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# Eurocommunism

## CAN IT REGAIN THE INITIATIVE ?

The 1970s have drawn to a close. It is high time to try and summarise the experiences and lessons within the politics of the 80s.

From a left wing perspective it is natural to take as the starting point so-called Eurocommunism and its confrontation with the present developmental tendencies of capitalism. It is in and with Eurocommunism, the major force of the Western Left, that the revolutionary labour movement has gained its most important experiences of the conditions of class struggle under advanced capitalism in its present phase.

These experiences and lessons are many, complex and valuable. This article can only be a small contribution to a, of necessity, broad and extensive debate.

### **Eurocommunism's short honeymoon**

The term 'Eurocommunism' came into use in 1976-77, fashioned by an Italian journalist, and has since become part of the vocabulary of the Spanish, Italian and to some extent the French language, but much less so in Swedish.

In the final part of my *What Does The Ruling Class Do When It Rules*<sup>2</sup> I tried to point to its strategic content in relation to the history of the labour movement. Here we will be content to say that 'Eurocommunism' has come to describe a strategy and a tactic for a socialist social change which has as its starting point the communist movement's tradition of struggle and which explicitly makes use of and respects the democratic political institutions which the working class has achieved but which the bourgeoisie has shaped and controlled. What gave this strategy and tactic, which had really evolved through a long and gradual development, news value and interest to the mass media, were two factors. Firstly, they were formulated with new clarity and sharpness in 1975-76 in both parallel and joint statements by the Italian, French and Spanish parties. Secondly, and above everything else, it looked as if Eurocommunism was in the very near future to succeed in opening up a period of important and quite decisive change in these countries.

After the Italian Communist Party's (PCI) great electoral advances in June 1976 the old Christian Democratic power system was seriously shaken, and a broad political opinion became convinced that Italy could no longer be governed against the Communists. In France, it looked as though a victory for the union of Communists, Socialists and left-liberals in the forthcoming elections of March 78 was almost a certainty. In Spain, a process of democratisation had started after the death of Franco, a process in which Socialists and Communists could expect to play a greater and greater and soon leading role.

It did not happen quite like that. The Christian Democrats succeeded in maintaining most of its power monopoly in Italy, and in the June elections of 1979 the PCI lost more than half of its gains of 1976. The left wing alliance in France suffered a decisive split in September 1977 and lost the election in March 1978. The former phalangist Suarez presides in Spain with an increased majority over the fragile Spanish democracy, the socialists were pulled to the right and the PCE is only the third party. What had created the openings of 1975-77 and what closed them in 78-79?

### **The crisis of the 1947 system**

The openings to the left in the middle of the 70s were really the delayed effects, or perhaps rather, a maturing of the dramatic events

of 1968-69, the student movements, the wave of strikes, the Tet offensive and the Vietnam movement, and the women's movement.

These movements did not confront and shake, as many of us believed then, capitalism as a whole, but a particular economic, political and social system of developed capitalism. This system went back to the new employment policy of the 30s, which developed with the experiences of the war mobilisations and really achieved its definitive form with the dominant position of the USA in the world after the war and with the Cold War which together put a (temporary) end to all socialist strivings of the resistance movement and of anti-fascism.

For that reason we may call it the *system of 1947*. Notwithstanding the different national variations and their changes over time we can identify some common features of the 1947 system, which distinguish it both from the time between the wars and the period before the First World War.

The system of 1947 was a complex configuration with economic, geopolitical, social, political and ideological dimensions. Internationally it was an economic system of growing trade and foreign investment, under unchallenged American dominance (within the capitalist part of the world), facing an entrenched Soviet-led power bloc. Each individual advanced capitalist country experienced a period of unprecedented growth and level of employment. Decent housing and consumer durables spread to the working class. Socially the working class became successfully linked to the bourgeoisie under the slogans and the realities of capital accumulation and mass consumption. The expansion of the middle strata provided channels of social mobility. The Left was politically marginalised or isolated in ghettos. But the political system also involved a capitalist acknowledgement of the legitimacy of trade unions and of an active social and economic policy by the state. Ideologically, a bland social liberalism was triumphant — often paraded as a pragmatic 'end of ideology' after the fierce ideological battles of the prewar period.

This system went through several phases, from the hysteria of the peak of the Cold War to detente, some recessions and partial or temporary questioning, and many rather different national variations. On the whole, however, it lingered on till the escalation of the Vietnam war and till the explosion of student and working class protest in the late sixties.

Vietnam's successful war of liberation put an end to the USA's unlimited domination, not only militarily but, in part, also economically through the effects of the war expenses on the American balance of payments and the international position of the dollar. The war in Vietnam was also of great importance to the new radical youth movement which turned against the whole ideology of 1947, American liberal imperialism, capital accumulation, institutionalised

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class collaboration, and family consumption. The student movement questioned the authoritarian form and the bourgeois content and meaning of mass education, while the women's movement questioned male dominated society, the patriarchal family and sexual oppression.

The new strike movement broke away from class collaboration and

its economic model: more accumulation of capital equals more consumption, full stop. It turned against the speed-up, the degrading of work, the wearing out of the labour force, against capitalist dictatorship in the enterprises and also against highly indirect and limited democracy in the trade unions.

Briefly, new problems, new forces and demands came to the fore. The 'record years' of capitalism had come to an end. The social and political system which had been frozen in 1947 and which had, with minor variations and changes, existed for 20 years was breaking up. But it was not 'the final day of judgement' for developed capitalism, and expectations about new revolutionary movements and parties were soon disappointed.

The new forces came to be expressed as a change and renewal of the existing labour movement. Trade unions expanded, democratised, and radicalised. Communist Parties came out of their isolation, strengthened and renovated. Social Democratic Parties, or at least sections of them, rediscovered abandoned socialist objectives. Where the existing labour movement was weak, as in the USA, the new wave petered out, or re-entered capitalist society, leaving only marginal left wing effects, mainly among intellectual strata.

### **Eurocommunism: a response to the crisis of the 1947 system**

Eurocommunism, and parallel developments such as the left orientation of the French and Spanish Socialist Parties and the Catholic trade unionist radicalisation in Italy, can be seen as both delayed effects of and as a political answer to the sociopolitical crisis of the 1947 system. The reorientation of most Western Communist Parties and their new prospects of power in Latin Europe came out of the upheavals of the late 1960s. It took time for them to change, and at first the new movements and the 'old' CPs were at odds with each other, most dramatically during the May events in France in 1968.

However, it is here that we have to look for the explanation of the emergence of Eurocommunism. The fissures developing in advanced capitalism in the latter half of the 60s provided the ground for the massive new recruitment and rejuvenation of the Communist Parties. Compared to the movements of 1968, they had kept a more cautious line vis-a-vis the existing state apparatus, but it also turned out that they in fact had a much more realistic appraisal of the strength of the political system. And from the thrusts of 1968 came the new characteristic features of Eurocommunism: its conception of socialism as *la democratic jusqu'au bout*, as a thorough demoralisation of all existing institutions, the workplace, the family, the school, as well as the state and the economy; the themes of direct democracy and mass popular participation and self-government; the alliance of 'the forces of labour and culture'; the new conception of international solidarity, of solidarity with struggles for liberation and for socialism, rather than simply with the 'socialist camp'.

Fundamentally, Eurocommunism was an appropriate response to these new tendencies, a response which took into account the historical experiences of democracy and dictatorship, the constellation of power in the advanced capitalist countries as well as the new radical demands for direct democracy, equality and personal freedom.

### **The ambiguous legacy of 1968**

However amazing and shocking it would have appeared to the student and young worker revolutionaries of 1968, Eurocommunism, and Eurosocijalism, can be regarded as a legitimate heir to the new wave of social rebellion and as a genuine answer to the sociopolitical crisis of advanced capitalism. But to understand the current problems of the Communist and Socialist Left we also have to bear in mind that the movements of 1968 actually contained two different main tendencies, which only happened to coincide.



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There was, on the one hand, a popular-democratic upsurge of protest and, on the other an anti-puritanical individualist rebellion, in the Fiat works of Turin as well as in the rock culture of 'swinging London'. These two tendencies were united in their revolt against the sedate hierarchies of advanced capitalism, and largely under the impact of the Vietnam war they fused into anti-imperialism and revolutionary anti-capitalism.

The point is that the movement of 1968 was in part an accidental conjuncture of influences, the conditions for which later disappeared, with the end of the Vietnam war, with the rejuvenated labour movement establishing new positions and with the sharpened crises in and between socialist countries. In this new situation, the individualist tendency of 1968 has re-entered late capitalist culture, providing the latter with a new cutting anti-socialist and anti-political edge.

### **The structural economic crisis of the 1970s**

The rise of Eurocommunism may be explained as a lagged effect of the social and political contradictions which led in the late 1960s to a break-up of the 1947 system. Part of the contemporary difficulties of the former derive from the increasingly divergent tendencies of 68. But the main reason seems to be another one. Just when the organised Left had adapted to the new social and political conditions opened up in the latter half of the 60s, it had to confront another major crisis of advanced capitalism. That is the crisis of the economic structure of developed capitalist countries. Both the earlier socio-political crisis and the current economic one have contradictory and many sided manifestations and effects. But whereas those of the former, in spite of their ambiguity, were overwhelmingly progressive and radicalising, the current economic one works predominantly regressively and tends to weaken and demoralise the working class.

Since we are here concerned first of all with singling out political effects of the crisis, I am not going to enter into any difficult theoretical arguments but shall restrict myself to pointing out how the crises express themselves. The economic crisis of the 70s/80s is above all a gigantic restructuring of the capitalist world system under the control of the multinationals in alliance with authoritarian bourgeois

<sup>1</sup>This article was first published in *Sozialistisk Debatt*, No 5, 1979, the theoretical organ of the Swedish Left Party Communist. It has been slightly revised, abridged and updated for *Marxism Today*. The translation is by Gunvor Leeson.

<sup>2</sup>Published by New Left Books, 1978, and soon to appear in paperback.

regimes in some countries outside the main centres of capitalism — South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Brazil, the Arab oil states and elsewhere.

The oil, shipbuilding and steel crises in all the developed capitalist countries are perhaps the most dramatic expressions of this economic restructuring. It involves movements of productive investments, uncontrolled internal trade and manufacturing within a world system of giant enterprises. The restructuring also involves the end of another component of the 1947 system, the Keynesian business cycles and employment policy, now more or less helpless in front of a

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combination never experienced before, of mass unemployment with high inflation.

This economic crisis has weakened the working class, with unemployment and the threat of unemployment, and divided it into employed and unemployed, above all unemployed youths. Inflation, together with unemployment, affects different groups in different ways, gives rise to different demand priorities and divides the working class and the salaried strata further still.

In Sweden, the international economic crisis has so far been quite restricted in its expressions and its political effects. The working class and the labour movement have together maintained a high level of employment as a priority even under two bourgeois governments, but neo-liberal notions are spreading, including amongst the social democratic economists of the country which recently gave the Nobel Prize to Milton Friedman.

The effects have been most dramatic in Great Britain where a divided and demoralised labour movement recently lost the elections to a new-style Right which now leads Europe's most reactionary government. The decline and partial falling apart of the Danish Social Democrats are another dramatic political expression of this crisis.

The crisis has also been of great importance to the present difficulties of Eurocommunism, above all in Italy. In the 1979 elections, the PCI suffered its greatest losses in South Italy; a fall of 10% in Naples, 8% in Palermo, 6% in Rome (with the average for the country as a whole 4%). The Party is relatively poorly organised here, and a large part of the advance in 1976 in these areas was due to protest votes. The PCI joined, and sometimes came to lead, regional and municipal assemblies. But not even a Communist local politician can produce miracles with local mass unemployment and poverty in a capitalist country with a hostile central government. Expectations could not be met. The crisis has also weakened and demoralised the working class in other parts of Italy, but most of all where it was relatively weak already.

Side by side with the large enterprises where the unions have won many important and advanced demands, there has grown a large black labour market, where hundreds of thousands of workers are exploited for minimal wages, without regulated working hours, social welfare or any kind of security. While the desperate situation as regards youth unemployment provides terrorism with a social basis.

The crisis also was an important opportunity for splitting the left alliance in France. It effected the re-evaluation, by the Socialist Party's technocratic economists and leaders, of the joint programme of 1972. The opportunities for radical social change were seen as now more restricted. Influential parts of the Socialist Party came to see the programme as 'unrealistic', a thesis which was the main theme of the conservative forces in the election campaigns of 1978.

The fight for employment has also naturally been, and is, a mobilising demand in the fight of the labour movement. The PCF

here conducts a very militant and partly successful fight, above all for the threatened jobs in the French steel industry. But the usual equation unemployment = radicalisation does not work except for short periods and restricted groups of workers. The dominant effects are rather short term, immediate demands, and if these are not generalisable and successful, then division, passivity and demoralisation can result.

### The counter-offensive of the bourgeoisie

The present political winds from the Right get their strength from the combined effects of the two crises of capitalism, and from the fact that no progressive solution had been found for the first crisis before the second broke out. But the right wing trends have their own specific political and ideological form and dynamism. In the bourgeois counter-offensive, which since the mid-70s with growing force has set about closing the openings which were created by the breaking up of the 1947 system, we can distinguish at least three main tendencies or ideological themes: militant neo-liberalism, the 'German' model and the Cold War number 2.

### Neo-Liberalism

The militant neo-liberalism is most clearly represented by Margaret Thatcher in Britain, Glistrup in Denmark and the men behind the drastic lowering of taxation in California a few years ago, proposition 13. It characterises to a high degree the Carter regime in the USA, and is present in different variations in other countries. Above all it represents the *nouveau riche* bourgeoisie, and sections of professionals, and their striving to tear up as much as possible of the concessions which an older bourgeois class originally made to the working class in the 30s and 40s: an employment and social policy by the state, and cooperation with the trade union movement.

Neo-liberalism can operate in a world where the conditions for the old economic policies no longer exist, where there exists both unemployment and inflation (with the neo-liberals concentrating entirely on the latter), and where the working class is isolated and demoralised, and can therefore be more or less ignored or kept under control.

Neo-liberalism has its mass basis in the privately employed middle strata in part, and also, among certain sections of the working class, among the labour aristocracy and among recently proletarianised strata. It has, particularly in the USA, a further ideological resonance among the most individualistic currents from 1968.

In France, with the old state-centred traditions of the bourgeoisie, militant neo-liberalism has succeeded in making only slight headway, and it has been of even less importance in Italy where the Catholic and aristocratic charity and 'clientele' policy is an important element in the system of political power.

In Sweden, it is observed among the Moderates (the most right wing of the three bourgeois parties in Sweden), but still in a mild form because of the strength of the working class and the certainly withered but still continuing popular and petit-bourgeois traditions of the Centre Party.

Until now, it is above all British and Danish social democracy and New Deal-liberalism in the USA which have received the hardest blows from the militant neo-liberalism, but the influence of it can be felt everywhere in the developed capitalist world.

### The German model

The 'German' model is a term that West German social democracy used about its own policy in the election campaign of 1977, so let us use it as a description of the tendency in the international bourgeoisie's counter-offensive represented by West German social democracy. The SPD, and the West German government led by the

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SPD, play an immensely important role in this counter offensive, on two levels. First of all, the SPD, both as a party and as a government has to an increasing extent after Vietnam and Watergate, taken over the USA's role as the gendarme of Europe, and occasionally in other parts of the world also. West Germany for one had the most intimate relations with the Shah's regime in Iran and contributed to the costs of the Franco-Belgian invasion of Zaire in 1978. The US President, Gerald Ford, declared publicly in 1975 his gratitude for the anti-communist contributions by the Socialist International, led by the SPD, in Portugal at a time when the CIA, immediately after Watergate, was more or less out of action.

The SPD is to a great extent financing the Spanish Socialist Party, and behind the party leader Felipe Gonzalez's drastic initiative to get his party to reject its Marxist programme, there are, amongst others, strong West German pressures.

Before the Carter administration gave expression to it in 1978, Helmut Schmidt had made it publicly clear that the West German government regarded as completely unacceptable any communist participation in the Italian government, a declaration with thinly veiled economic threats.

Defeated in the Second World War, and since then, unlike West Germany, without a strong, nationalistic self-conscious bourgeoisie, Italy (that is to say the bourgeois politicians) is extremely sensitive to foreign pressures. The recent strengthening of the Christian Democrats' right wing and the already hardened opposition to cooperation with the Communists, depends to a not insignificant degree on the threatening West German shadow.

It is probably not so much the SPD's role as international gendarme which the Party's campaigners were thinking about when they talked about the 'German' model. The SPD plays its part in the counter-offensive of the bourgeoisie also on another level. The 'German' model represents rather a technocratic economic policy which so far has been relatively successful under the international economic crisis.

It is technocratic administration of capitalism without the militant neo-liberalism and without giving priority to employment and social reform policies. A model which rests on the exceptional strength of West German capitalism and on a mini-solution of the unemployment problem by a large scale deportation of the workforce imported from abroad. As an economic policy, the 'German' model represents the least necessary change to the system of 1947, a cold technocratic administration which rests more on a trust in the security of expert knowledge in a disturbed time than on class collaboration for increased consumption. Its preconditions are a strongly entrenched capitalism, a surrounding world in crisis and a tamed labour movement. The model can find a social basis in wide sections of the bourgeoisie and middle classes in countries with strong state traditions and likewise among sections of the working class.

In debates in France, President Giscard and his government are usually given an American liberal label, but in reality it is a policy of West German character. It is not equally successful, having to confront a militant labour movement, but it is better fitted to meet the crisis of the 70s than Gaullism. The 'German' model — or a similar policy — has also a significant attraction for a large part of the upper strata of the new public employees which gather in the Social Democratic and Socialist parties, from Spain, Italy and France to Britain and Sweden. It can be found also among the Italian Christian Democrats' modernistic right wing.

This technocratic administrative model can be said to belong to the counter-offensive of the bourgeoisie in spite of the fact that many of its

supporters regard themselves as social democrats or even socialists, because it means an effort to close or replace the socialist openings of the 70s with a modernised technocratic administration of capitalism.

It is probably the foremost and most serious opponent to Eurocommunism or Eurosocialism (ie, the Marxist socialism of the left within the French, Italian and Spanish Socialist Parties) in France, Italy or Spain. Its theme is to present the Communist Parties and socialism as 'old fashioned', ie, not corresponding to the level of capitalist development in the USA and West Germany, and unrealistic in relation to the restricted room for economic and social manoeuvring of the international crisis.

### The Cold War II

A third tendency in the bourgeois counter-offensive is the successfully initiated ideological war of the same kind as that of the 50s, above all in France, but also in Italy, Spain and other countries. The French so-called New Philosophers are only a small part of this great operation, a hysterical anti-communism.

That the bourgeoisie is anti-communist is nothing new, and that the propaganda increases during a political-social crisis is not particularly remarkable either. Two aspects, however, are repetitious of the 50s special crisis — the first is that in the same way as the McCarthyism of the 50s turned on progressive forces who neither defended nor represented a stalinistic policy, so the crusade of the 70s is directed with growing hysteria against the Eurocommunist parties who clearly no longer defend or represent either Stalinism or the East European or East Asian post-stalinism. The second is that the ideological edge is made up of philosophers and writers who draw their hatred from 'I believed in and was deceived by Communism'.

This new anti-communism attaches itself partly to the anarchistic individualism of 1968 and is often, particularly in France, the waste product of burnt out maoism. It has naturally been taken up warmly by the bourgeoisie and it has also been exploited by the Socialist Parties in their competition with the Communists, the least scrupulous of them being the Italian Socialist Party.

We also need to remind ourselves of the large power resources of the bourgeoisie which the crises of the 70s left to a large extent untouched and which are also part of the problem of Eurocommunism.

On the most general level, it is important never to forget the sad fact that the power of the powerful always has a tendency to create consent among a large section of those ruled. 'Consent' because of fear, lack of self-confidence, ignorance about possible alternatives, passivity, gratitude for small favours.

### The dilemma of Eurocommunism

How have the big Eurocommunist parties acted in these two inter-related capitalist crises and within the bourgeois counter-offensive? Let us first familiarise ourselves with the basic features of their

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situation. Eurocommunism was a result of and an answer to, a basically correct answer to the 'political-social' crisis, which erupted at the end the 60s. This crisis was more forceful in France, Italy and Spain than in other countries.

These countries had a strong communist labour movement (albeit underground in Spain). The bourgeoisie was more divided (especially in France, between the Gaullists who were in power after the coup d'etat type events of 1958, and the non-Gaullists: in Spain between fascists and 'modern' conservatives; in Italy between modern capital and a partly pre-bourgeois political system in Italy). Further, in Italy and Spain, the new masses of factory workers were not immigrants

who could easily be isolated. Eurocommunism involved a confluence of three elements: the communist movement's proletarian traditions of struggle, the demands of the new revolt for immediate qualitative changes at the place of work, in the school, family and politics, and an open acknowledgement of the strength of the bourgeois-democratic state and its electoral legitimacy.

The dilemma was, and is, how to hold these components together in a dynamic tactic and strategy for social change. The crisis of the economic structure sharpened this threefold dilemma. How to hold a broad, popular movement together, distributed between the vastly different expanding and declining branches and regions? How to unite a militant defence against unemployment and insecurity with the creating and maintaining of a front broad enough to win a sufficient majority to change society in a democratic way? How to unite the new political forces and ideologies of the youth revolt with the traditions of the working class and with a successful parliamentary tactic?

Before we enter into any criticism, it might be underlined that it is here a question of dilemma for which there is no simple answer. The three components of Eurocommunism are different in origin and pull in different directions.

To be able to combine them at all was a great achievement, which seemed impossible in 1968-69. The new revolt had a predominantly anarchistic-maoist direction in uncompromising conflict with both the existing labour movement and with electoral strategies and socialist revolution under parliamentary-democratic forms.

But it was achieved even though the PCF's slow adjustment created a deep split between the Party and the students and middle class of the May revolt, which later became the starting point for the upward spiral of both the Socialist Party and the ideological diffusion of the disillusioned maoist anti-communist crusade. The flowering of the Socialist Party in Spain, on the other hand, had probably more to do with the Communists' handicap under the Franco regime more than 30-year-old institutionalised anti-communism. The Italian

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Communists rather quickly picked up the new current, both in the Party and in the trade union movement led by them.

But how can one unite the three components in order to bring about a socialist change in the face of the economic crisis and its tendency towards division and fragmentation, and in a sharp struggle with an opponent with both new and old power resources at its disposal? In that task Eurocommunism has so far not succeeded. Communist mistakes have contributed partly to this, which is also admitted, indirectly by the change in tactics of the PCF, and more openly but also in restricted fashion by the PCI's central committee meeting in July 1979.

#### Errors of Eurocommunism

However, it is important to avoid the typical trotskyist way of looking at the history of the labour movement: all defeats and lack of success are brought about by the mistakes and treachery of the leadership.

Bearing in mind all objective difficulties and with full recognition of the great and exceedingly important results which have been achieved, it has now become evident that the Eurocommunists made a serious mistake, a common mistake although in different forms, and with many different concrete expressions. It can be summed up in one sentence: an overemphasis of parliamentary tactics at the expense both of the revolutionary labour movement and of the new social

movements of 1968. On the parliamentary level, the parties got entangled in the game of their opponents and lost some (only some) of their roots in the working class and their contacts with the youth revolt. The main reason here as far as one can judge was an underestimation of the bourgeoisie's capacity and will to resist, with an equivalent overestimation of the possibilities for driving the development forward through agreements between parties and by parliamentary manoeuvring. In France, where the greatest possibilities were and are — with the strongest Left and the least dependence on the USA and West Germany — the PCF staked everything on the party-alliance with the Socialist and left-liberals and their joint programme from 1972. The weakness of this line, although

*Marchais, Carrillo and Berlinguer*



in principle correct, was that it was not anchored in a social movement at grassroots level. This meant that when forces in the Socialist Party, in step with the electoral advances of the latter and in step with the evaluation of the economic crisis by the economic technocrats, began to pull to the right, there was no united movement — in contrast to Chile before the 1970 election — which could drive the left alliance forward and maintain its unity. Caught in the tactics of its own parliamentarism and electoral calculations, the PCF leadership in the late summer of 1977, was forced to choose between 'capitulation or breakaway', and chose the latter in September. The left alliance went to the polls in March 1978 divided in an even sharper internal polemic, and narrowly lost. The PCF leadership has since further re-evaluated its earlier belief in agreements at top party levels. But one can say in some measure that the policy of left unity, which was called 'unity and struggle', has in practice developed from 'unity without struggle' to 'struggle without unity'.

In Italy, with its weaker socialist left, heavy foreign dependence, strong but politically and socially contradictory Catholicism, fragile democratic institutions, and not insignificant fascist and militant reactionary groups, the PCI developed a much less ambitious and long term strategy, the 'historic compromise'. It was and is aimed at reaching a change in and settlement with the Christian Democrats, aimed at bringing to life again the radical unity of the anti-fascist resistance movement between Communists, Catholics and Socialists. But in the tactical practice, after the electoral advances of 1976, the line of the historic compromise became, at the national, regional and local levels, horse-trading with a Christian Democratic governmental party determined, and egged on internationally, to maintain all real power. In exchange for vaguely formulated promises of reforms, the realisation of which were delayed and partly frustrated, the PCI decided to dampen the more and more frustrated struggle of the popular classes and movements, a tendency which was reinforced by the economic crisis. PCI often calls itself a 'party of government and of struggle', but between 1976-79, the Party became more a government party without struggle and without the power of government. The PCI's leadership has now self-critically assessed this whole practice, at

the same time as the central committee meeting of July 79, in spite of some critical voices, re-affirmed anew both the tactical and the strategic main line.

In Spain, the PCE's line, as in Italy but naturally even more so, is distinguished by a strong emphasis on the necessity to consider the fragility of democracy and at the same time an over-valuation of the possibilities of parliamentary manoeuvres.

The 'Moncloa pact' of the autumn of 1977 between the government and the parties of the labour movement and large trade unions came about to a large extent on the initiative of Carrillo, the Spanish party leader. It was in a way a deft tactical manoeuvre to avoid the PCE becoming marginal in a two-party system between the government party and the Socialists. But in exchange for trade union restraint the labour movement got a piece of paper about economic, social and political reforms which the government has for the greatest part left aside and which the Socialists demagogically refused to fight for, referring to the Moncloa Pact as a Communist initiative and arguing that everything would be solved shortly when the Socialists were returned to power. This they did not achieve, with the Centre Right winning the elections in March 1979.

### The perspective of the third road

How can one sum up these experiences of the 1970s? What does the perspective ahead look like?

The dissolution of the economic, political and social system of 1947 has not found any stable solution, neither progressive nor conservative. Society and politics in the advanced capitalist countries are in a state of flux and change. The (structural) economic crisis has only begun and will continue. Eurocommunism, and in its way, Eurosocialism, brought together the labour movement and its traditions of struggle and revolutionary theory, the mass movements of 1968, and parliamentary-democratic politics in a democratic socialist mass politics. In this way, Eurocommunism has given the main line of direction to the still possible progressive road out of the crisis of advanced capitalism.

Eurocommunism has not yet reached its first goal, the start of bringing about a change in society, but it and the Left as a whole are stronger in all respects at the end of the 1970s than they were at the beginning. The bourgeois counter-offensive has not achieved its aims either and will continue in different versions and combinations of versions of neo-liberalism, authoritarian technocracy and hysterical anti-communism.

The Italian Communists have started to call their line, and parallel Eurocommunist and Eurosocialist lines, the 'third road' in contrast to social democracy and Stalinism. In order to develop this third road further there are at least four big problems which will have to be resolved more adequately.

1. There is first of all the strategic problem of combining representative democracy and direct grassroots democracy, mass movements and parliamentarism. Pietro Ingrao, the foremost spokesman of the left in the PCI, has defined the objective as one of developing a *mass democracy* which unites organs and expressions of direct democracy at workplaces, residential areas and in different grassroots movements such as the women's movement, with living, central parliamentary institutions. Ingrao emphasises also the crucial role of the party as the dialectical intermediary between direct grassroots movements and a unifying policy at a central level, in contrast to the relatively isolated expression of different radical protest groups on the one hand and parliamentary manoeuvre on the other. In my opinion there is, in spite of the latest self-criticism, relatively too much of the latter in the PCI and PCE and, after the tactical changes of 1978, too much of the former in the PCF.

2. A problem of its own, even if it comes under the general problem

of mass politics/parliamentarian politics, is the relationship to Eurosocialism and social democracy. This is a very important problem since a socialist transformation of the developed capitalist countries is only possible through co-operation between Communists and Socialists. Only in Spain has the development along these lines made progress recently. At the local elections last spring, PCE and PSOE made an agreement about mutual support in the elections of mayors and municipal executives. All Spanish cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants, except two, now have socialist-communist executives, with a socialist mayor and a communist deputy, except in Cordoba in Andalusia, where the situation is the other way round.

In France, the PCF continues its vehement polemic with the PS for the latter's 'right wing turn' in its struggle to win back its role as the largest party of the Left. The PS has however, since the Congress in

## an overemphasis on parliamentary tactics at the expense both of the revolutionary labour movement and of the new social movement of 1968.

March 1979, been led by a marxist, centre-left coalition of clear Eurosocialist and not social democratic, orientation. The French Socialists also talk about the 'third road' and about the 'blockage' of the Swedish democratic model.

In Italy the Socialists have felt threatened by being overtaken by the 'historic compromise' and PSI's new leadership has exploited every possibility for an aggressive anti-communist polemic, both from the right — with the party leader Craxi's substitution in 1978 of the old Marxist tradition with Proudhon, and then with the attempt in the summer of 1979 to form a government with the technocratic right wing of the Christian Democrats — and from the left through, among other things, contacts with the violent 'autonomist' student movement and through alliances with the Radical Party. So far without much progress in either case. At the PCI's central committee meeting in July 1979, Ingrao developed a programme of closer co-operation with the PSI, but Berlinguer, in his summing up, rejected strongly making a policy of unity with PSI a priority, and drew attention to the present PSI's leadership's demand for a social democratisation of the PCI.

3. The structural economic crisis demands a solution in line with a democratic socialist mass policy for social transformation. So far, however, one has to say that Eurocommunism has hardly developed such a solution. The PCF, most recently at its 23rd Congress in May 1979, has defined the crisis as being 'national, before anything else', as France's 'decline' under the strategy of big capitalism. The Party conducts a very militant fight to defend the jobs of the workers in the steel industry, and also for, among others, the wine growers of the south of France who are threatened with strong competition if Spain and Greece join the Common Market. Here the Party has made certain immediate gains, but in the long term view, more penetrating analysis of the technological and international dimensions of the crisis is really required.

The PCI's and PCE's views on the other hand appear too fixed within the solutions possible as dictated by the logic and space of the existing economic and political system. Berlinguer speaks of *austerity*, a word which more or less means 'restraint' with overtones of 'moral purification'. This is necessary above all because of the need to clean up the jungle of corruption, clientelism and parasitic favouritism of the Christian-Democratic state, but it also involves restraint in relation to wage demands. The concept and the policy have been targets for much criticism among the Italian Communists themselves, but were underlined again in Berlinguer's summing up at the

important Central Committee meeting in July 1979.

It should be emphasised that what is called for is not necessarily an elaborate and realistically viable 'solution' to the economic crisis. The Social Democratic breakthrough in the Nordic countries in the 1930s had little effect in real economic terms. In spite of the very sophisticated theories inspiring them, the economic policies of, for example, the Swedish Social Democrats had only marginal effects on the levels of production and employment and on the distribution of income. Nevertheless, the 1930s constituted an enduring watershed in the socio-political history of Scandinavia.

What is needed is first of all an understanding of the crisis and of the realignment of forces it makes possible, and a *political formula* expressing this understanding and realignment. In the current situation this would involve a welding together of the labour movement — in its Eurocommunist, Eurosocialist and leftwing Social Democratic tendencies — with the movements of 1968, within the parameters of Western politics.

#### A new internationalism

4. Fourthly, Eurocommunism now faces the necessity to develop a new internationalism. The capitalist crisis is international and involves both relations between the advanced capitalist countries and regions (Western Europe, North America, Japan, Oceania) and between them and the rest of the world.

The Communist movement is international, and so is *its* crisis (opposition/repression within, war and conflict between the socialist countries). Moreover, the revolutions in the third world are often led by movements other than the Communist Parties. 'Proletarian

### large problems remain. One is the relation with the Communist Parties which are in power.

internationalism' can now no longer therefore mean only international solidarity between the Communist Parties and, even less, primarily, solidarity with the CPSU.

Here the Eurocommunists have gone quite far, and a central theme at the last congress of the PCI was the 'new internationalism'. The foreign guests present at the congress were an expression of the successful diplomacy of the PCI, which had succeeded in gathering Russians, Chinese and Vietnamese, Egyptians and Palestinians, Ethiopians and Somalis, 'orthodox' and 'eurocommunist' parties, European social democrats, and the liberation movements of the third world.

But here large problems remain. One is the relation with the Communist Parties which are in power. The 1979 congresses of the PCI and PCF took, each in their own way, a clear stand against the new Cold War: Eurocommunism takes a strong, critical stand against authoritarian rule in the socialist countries, but there is no intention of denying the epoch-making historical roles of the October Revolution, of the Soviet Union and of China, and there is no intention of rallying to a new cold war and of breaking off relations. This is a clear and correct attitude, but its practical adaptation is difficult and is going to be more difficult with the open crisis in and around Indochina, which is likely to continue, and the internal conflicts in Eastern Europe, which are likely to worsen.

European politics is becoming more co-ordinated with the extension and development of the EEC, notably with the new direct elections to the European parliament. But the co-ordination and cooperation of the Communist Parties in Western Europe are poor, not least between the two most important parties of Eurocommunism, the PCF and PCI. The differences between them express in many

ways the differences in state and society between France and Italy. As such they are natural, objective differences, but they also express ideological-political differences of a party nature. As long as they are not significantly reduced and bridged over, the strength and possibilities of Eurocommunism will be weakened.

The new internationalism can only come from an increasing drawing together and cooperation between the Communist Parties sharing the same basic experiences and problems, including the Eurocommunist parties, the Japanese party, and the increasingly similarly oriented Latin American parties of Mexico (above all), Chile and Brazil. The increasingly divergent positions of the PCF and PCI makes this coming together difficult. On the other hand it is, potentially at least, being furthered by the new situation in Latin America, and where the new strategy and tactics for democracy and socialism are fully supported by the governing Cuban leadership. In both Europe and Latin America the recent, very important reactivation of the Socialist International should be taken as a positive challenge to a movement which has always, though not seldom in mistaken forms, regarded internationalism as one of its defining characteristics.

The Swedish VPK<sup>3</sup> should be able to play a role of some importance in the development of the new communist internationalism. It has an awful lot to learn from the large Eurocommunist parties, and it would be very valuable for it if the contacts could be extended below the diplomatic 'politeness' of official relations. But the VPK has also at least two important contributions to make. The VPK has an intimate experience of the most advanced social democracy, of what it has achieved and not achieved, how and why. And social democracy is something which is intensively discussed in Latin Europe, but usually without real knowledge, often painted with a pink glow by the PCI and painted rather black by the PCF.

Secondly, the VPK operates in the most advanced capitalist country and has started a discussion about how the great current technological transformation of capitalism is to be understood and be met. That is a debate which has not yet been started in either the PCI, PCF or PCE.

The VPK has also a certain place in the history of Eurocommunism. Although it took time before the new line could flourish and be consolidated (with left-socialist tendencies coming from Denmark and Norway, the strong pro-Soviet group and the leftism of the late 60s), the 20th Congress of the VPK in 1964 and its newly elected leadership introduced a policy which twelve years later in Europe came to be known as Eurocommunism.

Postscript February 1980.

*The above was written in the late summer of 1979. It was written as a political intervention in the debate on the Swedish Left, thus with limited ambitions of analytical depth. What has happened since the original article was written does not, as far as I can see, call for a revision of the main lines of argument. But it needs to be said, that the difficulties, divergences and mistakes of the main Eurocommunist parties singled out above have tended to be aggravated. This downturn phase of the Left in the advanced capitalist world, however, should be seen as a conjuncture of recession in a longer trend of growth. On the whole, the Left remains stronger today than ten, not to speak of twenty or thirty, years ago. It should be used for a self-critical and non-sectarian appraisal of the experiences we have made, for preparing us better for the coming battles for democracy, socialism and human liberation. Since our basic problems and tasks are common across state and language boundaries, this appraisal has to be an international debate. I am therefore very grateful for this opportunity to communicate with British comrades.*

<sup>3</sup> The Swedish Left Party Communist.