

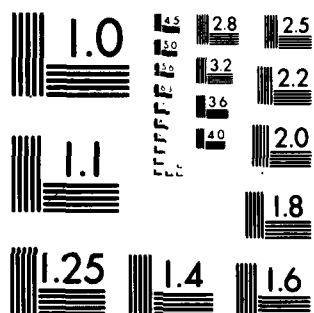
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COMMUNIST-SOCIALIST COOPERATION
IN WESTERN EUROPE:
THE DOMINO THEORY
REVISITED

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COMMUNIST-SOCIALIST COOPERATION IN WESTERN
EUROPE: THE DOMINO THEORY REVISITED?

Introduction

During the turbulent period which followed the downfall of Marcello Caetano's right-wing government in Portugal, various American commentators, including a New York Times editorialist, warned that a forcible communist takeover of power in Portugal might encourage similar trends in Italy and in France and spawn serious disruptions in other Western European countries.¹ Once a modicum of order was restored to Portugal and communist militancy subsided somewhat within the country, the attention of those concerned with the spread of communism in Western Europe was shifted to Italy. In particular, Secretary of State Kissinger warned that a communist victory in the June, 1976, elections might precipitate dire problems for the Europeans. If the Italian communists were to emerge as the strongest party and were to be permitted to participate in a coalition government, Kissinger alluded to the cancerous effect that this might have on European and Atlantic policies. The Secretary of State voiced the opinion that "the advent of communism in major European countries is likely to produce a sequence of events in which other European countries will also be tempted to move in the same direction."² In essence, Kissinger and various other American observers were revamping the old domino scenario which Dwight Eisenhower had first applied to Indochina in 1954, and were placing it within a new Western European framework.

→ The purpose of this paper is to examine the apparent trend toward greater communist-socialist cooperation in various Western European nations and to determine the prospects for greater leftist cooperation on a pan-European scale. In particular, special attention will be accorded to the development →

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of the electoral alliance between the French Communist Party (PCF) and the French Socialist Party (PS). In addition, an assessment will be made of the chances of these new phenomena of "Eurocommunism" and Eurosocialism" evolving into a new European order based on "Euroleftism." Finally, the American reaction to these recent developments in Western Europe will be discussed, with close scrutiny being accorded to the credibility of the neo-domino scenario.

The Western European Socialist and
Communist Movements - An Overview

Inspired by the success of the Bolsheviks in 1917 Russia, militant elements split off from the established Western European socialist movements soon after the conclusion of World War I and formed separate communist parties. These two worker-based movements essentially went their own respective ways until the mid-1930s. United in their opposition to fascism, the French socialists, radical socialists, and communists eventually agreed to form an alliance in 1935 and were successful in achieving governmental power under the leadership of the socialist, Léon Blum. A similar apprehension toward fascism hastened the formation of a front of republicans, communists, socialists, and syndicalists in Spain in 1936.

In many of the Northern European countries, however, the common aversion to fascism was not sufficient enough to entice the socialist parties to join forces with their normally weaker communist counterparts. For example, the British Labour Party adamantly refused the request of the miniscule United Communist Party to form an electoral alliance, fearing that such a union might cost the Labourites dearly at the polls.

With the end of the Second World War, a few socialist and communist

movements joined ranks. From 1944 until 1947, both French leftist movements participated in the tripartite government. The two major Italian leftist parties also aligned briefly in order to cooperate in the 1948 parliamentary elections.

The advent of the Cold War soon precipitated a new schism in leftist ranks, persuading many socialist movements to seek alliances with centrist groups and forcing several communist parties into political ghettos. The French communists, for example, were dismissed from the Ramadier government in 1947 for allegedly fomenting domestic unrest and for catering to Russian demands. In the 30-year period since Ramadier excluded them from his cabinet, the communists have never again taken part in a governing coalition.

In the past few years, some of the socialist and communist movements in Southern Europe have achieved a reconciliation of interests. Much of the impetus for this new-found friendship is attributable to the fact that the leftists had generally been out of power in the South for several years and prospects were slim for any leftist party, acting alone, to emerge with a victory in the foreseeable future. The easing of tensions between the East and the West and the concomitant increase in East-West exchanges also helped to erase some of the hostile stereotypes that the Western European communists had acquired during the height of the Cold War animosities. This new dose of respectability undoubtedly helped make the communists more enticing partners for the socialists.

On the other hand, many Western European socialist movements continued to denounce any form of cooperation with the communists. The fissures caused by North-South differences of opinion over communist cooperation were clearly apparent at the socialist summit meeting held at Elsinore, Denmark in January, 1976. Helmut Schmidt, Harold Wilson, and many of the other Northern European socialist leaders warned that any such cooperation would ultimately backfire

on the socialists.³ Wilson and Schmidt intimated that the communist movements are essentially totalitarian in structure and in theory and would threaten democratic principles in any country where the communists achieved power. Even if the communists proved to be moderate in terms of domestic goals, the Northern socialist leaders contended that foreign policy priorities might be drastically revised, particularly insofar as NATO and the EEC were concerned.

The Southern European socialist forces, mainly comprising Italy, France, Portugal, and Spain, argued that such cooperation is essential in order for the socialists to gain power. French socialist leader, François Mitterand, insisted that cooperation with the communists in electoral alliances represents the most feasible route for the socialists to share governmental authority due to the fact that the communists are especially strong in Southern Europe.

Conversely, the communist movement is generally weak in Northern Europe. As Table I indicates, the communists gained only 0.1 per cent of the vote in Great Britain and West Germany, 1.2 per cent in Austria, 4.2 per cent in Denmark, 4.7 per cent in Sweden, and comparatively low percentages in several other Northern European countries. In Great Britain, West Germany, and much of Scandinavia, there is no compelling reason for the socialists to cooperate with the negligible communist movements in order to achieve electoral supremacy. The socialists already direct the governments of many of these countries and might even risk forfeiting substantial voter support if they were to join forces with the communists.

The socialist split over the communist cooperation issue also has significant ideological roots. The Northern European socialists have generally been in favor of "social democracy," a concept which implies mixed economies, strong Atlantic ties, and a persistent distrust of communist intentions.

TABLE I

THE SOCIALIST-COMMUNIST PERFORMANCE IN NATIONAL PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

Country	Year of Election	Total Seats in Parliament	% Vote Socialists	Parliamentary Seats	% Vote Communists	Parliamentary Seats
Austria	October, 1975	183	50.4	93	1.2	0
Belgium	March, 1974	212	26.7	59	3.2	4
Denmark	January, 1974	179	29.9	53	4.2	7
Finland	September, 1975	200	25.0	54	18.9	40
France	March, 1973	490	22.2	100	20.7	73
Greece	November, 1974	300	13.6	12	9.5	8
Iceland	June, 1974	60	9.1	5	18.3	11
Ireland	February, 1973	144	14.1	19	0	0
Italy	June, 1976	630	9.6	61	27.1	179
Luxembourg	May, 1974	59	29.0	17	10.4	5
Netherlands	November, 1972	150	27.4	43	4.5	7
Norway	September, 1973	155	35.3	62	11.2	16
Portugal	April, 1976	263	35.0	107	14.6	40
Sweden	September, 1976	349	43.0	152	4.7	17
Switzerland	October, 1975	200	25.4	55	2.2	4
United Kingdom	October, 1974	635	39.3	319	0.1	0
West Germany	October, 1976	496	45.8	230	0.1	0

On the other hand, some of the Southern European socialist leaders are now opting for "democratic socialism," signifying an end to capitalist priorities, an emphasis on Western European independence from the two blocs, and a willingness to cooperate with other parties to the left in order to achieve political power.

Several Western European communist parties have enhanced their own electoral fortunes by expressing a willingness to form alliances with the socialists and with other leftist groups and to work within the established political system. In addition, the communists have allayed some of the suspicions of a significant section of the electorate by declaring their independence from Moscow.

The Italian Communist Party (PCI) has paved the way in renouncing any sort of tutelary relationship with the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). Former PCI leader Palmiro Togliatti shook the Kremlin in 1956 when he asserted that there were many roads to socialism and, therefore, it was not necessary to follow the Soviet example. The current PCI leader, Enrico Berlinguer, has remained faithful to Togliatti's thesis and has been highly critical of the Soviet-inspired invasion of Czechoslovakia and the repression of Soviet dissidents, while at the same time praising the spirit of the "Prague Spring" of 1968. Particularly beginning in 1975, PCF leader Georges Marchais has also become quite forceful in his condemnation of the closed nature of Soviet society and has pledged that "socialism in France will be socialism in French colors."⁴ The Spanish party program for 1975 was also decisive in its disapproval of certain Soviet practices:

No student of Marx has ever rationalized a one-party system or a Communist Party that is by law more privileged than other parties. Nor would he justify the elevation of Marxism to an official national philosophy and the subjugation of the arts and culture to a government monopoly.⁵

Spanish Communist Party leader Santiago Carrillo perhaps best summed up the new position being adopted by many of his Western European counterparts when he explained at the recent Berlin Communist Conference that the time had long since passed when communism was a religion with its headquarters in Moscow. Carrillo noted that the ultimate loyalty must now be directed toward the domestic constituency, a concept which is reminiscent of "national communism" but which, nonetheless, accurately reflects the professed sentiments of several other Western European communist leaders.⁶

The unwavering commitment to democracy and to representative government professed by several communist movements has also resulted in certain electoral dividends. Berlinguer has once again set the pace in this sphere. The PCI leader, who himself comes from a bourgeois family and whose wife and four children are practicing Catholics, steadfastly supports the Italian multiparty system and has even offered to form a compresso storico, an historic compromise, with the dominant, but troubled, Christian Democrats. The rationale for proposing the union with the moderate Christian Democrats was to work together to restore stability and vitality to the Italian economic and political systems and to show the Italian people that the communists could act responsibly at the national governmental level. Even following the election of June, 1976, in which the PCI achieved new electoral gains but not enough to participate in a coalition government, the communists have abstained from voting on certain key issues in parliament in order to allow the minority government of Premier Giulio Andreotti to remain in power. Berlinguer has also promised the electorate an honest and an efficient administration, if and when the communists finally gain a share of the national power. Judging from the efficacy of communist administrations at the regional level as well as in such major cities as Bologna and Turin,

there is seemingly a fairly solid basis for Berlinguer's pledge.⁷

With a membership of 1.7 million, the PCI is by far the largest communist movement in Western Europe and has traditionally gained a higher percentage of votes than any other communist party. In the last municipal and parliamentary elections, the PCI attracted 33 per cent and 27 per cent of the vote respectively. Most of the PCI leaders are not from the working class and have paid much more attention in the past to advocating greater social justice than to establishing any form of a dictatorship of the proletariat. In addition, the party has disavowed any scheme to implement blanket nationalization. In essence, the PCI has chalked up impressive gains in recent years because it has convinced a broader range of Italian voters that (1) the party is committed to an Italian road to socialism free from Soviet pressure, (2) the party can provide effective and honest government, and (3) no irreconcilable political differences exist between fervent Marxists and devout Christians.⁸

Georges Marchais has recently adopted many of these PCI viewpoints, signing a joint declaration with Berlinguer in November, 1975, which pledged the adherence of the French and Italian communists to (1) a pluralistic society, (2) a multiparty system, and (3) the protection of liberties achieved by "bourgeois democracy."⁹ The Spanish Communist Party has also emerged from 37 years of clandestine activity and promised to close down its secretive cells and to establish new party sections throughout Spain which will be open to public scrutiny. In announcing that the party was going "public," Santiago Carrillo committed his forces to the support of a "multiparty democratic government."¹⁰

These declarations of independence from the Moscow communist movement can in no way be construed as an affirmation of support by the Western

European communist parties for American foreign policy priorities. Nonetheless, some of the Western European movements have at least voiced tacit acceptance of a continued American presence on the continent. The PCI insists that it favors a Western European configuration independent of the two superpower blocs, but stipulates that it will sustain the Italian membership in NATO so long as the blocs exist. The Spanish communists have also officially frowned upon the maintenance of American bases on Spanish soil, but have promised to accept this arrangement until such time as the blocs are dissolved. The French communists, on the other hand, have consistently criticized bloc politics, but have continued to be particularly scornful of NATO.

Some of the communist movements have made considerable progress in the 1970s and have become important forces in their respective political systems. From an overall perspective, however, communist progress within the Western European framework has been sporadic at best. Following their abortive coup attempt in November, 1975, the Portuguese communists, who remain closely aligned with Moscow, were forced into a political ghetto and were even scorned by many of the other communist movements. Moreover, communists in the North have made little headway toward achieving governmental power. The Norwegian movement, for example, which has been described as "a small and powerless party,"¹¹ has recently removed itself from a leftist alliance and now commands only .2 per cent support among the Norwegian populace.¹² Movements in other parts of Scandinavia, Austria, West Germany, Great Britain, and the Netherlands are, at best, fringe parties which have minimal influence over the governmental process.¹³ Furthermore, their future electoral prospects appear to be quite dismal. Consequently, the recent successes of the Italian and French communists, which have received so much notoriety

in the Western press lately, are not indicative of the overall state of affairs of Western European communism.

The French Left and

Alliance-Style Politics

In June, 1972, the French communists and socialists issued a 140-page document entitled "A Common Program of Government" which outlines the policies to be pursued if the left comes to power in the near future. This alliance, which was consummated between the two major leftist parties in the early 1970s, is not the first of its kind. In the 1930s, the communists combined ranks with the Léon Blum-led socialists to form two popular front governments. Both parties also participated in the post-World War II tripartite government. The parties dissolved their close links during the Cold War era, although the communists made renewed overtures to the socialists in the mid-1950s to create an electoral alliance. Socialist leader Guy Mollet, who had recently returned from a State visit to Moscow, refused to cooperate with the communists at that juncture. Several years later, however, Mollet asked his socialist compatriots to support communist candidates in the second round of the 1962 legislative elections if such an effort would help to defeat a Gaullist aspirant.

The old socialist movement (Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière - SFIO) finally agreed to cooperate with the communists on a limited basis in the 1965 municipal elections in the Seine region. That same year, the communists threw their support to François Mitterand in his unsuccessful presidential bid against de Gaulle. In February, 1968, the two parties reached another agreement on an electoral alliance but cooperation waned soon after the overwhelming Gaullist victory in the parliamentary elections

which were held that summer.

Intense socialist interest in solidifying contacts with the PCF really took shape after François Mitterand assumed control of the new Parti Socialiste (PS), the movement which replaced the old SFIO in 1969. The SFIO was disbanded after a long series of dismal performances at the polls, culminating in the socialist candidate receiving only five per cent of the vote in the first round of the 1969 presidential elections. Mitterand assumed the leadership of the movement in 1971, modernized its structure and its ideological bearings, and made a concerted effort to broaden its appeal. In addition, he vigorously supported a rapprochement with the PCF.

The PCF-PS alliance has thus far proved successful at the polls. The new popular front organization gained an impressive 92 additional seats in the 1973 legislative elections, with the socialists doing better than at any other time during the Fifth Republic. Following President Pompidou's death, the leftist candidate, Mitterand, missed by only 1.4 per cent of defeating Valéry Giscard d'Estaing in the 1974 presidential race. The left, which already controls about 60 per cent of the municipal councils in cities with a population over 30,000, is expected to do well in the March, 1977, municipal elections. In addition, the vitally important parliamentary elections will take place no later than 1978. A poll completed in March, 1976, indicated that if the legislative elections were held at that time, the left would have garnered 54 per cent of the vote and would have gained control of the French National Assembly. ¹⁴

Although Mitterand is a dynamic political personality who has instilled new lifeblood into the socialist movement, the turnabout in leftist fortunes is also attributable to the facelifting operation which Georges Marchais has performed on the PCF. Under Marchais' predecessors, particularly Maurice

Thorez, the PCF was one of the most Stalinist-oriented movements in Western Europe, even shying away from denouncing Stalin until six years after Khrushchev's famous anti-Stalin speech at the 20th Congress of the CPSU. In addition, the PCF in former years was well-noted for its almost complete obedience to Moscow directives, including initial support of the controversial Nazi-Soviet Pact of August, 1939. In 1947, the PCF leadership denounced Tito and refused any sort of reconciliation with the Yugoslavs so long as Moscow opposed it. Ten years later, both the Czechoslovakian and French communist movements signed a declaration which denounced any form of "national communism." The PCF was highly critical of Togliatti's polycentrism thesis and for many years labeled the Italian communists as revisionists. The PCF also firmly supported the Kremlin against the once-recalcitrant elements in the Polish communist movement and the Rumanian communist hierarchy. Moreover, the PCF remained, until 1975, a faithful ally of the Soviet Union in its war of nerves and words with the Chinese.

Unlike the Italian communists, the PCF was not a fervent supporter of Dubcek's 1968 Prague reforms. Just the same, then-PCF leader Waldeck Rochet tried to talk the Soviet leaders out of a military intervention into Czechoslovakia. After the invasion occurred, the PCF for the first time dissociated itself completely from a major Soviet action. The PCF expressed its "surprise and condemnation" over the invasion and called for the acceptance of the principles of independence, equality, and noninterference. Nonetheless, the PCF refused a PCI request to issue a joint declaration in support of the Dubcek regime.

Following the Czechoslovakian incident, the PCF occasionally criticized certain Soviet actions and policies, particularly the 1970 trial of the Lenin-grad Jews and the existence of a so-called Brezhnev Doctrine. On the other

hand, the PCF organs were quick to defend the Russians in other areas. In September, 1972, the PCF Politbureau contended that "reactionary forces" in France were conducting a deliberate anti-Soviet campaign.¹⁵ In the March, 1974, issue of the Moscow-based International Affairs, an article by PCF member Georges Cogniot blamed "Atlanticists," the "big capitalist press," radio and television, and "so-called leftists" for promoting anti-Sovietism in France.¹⁶ Mitterand's own criticism of the handling of the Solzhenitsyn and Jewish emigration affairs was also labeled by the PCF press as part of a virulent anti-Soviet campaign.¹⁷

At least publicly, Marchais has ended this subordinate status to Kremlin directives and has been sharply critical of anti-democratic tendencies in the U.S.S.R. In recent months, the PCF leader has pledged PCF independence from the CPSU, particularly in his remarks at the 1976 Berlin communist conference.¹⁸ Moreover, a film about Soviet prison camps which was smuggled out of the U.S.S.R. was shown on French television in December, 1976. Instead of reverting back to the old position that the film was part of a capitalist-inspired anti-Soviet campaign, Marchais dared the Kremlin leaders to deny the authenticity of the film and asked the Soviet officials to explain, if the film were genuine, why such camps existed in a socialist nation. In addition, by combining statements from the 1968 PCF Manifesto, Marchais' book entitled The Democratic Challenge which was published in 1973, and the document endorsed by the PCF's 22nd Congress in February, 1976, one discovers that the PCF is now committed to support (1) universal suffrage under all circumstances, (2) the freedom of opinion, expression, association, press, and movement, (3) the right to strike, (4) the multiplicity of political parties, including opposition parties, (5) the abandonment of the Marxist principle of the dictatorship of the proletariat, (6) the rejection of the notion that

there is a socialist "model," (7) the encouragement of a dialogue between Christians and Marxists with guarantees of freedom of conscience and of religion, (8) the independence of artistic expression, (9) the condemnation of any foreign interference in the affairs of France, (10) the signing of existing international agreements banning nuclear arms tests, the proliferation of nuclear arms, etc., (11) French participation in the Geneva talks on disarmament and the Vienna talks on mutual reduction of forces, and (12) the denunciation of any plan to nationalize all industrial and commercial enterprises or to expropriate or to collectivize family farms.¹⁹

The PCF has long been the best organized party in France and has usually been able to count on the support of from one-fifth to one-fourth of the voters in any national election. The movement has also increased its membership recently to approximately 600,000. Furthermore, a 1973 poll indicated that 59 per cent of those surveyed would not object to having communists participate in a French government, up from 38 per cent only nine years earlier.²⁰ The aforementioned 1976 poll, showing that a majority of the French were inclined to vote for the left in the upcoming parliamentary elections, coupled with the continuing deterioration of the once powerful Gaullist forces, would seem to indicate that the communists may soon participate in the governing of France.

On the other hand, the PCF-PS electoral alliance still faces some serious challenges. For openers, sporadic bickering within the alliance continues to persist. Following the legislative by-elections of the autumn of 1974, in which the socialists registered strong gains but the communists did not, Georges Marchais accused his leftist partners of reneging on the popular front agreements. The French Fifth Republic Constitution stipulates that national elections will have a second round of balloting if no candidate in

a single member district is able to garner a majority on the first round. Most of the time, two ballots are necessary, with the top two vote-getters usually advancing to a run-off on the second round. According to the PCF-PS agreement, when a socialist or a communist makes it through to the second round and is competing against a non-leftist candidate, the partners will unitedly support the leftist aspirant. Marchais insisted that instead of faithfully adhering to this provision, the socialists were solely interested in increasing their own electoral support at the expense of the PCF and thus offered only token support to communist candidates who advanced to the second round. Mitterand, in fact, has not hidden his intention to mold the PS into the dominant leftist organization and to attract added support from districts which are now strongly communist. Consequently, both the communist daily, L'Humanité, and the weekly, France Nouvelle, have periodically criticized Mitterand and the socialists for wantonly disregarding the common electoral program which was first agreed upon in 1972.

Although not wishing to completely jeopardize the leftist alliance, Mitterand has adamantly refused to align himself too closely to Communist priorities. At the 1975 socialist conference held in Pau, Mitterand received the rousing support of the assembled delegates for his program to mold the socialists into the dominant force within the popular front organization, thus relegating the communists to a secondary position. Moreover, Mitterand has fully recognized that he cannot be too conciliatory toward the communists because a fairly significant faction of his own party, led in part by the flamboyant mayor of Marseille, Gaston Defferre, has traditionally been suspicious of PCF intentions. President Giscard made a surprise trip to Marseille at the end of February, 1975, ostensibly to look into the problems of emigrant workers in France. During this visit, Giscard had a long meeting with Defferre. The PCF immediately criticized Defferre for having agreed to meet with the

French president. Defferre had once tried unsuccessfully to form a socialist-centrist alliance prior to the 1965 presidential elections and had often criticized the PCF for its anti-democratic structure.²¹ The socialist executive committee immediately came to Defferre's defense following the communist criticism. In addition, the socialist leadership has denied PCF allegations that the socialists have cooperated with conservative factions at the municipal level. Such exchanges, of course, do little in the way of solidifying PCF-PS ties.

Even though the differences between the PCF and the PS will undoubtedly be cast aside prior to the upcoming municipal and parliamentary elections, the French voters are keenly aware of the fragile nature of the popular front alliance, thanks to the extensive coverage given by the French mass media to these various squabbles. In addition, policy differences do exist, with the PCF being much more critical than the PS of the EEC in general, of the scheduled direct elections to the European Parliament, of the Western alliance, and of Israel. Moreover, the communists and socialists originally came together for the purpose of combatting the dominant Gaullist movement. Now that the Gaullist fortunes are in a state of decline, the original unifying bond has dissipated and some socialists may now be questioning the utility value of maintaining close links with the communists. On the PCF side, some of the communists are embittered by the fact that their movement has been steadily losing ground to the socialists. It is possible, in fact, that Marchais' 1976 bombshell announcement that the PCF would no longer adhere to the Marxist concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat was primarily aimed at broadening the base of communist support and thus combatting the emerging socialist ascendancy over the left.

Some of the French voters may also be wary of the sudden change of heart

of the PCF toward the CPSU. After 55 years of docility to Moscow directives, the sudden pronouncement of independence has seemed somewhat out of character. On the other hand, Moscow had often placed its own national interests ahead of PCF priorities, a situation which naturally rankled a sector of the French party. The Soviet Union traditionally praised Gaullist foreign policy priorities, and has been fairly satisfied with Giscard's conduct of foreign affairs. Domestically, however, de Gaulle, Pompidou, and Giscard have been bitter critics of the PCF. A cartoon which appeared prior to the 1965 presidential elections perhaps best illustrates the dilemma faced by the PCF. The cartoon showed a boxing ring with the boxers and their respective managers in opposite corners. The boxer on the left was Mitterand, the communist-socialist candidate for the presidency. Behind Mitterand was his manager, Waldeck-Rochet, then the PCF leader. De Gaulle was seated in the opposite corner, with Premier Kosygin, representing the Kremlin, acting as his manager.²² The cartoon correctly suggests that the PCF was asked by the Kremlin to give tacit support to the policy-making hegemony of the Gaullists because of the General's independent stance within the western alliance and his willingness to strengthen ties with Moscow. The Kremlin may have also initiated the PCF request to its members to abstain from the second round of the presidential balloting in 1969, an action which insured Pompidou's victory over the centrist candidate, Alain Poher. The Russians were well-acquainted with Pompidou and believed that he would be faithful to his predecessor's foreign policy priorities. A Poher victory, however, may have signaled closer French ties with Washington but would have greatly enhanced the domestic fortunes of the PCF because it would have been a major step toward breaking up the dominant Gaullist movement. Consequently, the PCF was perhaps asked once again to sacrifice its own electoral ambitions for the sake of maintaining warm Gaullist

relations with the Soviet Union. A 1968 poll asked the French public if it thought the PCF paid too much attention to Soviet demands. 40 per cent responded yes and only 20 per cent no. Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, 37 per cent of those who claimed to be PCF members also said yes, and 38 per cent said no. ²³

Moscow's shortchanging of PCF interests undoubtedly caused some resentment in the French movement and may partially explain the independent stance finally taken by Marchais. The main rationale for this shift of priorities, however, was to placate the socialists and certain other elements of the French electorate who considered that the umbilical cord with Moscow would have to be severed before the PCF could be deemed as an indigenous political movement which put French interests first.

Just the same, Marchais' declaration of independence does not preclude the possibility that the Moscow party will remain primus inter pares for the French communist hierarchy. Although criticizing some aspects of Soviet policy, Marchais has still generally supported the Soviet regime. Moreover, the PCF anti-NATO, anti-EEC, anti-supranationalism, and anti-direct elections to the European Parliament stances closely parallel the Soviet attitudes and differ quite dramatically from the positions adopted by its Italian counterparts. Furthermore, the PCF has remained fairly supportive of Cunhal and the Portuguese communists in spite of that movement's propensity toward strong arm tactics. Conversely, the Portuguese movement, which is closely aligned to Moscow, was bitterly condemned by several of the other Western European movements for not working faithfully within the democratic framework.

The PCF's semi-totalitarian internal structure and persistent allegiance to various facets of democratic centralism continue to raise the question of how efficiently such a structure could function in guiding an essentially

democratic society. As Annie Kriegel has suggested, "the French communists constitute a closed society," and even though the democratic process is fairly well respected at the lower echelons of the party, there is "relative rigidity at the top of the communist hierarchy." ²⁴ The party leaders have traditionally opposed any efforts within the movement to evoke self-criticism. In 1970, Roger Garaudy, a widely read French author and a member of the PCF Politbureau for 24 years, was removed from his leadership posts for bitterly criticizing the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia and for insisting that the PCF should seek its own path to socialism. Garaudy's stance on these issues was about five years ahead of its time and was eventually adopted by Marchais. Nevertheless, this longtime member of the party was expelled from his posts because he dared to criticize the official party doctrine of the moment. Opposition parties have frequently stressed that the Garaudy affair clearly indicates that if the PCF were to gain control of the government, it would stifle divergent opinions within the overall party system as much as it has within the party itself. ²⁵

Although the French communists have moderated many of their more militant views in recent years, a leftist government would probably initiate significant changes in the French economic structure. For example, the PCF has pledged not to nationalize all businesses and industries, but the PCF-PS Common Program does single out 13 of the largest French companies for nationalization. Marchais has also recently soft-pedaled the party's commitment to a mass revolutionary struggle. He has insisted, however, that "we don't reject the parliamentary road to power. We will use any means, any opportunity. But if the bourgeoisie wants violence, we will respond accordingly." ²⁶ Such statements, which are well publicized by opponents of the left, have done little to soothe the qualms of the more moderate elements in French society. ²⁷

The communist-socialist alliance has made impressive strides in its quest to elect a majority to the French National Assembly and to form a governing coalition. Indeed, the popular front grouping may achieve its goal as early as 1978. Nonetheless, some of the French electorate remain suspicious of communist intentions in particular and may become even more wary as the pre-election charges and countercharges begin to intensify. In addition, the socialists have made tremendous progress under the leadership of François Mitterand and do not suffer from the legacy of voter distrust which has traditionally haunted the communists. The PS may even be enticed to dissolve the alliance if Mitterand begins to perceive the PCF as more of a liability than an asset at the polls. Moreover, judging from the dramatic resurgence in socialist support, even if the leftists were to gain a majority in the upcoming parliamentary contests and were permitted by President Giscard to form a left-of-center government, the PS would most likely dominate the new coalition. Mitterand is a strong political figure and would not be easily swayed by communist insistence on major policy changes. Indeed, if the PCF demands were perceived by Mitterand as becoming too intolerable, the socialist leader might well exercise the option of aligning the PS with some of the more progressive centrist parties in order to form a new coalition sans the communists. Regardless of the scenario which might be offered, the underlining proposition remains that the PCF-PS alliance has been constructed on a very fragile foundation which might crumble at any time.

A New European Order?

Eurocommunism

In the past couple of years, the expression "Eurocommunism" has been incorporated into the vernacular of various political observers and Western

European communists to distinguish the Western European communist movements from their Eastern European counterparts. This attempt to differentiate the communist movements which exist in the two parts of Europe has incited great controversy. Some Soviet writers have labeled the trend toward Eurocommunism as "rightist deviations"²⁸ and the Kremlin may well be concerned that these "deviations" may be contagious and thus represent a threat to Eastern bloc stability. At the other end of the spectrum, Alexander Solzhenitsyn has asserted that there are still no major differences between the two European brands of communism. He insists that the Italian communists would "ape" their Soviet counterparts if they ever came to power and that this "is predictable in any and all communist revolutions: one thing is said before gaining power and another thing is done afterward."²⁹ The exiled Soviet author adds:

I don't believe the statements of the French or Italian Communist Parties concerning their intentions. One must not forget that Lenin himself always used golden words before coming to power. But once he came to power he showed that he had a well-organized dictatorship run by an iron fist.³⁰

Attempts have also been made to describe Eurocommunism as an evolving communist movement which is distinctively Western European in character.³¹ This definition, however, is fraught with certain difficulties because of the myriad differences which still exist between the individual Western European communist movements. For example, does one include the Trotskyists or the Maoists or the youth-oriented movements such as the Parti Communiste Revolutionnaire in France as part of the Eurocommunist phenomenon, or is the phenomenon simply limited to the more orthodox communist parties? Moreover, what are the common denominators which link Western European communists within a distinctive Eurocommunist framework and how solidifying are these common features? At a recent Berlin gathering of both Western and Eastern European communist movements, consensus could only be reached on the virtues of

detente, socialism, and anticolonialism.³² In addition, the conference issued a declaration at the conclusion of the proceedings which pledged each party, in a rather general and innocuous fashion, to "develop their internationalist, comradely, and voluntary cooperation and solidarity on the basis of the great ideas of Marx, Engels, and Lenin."³³ Furthermore, strict adherence was to be given to "the principles of equality and sovereign independence of each party, noninterference in internal affairs and respect for their free choice of different roads in the struggle for social change of a progressive nature and for socialism."³⁴ One week later, 15 Western European communist movements convened in Strasbourg but still could not reach agreement on common principles which were any more specific than those enunciated at Berlin.

Basic disagreements do exist among the Western European communists. Although the two major stalwarts, the PCF and the PCI, have patched up many of their differences in the past two years, they previously had their own mini-version of a Sino-Soviet ideological conflict. Even today, there are great disparities in the official attitudes of these two parties toward the EEC, NATO, direct elections to the European Parliament, support of the Portuguese Communists, and the extent of the nationalization of key industries, businesses, and financial institutions. The PCI agrees that changes must be made in the EEC but believes that Italy must continue to be a member of the organization and must support further European integration. The party also agrees to Italy's participation in NATO so long as the two blocs exist. As for the direct elections to the European Parliament, the PCI accepts the proposal and has been seated at Strasbourg for several years. The PCI has also been highly critical of the militancy of the Portuguese Communist Party and its close ties with Moscow. In addition, Berlinguer has advocated a

very modest nationalization program if the communists ever gain control of the government. On each of these issues, the French communists have adopted a much more radical position which coincides fairly closely with Moscow's way of thinking.

The Portuguese Communist Party remains closely aligned with Moscow, certain other Western European movements have fairly cordial relations with the CPSU, while the Italian and Spanish communists have been particularly at odds with the Muscovites in recent months. Some of the parties believe that the United States must continue to be a viable force in Europe until such time as the Eastern and Western blocs are dismantled, while others seem to at least tacitly accept the Finlandization scenario for Western Europe.³⁵ In terms of electoral strength, the Italian and French parties command significant support, while many of their counterparts to the North attract a very negligible following.

In essence, there are great disparities in the ideological priorities and the political fortunes of the Western European communist movements. Consequently, it is extremely precarious to give too much substance to the notion of Eurocommunism as an evolving and distinctive pan-Western European phenomenon. Moreover, the new emphasis given to the "many roads to socialism" doctrine and to the need to tailor-make a communist movement in accordance with the specific cultural, political, and socio-economic characteristics of a nation has definitely acted to chip away at some of the ideological cement which at one time seemed to give communism at least a semi-international outlook. Indeed, the Western European communists may still agree that capitalism is in a state of crisis, but the trend toward national communism has given many of the movements a distinctive, somewhat parochial, outlook on political developments.

The Domino Theory and the
American Perspective

The domino scenario would suggest that communist electoral triumphs in France and/or Italy would in the long run strongly encourage accelerated communist activities and agitation in other parts of Western Europe. In the short run, the communist successes would inflict incalculable damage on the EEC and on NATO and would upset the power configuration which has existed in Western Europe since the end of World War II. In particular, the socio-economic structure which now characterizes much of Western Europe would be jeopardized and the region might incur a Finlandization status vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. In global terms, communist participation in Western European governments might well upset the balance on which detente rests and lead to greater East-West tensions.

Within the last couple of years, Henry Kissinger, Alexander Haig, and the U.S. Ambassadors in Rome and in Paris have couched the possible consequences of communist participation in terms highly reminiscent of the above scenario. Addressing himself to the possibility of communist participation in major Western European governments, Kissinger warned:

This, in turn, is going to produce governments with which the degree of cooperation that has become characteristic of Atlantic relations will become increasingly difficult, in which their own internal priorities are going to be away from the concern with defense, which will create new opportunities for outside pressures and toward a more neutralistic conception of foreign policy. 36

This type of official American response, however, may be based on drastically oversimplified assumptions. Ironically, some Western Europeans even fear, as Stanley Hoffman has noted, that this type of rhetoric may be intended to provide "a golden opportunity to future Mike Mansfields

and neoisolationists in Congress" to withdraw the American commitment to Western Europe. 37

The differences which are already so pronounced among the Western European communist movements, combined with the differing electoral characteristics to be found in each country, diminish the likelihood that successes registered by one party will greatly enhance the electoral prospects for communists in other countries. For example, communist participation in an Italian government will probably have little, if any, effect on the fortunes of the miniscule Norwegian Communist Party. Moreover, the example of the rather tenuous socialist-communist cooperation in France and in other Southern European countries is not likely to encourage similar efforts in the North where the socialists are particularly strong and the communists generally weak. If anything, "Eurosocialism" may be a much more accurate term than "Eurocommunism" to describe a current trend toward greater political party cooperation across national boundaries. The socialists in Western Europe represent the largest political force with over five million members and 53 million voters. Socialists also dominate more Western European governments than any other political movement and have the largest party representation at the European Parliament. In spite of the disagreements between the Northern and Southern European socialist sectors over the communist cooperation issue and certain other ideological standards, the socialists continue to meet annually, publish a joint newsletter, and have rapidly emerged as the most cohesive political force in Western Europe, having many fewer points of major discord than their communist counterparts.

The new Carter administration should be cognizant of the disparities existing among the Western European communist movements and give little credence to any new domino scenario. With the major exception of the Portuguese Communist Party, the western European communists have generally opted to work within the

electoral systems of their respective countries. In Italy, growing communist support is at least partially attributable to the understandable voter disenchantment with the corruption and with the inefficiency which have plagued the Christian Democrats and their coalition partners. Voter uneasiness over the effects of the economic recession has also helped the cause of some of the communist movements. Indeed, there are certain advantages to being out of power when hard times strike a continent and unemployment and inflation rise precipitously. On the other hand, the relatively poor performances by the socialists in the 1976 Swedish and West German elections and the mounting pressure to cut back on some of the state programs in the Netherlands, Denmark, and other socialist-oriented nations may be indicative of greater voter anxiety toward traditional leftist solutions to social and economic problems.

Although remaining adamantly opposed to many communist priorities, the United States must nonetheless respect the sovereignty of the Western European nations and accept the wishes of any electorate which democratically votes the communists or communist-socialist alliances into power. If the communists, working within the democratic framework, are able to eradicate some of the chronic inflation, burgeoning unemployment, and endemic social malaise which has perennially plagued some of the countries, then hats off to them. However, in view of the exogenous nature of some of the more serious economic ills now inflicting Europe, the communists will face a formidable task and may not turn out to be the panacea which their voters expect. Moreover, any resurgence in strong arm tactics on the part of the Portuguese or any other communist movement might make voters in other Western European countries more reticent to support their own communist movement. Ironically, this would represent a domino effect in reverse, and would essentially be

unfair because each of the communist movements should be considered on the basis of its own separate merits and the conditions prevailing in its country, and should not be readily linked to the activities or the idiosyncrasies of any other party or associated too closely with any "Eurocommunist" phenomenon.

Footnotes

1 New York Times, 17 February 1975, p. 20. A part of this editorial was also reprinted in the Paris-based International Herald Tribune, 18 February 1975, p. 4. The editorial stated that "a forcible communist takeover in Portugal might encourage a similar trend in Italy and France; create problems in Greece and Turkey; affect the succession in Spain and Yugoslavia and send tremors throughout Western Europe."

2 U.S. Department of State, Department of State Bulletin, 3 May 1976, p. 568.

3 New York Times, 20 January 1976, p. 6, and 25 January 1976, IV, p. 5.

4 Ibid., 1 July 1976, p. 12.

5 Atlas, August 1976, p. 34. The article originally appeared in Die Zeit, 9 April 1976.

6 Economist, 3 July 1976, p. 35.

7 Communists are participating in six of the Italian regional governments and in the governments of such major cities as Rome, Milan, Venice, and Florence. The party also controls 228 of the 630 seats in the Chamber of Deputies.

8 See the remarks of Peter Lange in his article, "What Is To Be Done - About Italian Communism?" Foreign Policy 21 (Winter 1975-76): 230-232.

9 New York Times, 4 January 1976, p. 9.

10 Ibid., 1 August 1976, p. 3.

- 11 Per Egil Hegge, " 'Disunited' Front in Norway," Problems of Communism, May 1976, p. 49.
- 12 Ibid., p. 58. The poll was conducted by the Gallup organization.
- 13 The communists have done fairly well in tiny Iceland and in Finland. Finland, of course, has a special status vis-à-vis the Soviet Union.
- 14 See James O. Goldsborough, "Communism in Western Europe," European Community, April-May 1976, p. 3.
- 15 See André Laurens and Thierry Pfister, Les nouveaux communistes (Paris: Stock, 1973), p. 119.
- 16 Georges Cogniot, "The Struggle for European Security and the New Intrigues of the Atlanticists," International Affairs (Moscow), March 1974, pp. 38-45.
- 17 Marchais accused the socialists and other groups of an "anti-Red orchestra." See the Herald Tribune, 10 October 1974, p. 5.
- 18 See the New York Times, 1 July 1976, pp. 1,12,13.
- 19 See Jean Kanapa, "A 'New Policy' of the French Communists?" Foreign Affairs 56 (January 1977): 282-284.
- 20 See the New York Times, 14 January 1973, III, p. 50, and Roy Macridis, French Politics in Transition (Cambridge, Mass.: Winthrop, 1975), p. 66.
- 21 Defferre once addressed a socialist conference in Marseille and questioned the wisdom of a socialist-communist rapprochement. Two communists at the conference attempted to dispute Defferre's premise but the mayor refused to yield the floor. He rebuked the two communists by insisting that "if one of ours interfered in one of your meetings, you would beat him up and kick him out. That's the difference between us. We're democrats and you're not." See the New York Times, 17 February 1973, p. 3. Jean-François Revel's book, The Totalitarian Temptation, has also caused great discussion in socialist ranks because of his thesis that the socialists are committing political suicide by aligning with the communists. See ibid., 20 January 1976, p. 6.
- 22 L'Express, 20 June 1966, p. 173.

- 23 See Frank Wilson, The French Democratic Left, 1963-69 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1971), p. 213.
- 24 Annie Kriegel, The French Communists, trans. Elaine P. Halperin (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), pp. xxi and 250.
- 25 Macridis, in his article, "The French CP's Many Faces," Problems of Communism, May 1976, p. 61, raises some disturbing points. For example, in his book The Democratic Challenge, pp. 127-128, Marchais emphasizes the desirability of a plurality of parties but uses Eastern Europe as a model, claiming that pluralism exists there. Marchais also insists that opposition parties should be allowed to function, but within a "new legal order" established by the leftist government.
- 26 New York Times, 19 February 1971, p. 37.
- 27 A July, 1971 survey asked people to respond to the statement that the PCF wants a revolution. 31 per cent of the respondents agreed with the statement, 51 per cent disagreed, and 18 per cent had no opinion. See Ronald Tiersky, French Communism, 1920-1972 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), p. 386.
- 28 New York Times, 24 October 1976, IV, p. 14.
- 29 Solzhenitsyn made this statement to C.L. Sulzberger. See ibid., 18 August 1976, p. 37.
- 30 Ibid.
- 31 Kanapa, the head of the foreign affairs section of the PCF Politbureau, uses this expression in " 'New Policy,' " p. 284.
- 32 New York Times, 1 July 1976, p. 1.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Ibid.
- 35 The PCF, in particular, has been very hostile toward NATO and supports an independent French force de frappe. France, however, is far from being a superpower and any dissolution of NATO without a concomitant break-up of the Warsaw Treaty Organization might well result in Finlandization for Western Europe.