatively little domestic clout even after its legalization in the spring of 1977. In the nationwide elections of 1977 and 1979 it won about 10% of the popular vote compared to the PCF’s consistent hold over 20-odd percent of the French electorate and the PCI’s surge well above the thirtieth percentile in the Italian elections of the mid-1970s. The Spanish party’s leverage within the European Communist movement was correspondingly less than that of its French and Italian comrades. Its significance lay rather in its role as pace-setter and whipping boy with regard to anti-Soviet criticism. On the one hand, the CPSU would periodically attack the PCE leadership for its defiance, thereby hoping to intimidate the larger parties into assuming a more compliant posture (lest they suffer the same fate). On the other hand, Moscow’s inability to cow either the PCE or the other Eurocommunist parties into submission served to underscore the ever widening limits of permissible inter-party criticism within the European Communist movement.

In the late 1960s the CPSU was so outraged over the Spanish party’s criticism of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia that it sought covertly to overthrow the Carrillo leadership. Then during the winter of 1973–1974 Moscow resorted to public polemics with Carrillo’s close associate, Manuel Azcarate, because of his insinuations that the Soviet Union preferred East-West détente to revolutionary change in the West. Neither measure was successful in halting either PCE defiance or the emergence of the Eurocommunist entente. And finally the Soviets were obliged to seek an accommodation with the PCE leaders, conceding their right to disagree with the CPSU in return for their agreement to participate in the East Berlin Communist summit.

However, in mid-1977 Moscow chose to bring the simmering Soviet-Eurocommunist tensions into the open by once again attacking the PCE. The medium selected was the Soviet foreign policy weekly, New Times, and the immediate target was Carrillo’s “Eurocommunism” and the State, a pamphlet published in April 1977 with an eye to the forthcoming Spanish parliamentary elections. The impact was a sharp escalation of polemics that had already intensified during the winter of 1976–1977 over the issues of human rights and Soviet bloc dissent.

The New Times attack, written anonymously, refrained from discussing the domestic strategy of the Western CPs, focusing instead on “Eurocommunist” foreign policy as defined by Carrillo. Moreover, the article conceded that there were two forms of Eurocommunism, one supported by the enemies of socialism and one supported by “the Left, including the Communist parties,” which embraced those “common features characteristic of the present strategy of the Communist parties of the developed capitalist countries.” New Times denounced even the latter version of Eurocommunism as “erroneous,” given the fact that there was only “one” scientific communism (witness the “General Laws”). However, it reserved its heavy guns for Carrillo’s inter-

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16See the Mujal-León Chapter cited in note 5 above.
pretation of Eurocommunism which, it declared, "coincides precisely with the meaning attached to it by the imperialist opponents of communism." 17

In brief, *New Times* argued that imperialism's latest anti-Communist tactic was to split the international Communist movement, to set the CPs of West Europe against those of East Europe, and that Carrillo was objectively, if not willfully, serving this aim. The article went on to chide the Spanish leader for maintaining that regional solidarity among Western CPs had priority over their relations with the socialist states of East Europe. It also charged him, rather lamely, with favoring the perpetuation of military blocs because of his call for a united Western Europe "independent of the USSR and the USA." Finally, it accused him of "conscious anti-Sovietism" for denying that the Soviet Union was a "workers' democracy where the organized proletariat is the ruling class."

The critique of the second, "leftist," variant of Eurocommunism as "erroneous" was most certainly aimed directly at the PCI, the first Communist party to accept the label of Eurocommunist, while the specific charges against Carrillo could be construed as embracing the PCI as well. The Italian party reacted accordingly. In measured but resolute terms it rebuked Moscow for its polemic against Carrillo and rebutted the innuendoes against its own policies.

The PCI's response to the *New Times* challenge, as reflected in *l'Unita*, included extensive coverage of rebuttals by Carrillo and the PCE Central Committee in the Spanish media as well as Italian Communist editorials critical of the Soviet move. 18 The gist of the Italian party's arguments were as follows. First of all, Moscow rather than Carrillo was guilty of splitting the Communist movement by its use of abusive language and its veiled inclusion of other parties in the *New Times* attack. Secondly, the PCE's call for a Europe "independent of the USSR and the USA," just as the PCI's similar call for a Europe "neither anti-Soviet nor anti-American," would ultimately contribute to the dissolution rather than the perpetuation of military blocs. In fact, *l'Unita* quoted Carrillo verbatim to the effect that it was Moscow who preferred the European status quo to the prospect of genuine independence and autonomy in both West and East Europe! Thirdly, on the question of support for human rights and Soviet-bloc dissenters, which for Moscow constituted the cutting edge of "anti-Sovietism," an Italian participant in top-level PCI-CPSU talks on July 1, 1977, reported that the Italians had insisted that the defense of human rights, including "basket three" of the Helsinki Declaration, was not only legitimate but should in no way impede the progress of arms control talks. 19 In other words, on the most sticky issue then dividing Moscow and Washington under the new Carter Administration, the PCI tilted to the West.

One final note. The PCF's response to the *New Times* attack on Carrillo was

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relatively subdued, in line with its reaction to the "Charter 77" case. While publishing brief reports on the Soviet article and Carrillo's riposte, l'Humanite refrained from editorial commentary except to argue that attacks by one CP against another CP's secretary general were inadmissible. However, a year later the French party was to sharply intensify its criticism of the Soviet system, thereby suggesting that its earlier restraint was the result of internal party considerations rather than conscious compliance with Soviet wishes.

Eurocommunism versus Moscow: Conflict and Conciliation

Underlying all the specific clashes between the West European CPs and the Soviet-oriented regimes of East Europe during the 1970s was the singular fact that relations among them had begun to acquire some of the characteristics of the historic relationship between Social Democracy and Leninism. The schism within the European Marxist movement a half century earlier had been a rupture between ideological brothers whose shared vision of a future Communist society was flawed by bitter controversy over the means to that end. For the Leninists of the Third Communist International the Socialists' commitment to democratic methods in the quest for social change spelled treason: their reformism would only shore up the capitalist order by dulling the revolutionary impulses of the common worker. For the Socialists the Leninists' use of dictatorial methods to preserve their power likewise spelled treason: party-controlled social development would never lead to the liberation of human potential envisioned by Karl Marx.

Some of these same themes lay at the heart of the controversies that wracked the European Communist movement during the 1970s. However, historical analogies are never exact. And in this case there was one compelling difference: the protagonists in the contemporary intra-Communist debate disclaimed any intention of repeating the organizational rupture of 1920. Their political and ideological differences notwithstanding, they extolled the enduring nature of pan-European Communist ties.

To be sure, the Soviet leaders and their loyalist allies disparaged "Eurocommunism" with remarkably little restraint, as witnessed by the June 1977 New Times attack on PCE leader Santiago Carrillo. The CPSU's long-standing polemics against the Italian Communist leadership were more subtle yet no less barbed. Nevertheless, the Soviet leaders went to great lengths to paper over those differences in time for the sixtieth anniversary of the Great October Revolution in November 1977. In early autumn Russian emissaries conferred with Carrillo in Madrid, assuring him of equal time to present his views if only he would attend the festivities. (Carrillo, it might be noted, had not attended the CPSU's Twenty-fifth Congress in 1976.) As a gesture of good will, Pravda published a lengthy feature by its editor-in-chief lauding the achievements of the Spanish CP and referring sympathetically to Carrillo. When the PCE chief was actually prevented from speaking in the Great Hall of the Kremlin on

20L'Humanite, June 24, 28, and July 7, 1977.
21For details see my paper cited in note 4 above.
November 2, 1977, the Soviet leadership pleaded innocence (Carrillo, they claimed, had arrived too late for his speech to be translated into the seventeen languages required for the occasion) and proceeded to shower their attention upon PCI General Secretary Enrico Berlinguer. Despite the influx of guests from some 100-odd countries, Brezhnev and the two Soviet leaders most directly responsible for relations with non-ruling CPs, Mikhail Suslov and Boris Ponomarev, managed to find time the very next day to meet with Berlinguer for fifty minutes "in an atmosphere of cordiality and friendship." In view of the close political ties between the Spanish and Italian CPs, the Kremlin’s respectful treatment of Berlinguer must be interpreted as an attempt to minimize the negative impression conveyed by their clash with Carrillo.

Just as the CPSU leadership strove for a public image of pan-European Communist harmony, so too the Eurocommunist triad of major non-ruling parties rejected the idea of a break with Moscow. Upon his return to Madrid on November 4, 1977 Carrillo declared that the Spanish Communists didn’t want, nor did the Moscow incident represent, a rupture with the USSR, a theme which he repeated a week later at a joint press conference in Rome with Berlinguer.23

As for the PCI, Berlinguer and others had rejected the idea of a rupture any number of times, particularly at moments of high tension with the CPSU. Two such cases had already occurred during 1977, first the previous winter after the Italian CP’s outspoken defense of the Czech "Charter 77" movement, and then in July after the PCI’s rebuttal of the New Times attack on Carrillo. In a January 30, 1977, speech to an assembly of Communist workers in Milan, Berlinguer had hailed as immutable three PCI principles: the goal of socialism, the operational rule of democratic centralism, and the maintenance of international Communist ties.24 In an interview over Italian TV the following month, Berlinguer once again insisted on the preservation of correct PCI relations with the CPSU.25 Similarly, after the July 1977 high-level PCI-CPSU talks in Moscow following the New Times polemic, a member of the Italian delegation reiterated his party’s opposition to a "rupture" with the CPSU, arguing that a break in inter-party relations would not be in the interests of either the PCI or Italy.26

As we have already seen, friction between the French Communist Party and the Soviets developed at a different tempo and along different lines than in the case of the PCE and the PCI. The quality of personal links at the leadership levels varied accordingly. While the French representatives at the November 1977 Moscow celebration did not become involved in the Carrillo flap, PCF leader Georges Marchais chose not even to attend the festivities. Nevertheless, the head of the French delegation declared in the Kremlin that despite their dif-

23For the text of the PCI-CPSU communique on the meeting and the PCI’s account of both the meeting and Carrillo’s confrontation with the Soviet leaders, see l’Unita, November 4, 1977, pp. 1 and 14. The Carrillo incident is analyzed by Eusebio Majal-Leon in "Th PCE in Spanish Politics," Problems of Communism, XXVII, 4 (July-August 1978), pp. 15-37.
26Ibid., February 11, 1977, pp. 1 and 11, especially p. 11.
27"Conversazione con Macaluso," see note 19 above.
ferences "fraternal ties have always existed and continue to exist between the CPSU and the PCF." 27

This same pattern of outspoken criticism followed by professions of ongoing solidarity was to be repeated in mid-1978, especially in the case of the PCI. All three Eurocommunist parties heatedly denounced the Soviet trials and sentencing of dissidents Orlov, Scharansky and Ginzburg during the late spring and summer of 1978. The PCI's protests were accompanied by public signals of an interest in normalizing party ties with Peking, 28 a particularly galling slap in Moscow's face given the CPSU's furious reaction to Chinese party chief Hua Guofeng's tour of Romania and Yugoslavia in August of that year. Yet at the same time a veritable spate of statements appeared in the PCI press denying any intention whatsoever of a break with the CPSU. 29 Moreover, Berlinguer made a point of stressing his party's ideological affinity with the Soviet comrades in his speech to the annual festival of l'Unita in mid-September. 30 And the very next month he journeyed to Moscow for top-level talks with the CPSU leaders, thereby underscoring the PCI's intention of observing reasonably proper norms in inter-party conduct despite the ongoing PCI-CPSU differences. (That those differences remained—and that the CPSU had paid a price for Berlinguer's visit—was evidenced by the fact that the joint communique signed at the close of the bilateral talks reiterated two of the major Soviet concessions at the 1976 East Berlin conference: the positive value of non-alignment and the legitimacy of disagreements among CPs.) 31 The Spanish CP didn't quite match the PCI's conciliatory mode of behavior. However, in late October 1978 it too indicated its readiness to remain on at least speaking terms with the Soviet bloc by receiving a delegation of the Bulgarian CP, previously one of the most trenchant critics of Eurocommunism. 32 Only the French party stayed aloof from this new round of pan-European CP contacts, intensifying instead its ties with Titoist Yugoslavia and criticism of the Soviet system.

How is one to explain this blend of criticism and conciliation vis-a-vis Moscow on the part of the West European CP's? Three major reasons come to mind, involving questions of ideological affinity, historical identity, and residual pro-Sovietism. First of all, considerable ideological agreement continues to exist among the West and East European CPs not only with regard to the obvious issue of militant, third world "liberationism" but also with regard to the economic structure of a socialist society. Despite the polemical exchanges of the 1970s, PCI leaders from Berlinguer on down repeatedly endorsed the "fundamental directions" of Soviet economic policy, claiming that it represented the interests of the working class. For Italy they projected a mixed

28 L'Unita published feature articles positively evaluating recent Chinese political developments on July 19 and 21, 1978, p. 3; its coverage of Hua Guofeng's August tour of Romania and Yugoslavia was also sympathetic. PCI international affairs spokesman Giancarlo Pajetta discussed at length the appropriateness of normal interparty relations with the Chinese Communists in early September; see l'Unita, September 9, 1978, pp. 1 and 12.
29 See, for example, the statements by Pajetta and Minucci in l'Unita, July 24 and 30, 1978, pp. 1 and 14 respectively.
30 Full text in l'Unita, September 18, 1978, pp. 1, 3-5.
economy under socialism but for the USSR they merely sought more extended participation in economic decisionmaking. In a more striking example of convergent views, PCF leader Georges Marchais voiced allegiance to the "general law" of "common ownership of the principal means of production and exchange" even at the French party's twenty-second congress in February 1976—notwithstanding the escalating polemics with the CPSU. The PCF's later rupture with the French Socialists over the question of how far to nationalize French industry in the event of an electoral victory by the Unión de la gauche should thus have come as no surprise. As for the Spanish party, in "Eurocommunism" and the State Carrillo deplored not so much the economic structure of Soviet society as the absence of democratic control over the public sector and within the workshop.

A second consideration that binds the Eurocommunists to the CPSU is the simple fact of their historical identity. A new generation of leaders may be coming to power. But the men now in their fifties were nurtured in their twenties on the ideals of international solidarity, Soviet ideological prowess, and the historic breakthrough of the Great October Revolution. And the surviving members of the Comintern generation were at one time intimately linked to Moscow by a web of personal and bureaucratic ties. Carrillo remarked revealingly in his speech to the Berlin conference, "today we have grown up." But adults rarely disavow their parents, however critical of their upbringing they may be in retrospect. Not only that, but it would be rather absurd for the West European CPs to break with the Soviet Union of the 1970s when they failed to do so in the 1930s or late 1940s. How could their leaderships explain such inconsistency to themselves, let alone their followers? Finally, unlike the Chinese and Yugoslav Communists, whose historical legitimacy is rooted in their lonely partisan struggles, the legitimizing matrix of the major West European CPs may be traced to events and time-frames that inextricably link them to the CPSU. The current PCI leaders proclaim themselves disciples of Gramsci and Togliatti. Yet both men are hailed in turn as one-time guardians of Comintern interests (Gramsci in the mid-1920s and Togliatti in the mid-1930s). The PCF acquired its mass base during the Popular Front era of the 1930s, a time when its Stalinist credentials were beyond reproach. The PCE emerged as a significant political movement only during the Spanish Civil War when it was perf- force subordinated directly to Soviet power.

This brings us to the third question of residual pro-Sovietism. A rupture with the CPSU by any one of these Western CPs would be likely to provoke a schism in that party itself, encouraged all the while by the Soviets. The rank-and-file members who flock to the Soviet booths as local festivals of l'Unita and l'Humanite, who delight in cut-rate excursions to Moscow and Leningrad, would be incensed and bewildered. To be sure, pro-Soviet sentiments seem to be one the wane. Nevertheless, an undetermined number of older militants still harbor the ideological image of the "peoples' democracies" inculcated during the Cold War years and reinforced by their first-hand experience with the unemployment statistics and the staggering disparities in income distribution that prevailed in Mediterranean Europe during the early postwar years and

\[\text{L'Humanite, February 5, 1976, p. 11.}\]
continue in evidence to this day. Thus for Eurocommunist leaders to break with Moscow would mean to risk an undetermined degree of damage to the internal cohesion of their cadres. And they would also lose that aura of transcendent internationalism that must account for some of their devoted following.

In addition to the above reasons for continuing Eurocommunist ties to Moscow, there is what might be called a negative source of West European CP affinity with the CPSU, namely, the absence from their relationship of nationalist frictions. Here the Western CPs part company with their East European autonomist allies, the Romanians and Yugoslavs. To be sure, the Romanian and Yugoslav parties share a number of the CPSU’s ideological views. The Romanian CP’s historical matrix is also firmly rooted in the Third International, the Ceausescu regime’s efforts to obscure that fact notwithstanding. But of residual pro-Sovietism there remains not a trace in terms of effective political influence. The reality of inter-state hostilities has exploded the myth of international Communist camaraderie and gone far in undermining what remains of ideological and historical ties with the CPSU. Indeed, the Romanian and Yugoslav leaderships’ visceral insistence on sovereign independence and equality vis-a-vis Moscow constitutes the fundamental link between themselves and Peking.

For the Eurocommunists, on the other hand, the preservation of East-West detente takes precedence over rigid adherence to the principle of CP autonomy. This is true even in the case of the PCF and PCE who in the past deplored the status quo implications of detente. Baldly stated, the emergence of superpower detente was the essential precondition for the West European parties’ political advances in recent years. By the same token, their claim to a share of domestic power is threatened by the deterioration of Soviet-American relations and the spectre of a return of Cold War polarization at the domestic as well as the international level. There are of course many reasons for the growing strains between Moscow and Washington during the second half of the 1970s. Peking’s unabashed anti-detentiste posture, its attempt to rally the West to an anti-Soviet crusade (the mirror-image of its efforts to rally Moscow to an anti-imperialist crusade some two decades ago) is but one cause among many. Nevertheless, the critical importance to the Eurocommunists of a relaxation of international tensions helps explain their support for the Soviet position on the Sino-Vietnamese border war. And their alignment with Moscow on this issue underscores, in turn, the point that considerable political space remains for a mutuality of Soviet-Eurocommunist views.