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The European Communist Parties - a triple crisis

David CAMERON

In this issue of *International Viewpoint* we present a series of articles on the Communist Parties of capitalist Europe. In recent years it has become almost a commonplace to say that these parties are in crisis. But the crisis is much sharper and more visible in some cases than in others. So today we have to understand not simply the general contradictions which affect all of them but to see how these contradictions work themselves out in each specific case.

At the same time when these parties were part of the Stalinised Communist International, they simply applied the line that was imposed by the Soviet bureaucracy, adapting to the changes of line and the successive "right" and "left" turns, more or less simultaneously and relatively independently of the particular conditions of their own countries. But as far as the Communist Parties of Western Europe are concerned, they have been systematically applying a policy of collaboration with their own bourgeoisies for nearly 50 years now, with the exception of the relatively short periods of the Nazi-Soviet Pact (between 1939 and 1941) and at the time of the beginning of the Cold War and the Korean War. This ongoing practice of class collaboration has obviously had its effect on these parties and has become increasingly contradictory with the demands imposed by their links with the Soviet bureaucracy. Of course, the effects of this policy of class collaboration have not been exactly the same for the mass CPs, deeply integrated into the institutions of parliamentary democracy, such as the French and Italian parties, as for the smaller Communist Parties of Northern Europe or the underground Spanish and Portuguese parties.

So the phenomenon of Eurocommunism, which appeared nearly ten years ago, did not express itself in the same way or at the same moment in every party. Nevertheless it is clear that over and above national particularities, the development of Eurocommunism was a theoretical codification of decades of reformist practice. One of the reasons for this evolution was the desire of the Communist parties to get out of the ghetto and become credible partners in government for the bourgeois parties. So they had to take their distance from the Soviet Union and throw overboard part of the theoretical baggage they had inherited from the Third International, notably the Marxist theory of the state.

But we also have to see why this codification took place in the 1970s and not before. There was another motive for the more and more open criticisms of the Soviet Union and the willingness to try and formulate a credible reformist perspective for their own countries. The bureaucrats who lead the Communist Parties are not simply subject to pressure from the bourgeoisie on the one hand and the Soviet bureaucracy on the other. They are also subject to the pressure of their own social base, that is to say of the working class of their own countries, which in the final analysis is the source of their strength and therefore of their privileges, and also of their usefulness for both imperialism and the Soviet bureaucracy. Faced with a working class for which the links with the Soviet Union were no longer an advantage but a liability, they were led to criticise the repulsive features of "really existing socialism". They had to formulate a credible reformist perspective in order to maintain control over the most militant sections of the working class, who were looking for a political outcome to the wave of working-class struggles after 1968, and to derail these struggles themselves.

Today it is clear that far from being the solution to the contradictions of the Communist Parties or a new beginning

for them, Eurocommunism was just one stage in a crisis which had been smouldering since at least 1956 and which has deepened over the last decade. And in deepening it has diversified. If the Western Communist Parties are affected by a triple crisis, of their relations with the bourgeoisie, the Soviet bureaucracy and the working class, each of them has followed and continues to follow its own specific trajectory. The articles which follow deal with these specificities.

We have chosen to begin with the three parties which were previously the pillars of Eurocommunism. Since the high point of this phenomenon in 1976-77, many things have changed. The Spanish Communist Party abandoned the perspective of the "democratic rupture" with Francoism in order to adapt itself to a transition under the hegemony of the bourgeoisie which left intact the repressive apparatus of the state. Since then the Spanish working class has gone through the experience of the Moncloa Pacts and the "social peace" which ensued. The consequences have been dramatic for a party which did not possess an apparatus solid enough to resist the centrifugal tendencies its own policies gave rise to. In Italy the reality of the "historic compromise" was seen in the support the PCI gave to the policy of austerity and restructurings conducted by right-wing governments during the periods of "national unity" and "constructive opposition" between 1976 and 1980. But thanks to the depth of its roots in the working class and a favourable relationship of forces with Social Democracy, the PCI has managed to maintain its image of defender of the interests of the working class, even if it has problems trying to resolve the contradiction between that and its reformist political strategy.

In France, the golden days of the Union of the Left and the Common Programme have faded into the past. Since then the working class has experienced the Communist-Socialist split of 1977, the electoral defeat of 1978, the sectarian line of the PCF and finally the victory of 1981 followed by three years of Communist participation in a government of class collaboration. The combination of this series of sharp changes of line with the return to a much more pro-Soviet stance since 1977 has meant that the PCF has lost out on all sides. Today the crisis is beginning to affect the very apparatus of a party whose influence is steadily declining. The party leadership is trying to prevent the crisis having the same consequences as in Spain.

The situation of the two smaller Communist Parties that we deal with, the British and Dutch CPs, is on a completely different level. These parties have always been faced with dominant Social-democratic parties, surviving thanks to their links with the Soviet Union and the combativity of their militants in the unions. Today they are faced with the threat of splits and a process of marginalisation, under the double pressure of the Social Democracy and of the far-left, which is beginning to look as credible as they do.

Our last example is that of a party which might seem at first sight to be the exception to the rule. The Portuguese Communist Party has experienced neither Eurocommunism nor the threat of a split and shows no visible signs of crisis. It seems solid, with 20% of the vote in elections, 200,000 members and the leadership of the main trade union confederation. The article by Nuno Pinheiro tries to analyse the situation of the PCP, starting from the party's history under the Salazar dictatorship and its role during the revolution of 1974-75. But it also shows that the PCP is not immune from the contradictions which have provoked crises in its "sister parties", contradictions which will continue to have their effects in the coming period. ■

The Communist Party falters

Since the start of 1981, the Spanish Communist Party (PCE) has been in a chronic crisis. Splits, profound political shifts in the leadership, and various political turns have only made the situation worse. Repeated claims that the crisis has run its course have been immediately contradicted by the events. The slightest incident re-kindles factional warfare. There has been another example of this just recently. Felipe Gonzalez is negotiating with the various parliamentary groups a proposal for "consensus" on Spain's membership in NATO. The representative of the PCE in these negotiations should in principle have been its parliamentary spokesperson, Santiago Carrillo. But the party leadership decided to replace him with the general secretary, Gerardo Iglesias. Carrillo immediately launched a war of communiques in the press, claiming that Iglesias's behavior was "a matter for a psychiatrist."

In the midst of the battle, the deputy general secretary, Jaime Ballesteros, announced his resignation from the party, along with four other Central Committee members and, he claimed of "thousands of members." The reason for this action, he said, was that "in view of the process of liquidation and grave crisis that is afflicting Spanish Communism, we want to undertake a process of ideological clarification and unification of all Communists." On December 17, these five members of the Central Committee and about a hundred party leaders at different levels announced that they had gone over to the pro-Soviet Communist Party (PC) led by Ignacio Gallego. (1)

Miguel ROMERO

The most important thing to be grasped, in order to understand the gravity of the crisis is that the basic differences between Iglesias and Carrillo are minimal. On the other hand, it cannot be said that Gallego's PC is making great progress and that it can serve as a clear alternative in practice to the PCE. A grave and chronic sickness has gone to the very marrow of the PCE and there is no hope in sight for a cure. The root of the crisis is not the specific line of Iglesias or of Carrillo. It is not what separates them that is the most important but what unites them, a sort of belated Eurocommunism that does not dare declare its name. The following article is an attempt to interpret this crisis, which has led the PCE from the position of unassailable dominance that it held in the anti-Franco struggle to marginalization in Spanish politics.

What detonated the crisis, it is worth remembering, was the rejection of the term "Eurocommunism" by the majority at the January 1981 congress of the United Socialist Party of Catalonia (the Catalan branch of the PCE). Today, no one uses this notion any more except in some isolated speeches or in special circumstances, such as funeral orations or the fight over the legacy of Berlinguer.

The reasons for the crisis were obviously deeper going than a mere quarrel over terminology, and the PCE leaders

come closer to the underlying problem when they try to explain the crisis. For example, in November 1982, immediately after being elected general secretary of the party, Gerardo Iglesias told the daily *El Pais*: "I think that the party's difficulties arise objectively from the form taken by the transition [from Francoism], that is, there was not a democratic break. We had a party, which was called 'the Party,' that had opted for a democratic break. But what we proposed could not be carried out because we did not have enough strength and because the other parties, in particular the PSOE, put their bets on reform. This was the key that put the transition in the hands of the civilized right, which seriously restricted the possibilities for the growth of the more progressive forces. To be sure, the party threw itself in behind the democratic process that opened up without any reservations, giving this a higher priority even than seeking its own political space in Spanish society."

Around the same time, Santiago Carrillo expressed complementary ideas in a still more outspoken way: "At the time [of the first general elections in 1977, which capped the period beginning with Franco's death in November 1975], we were faced with an immature and ultraleftist PSOE, and we had to adopt an attitude of statesmanlike responsibility to get the country out of the rut it was in. Then, the PSOE

slid to the right, leaving no space for us between it and the UCD." (2)

The balance sheet of the transition has been an inexhaustible source of polemics in the Spanish left. I can only go over this question very briefly here to point up the apologetic character of the "self-criticism" made by Carrillo and Iglesias. The notion of the "democratic break" in its time was an excellent formula that came to mean for the majority of the Spanish people the liquidation of Francoism. The PCE did in fact appear up to 1977 as the main force fighting for such a break. But at no time did it give this objective a precise programmatic content nor did it define the policy of alliances or the methods of struggle for achieving it.

The « democratic break »

To the contrary, the PCE's strategy very closely resembled what actually happened — to organize a controlled mass pressure to induce decisive sections of the bourgeoisie to dump Francoism and put in its place a parliamentary regime based on national reconciliation, which meant fundamentally and explicitly respecting the military apparatus of the regime. It was not without reason that the PCE said in 1977 "de facto, the democratic break has occurred."

What happened was the contrary of a break. There was no break precisely where it was most necessary, that is in the Francoist apparatus of coercion. The result was an enormous political defeat for the workers and people's movement, whose deep-going effects were only understood later on.

The bourgeoisie was able to equip itself with a parliamentary system in its own time and to the extent that it wanted, one that amounted to an extremely reactionary version of the strong state, kept under constant surveillance and pressure by an army that was the backbone of the dictatorship.

What is more, the liquidation of Francoism by mass action (the "democratic break" in the best sense of the term) would have served a function of social hygiene, sweeping away all the filth represented by the ideas, the habits, and the institutions to which Francoism gave birth in the civil society. It did not happen like that, and so the society continued to be weighed down by considerable reactionary ballast.

The political force that lost the most in this process was the PCE. We can say that this was nothing more than historical justice, because the PCE also bore the main responsibility for the defeat. It is not

1. On the Gallego PC see *International Viewpoint* No. 45, January 30, 1984.

2. The Union of the Democratic Center (UCD), the now defunct bourgeois political formation that presided over the transition from Francoism. The main leader of the UCD was Adolfo Suarez, who was premier from 1976 to 1981.



Santiago Carrillo and Dolores Ibarruri, 'La Pasionaria', in 1978, at the first legal congress of the PCE for 46 years. (DR)

at all convincing to try to put the blame for this setback on the support that the PSOE did give, beginning in early 1977, to the plan of Adolfo Suarez, leader of the UCD and premier. It is still less convincing to try to explain this by the low level of political awareness of the masses. It is true that this consciousness was a lot lower than we thought and that the project presented by Suarez and the king posed an awkward problem to handle. That is, it appeared to offer the establishment of a democratic system in a painless way, without great exertions or dangers.

However, the PCE did not make the least effort to oppose this reformist scheme, which was called "the Reform". It did not attempt to explain to the workers that the "minimum program" for a democratic break was the dismantling of the Francoist apparatus. Nor did it do anything to sustain the mobilization and mass struggle necessary to achieve this objective. There is no reason to think that at the time this was an unattainable goal, and subsequent developments prove that it was necessary in any case to try to achieve it.

To the contrary, what the PCE did, especially after its legalization on the eve of the 1977 elections was to embrace the cause of the Reform with the zeal of the newly converted. This is the real source of the crisis of the PCE. To the astonishment of the left and especially of its own members, the PCE's first public activity after its legalization was held under the flag of the monarchy and marked by a declaration of loyalty to the king, all of which was justified as a token of gratitude to those "who legalized us." It is said that on that day many PCE members wept, perhaps for a lost identity. They did not yet know that it was lost forever.

The voters did not express any gratitude to Carrillo for his capitulation. In the June 1977 legislative elections, the PCE got under 10% of the vote. It tried to come up with complicated explanations

for this, but it was above all the price it had to pay for its policy, for the defeat of the alternative of a democratic break and the victory of "consensus."

Turn to the right

Carrillo's reaction to the party's electoral setback gave a new impetus to the crisis. What he called a statesmanlike sense of responsibility amounted in reality to a policy of helping to stabilize the system, trying to occupy the space traditionally filled by the Social Democracy, as Carrillo himself publicly acknowledged on a number of occasions.

It is significant in the quote that we gave from Carrillo that he said it was the PSOE's turn to the right that left the PCE without a political space! In reality, from the time of the Moncloa pacts [class collaborationist accords signed by the reformist union leaderships in October 1977] up till 1979, the PCE was generally to the right of the PSOE. And it led the Workers Commissions, the union confederation it dominated, on a course that lost them three fourths of their members. [See box.]

In that period, the PCE suffered a veritable programmatic liquidation. The identity of the party, which was built up in the anti-Franco struggle, was demolished, without Carrillo being able to offer anything substantial to replace it. The economic crisis came down on the workers, the pressure of reactionary threats grew day by day, and the PSOE and the UGT (the confederation led by the SP) increased their influence.

These disastrous results were identified in the minds of broad sections of the PCE membership with "Eurocommunism," a term that a lot of them discovered precisely at the time the "democratic break" was dropped, and which served as ideological cover for every step the leadership took to the right. The explosion was already

building up in 1980. The opposition to the leadership was orienting toward a "redemption of the PCE," presenting the history of the party under Francoism as a golden age.

This was a natural course for the development to take, since the revolutionary left was also going through a deep crisis at the time, which cannot be analyzed here, but prevented the far left from offering an alternative to the discontented ranks of the PCE.

In the attempt to recover an identity two aspects of rejecting Eurocommunism were to be combined. The first and fundamental one, as we have seen, was the experience of the party following 1977. The second was the reaffirmation of the "campist" (pro-USSR) position traditional in the party's politics. This was favoured by the sharpening of international tensions and by Carrillo's own positions as regards international politics, since his criticisms of the USSR were more and more from a bourgeois democratic, if not outright pro-imperialist, standpoint.

More than an international position, pro-Sovietism seemed a way of recovering the Communist identity in conformity with the history of the PCE. It is probable that big maneuvers by the Soviet embassy or factions of the party following its orders also played a role. But the formation of a pro-Soviet current can be understood without resorting to any conspiratorial theory of history.

On February 23, 1981, when Lieutenant Colonel Tejero went into the Cortes [parliament] with his pistol drawn, only three deputies remained seated, rather than hiding under their chairs. Paradoxically, they were the three who lost the most because of this attempted coup d'etat — Adolfo Suarez, Gutierrez Mellado (the general who was responsible for reform of the army and police at the time), and Santiago Carrillo. The attempted coup reflected the failure of a political plan of which each of the three, each in his own way, had been a sponsor.

Carrillo had tried to justify his successive capitulations in the name of statesmanship and consolidating democracy. The result was evident. And this failure was compounded by the political consequences of the coup. It was not a mass movement but a pact between the king and the military hierarchy that blocked the operation led by Tejero and General Milans del Bosch.

The coup attempt inaugurated the "counter reform," a new turn to the right on both the political and social levels in the conditions of widespread fear of a new coup d'etat. The right was in an open crisis. The PSOE, which then adopted the line that it is carrying out today of modernizing Spanish capitalism and integrating the army into the political system, seemed to be the practical alternative, a force that would carry through some reforms that would be progressive but still moderate enough not to provoke any new putschist threats.

In the aspirations for change that were expressed at the time, the PCE held a totally marginal position. The conditions were assembled so that the crisis in the party, which had already exploded in Catalonia, could extend in various forms to the organization as a whole. The first skirmish in the Central Committee took place in June 1982. Nicolas Sartorius, long considered the anointed successor of Carrillo, presented a critique concentrating on organizational questions. He called for "renewal of the leadership".

Carrillo responded by a feint. He presented his resignation. It was not accepted, as he expected that it would not be. But the traditional monolithism of the central leadership was shaken. The leadership crisis compounded a crisis of orientation that was to lead to the formulation of a literally absurd line. The PCE proposed to the PSOE forming a vague "democratic front," which it presented as the only alternative to "regression"

(toward the Francoist period). No one, least of all the PSOE, took this proposal seriously. The PCE leaders could see the disaster of the 1982 elections coming [see box] but the actual results went beyond the most pessimistic predictions. A few days after the October 28, 1982 elections, Carrillo was obliged to turn in his resignation, and this time it was accepted.

Gerardo Iglesias, Carrillo's replacement as general secretary, was at first put forward as a stand-in. But the bureaucracy has its own laws. Iglesias set about immediately surrounding himself with people he could trust and removing the "Carrillistas." The origin of the factional war that opened up lay more in conflicts within the apparatus than in important political differences. The line applied by Iglesias can be summed up in six points: (1) an "open door" policy, making it easier for thousands of lost members to return to the party by promising them a democratic internal

regime; (2) reinvolvement of the party in social struggles, which means consolidating its working-class base; (3) strong involvement in the anti-NATO movement and relaunching the Communist Youth; (4) maintaining the traditional trade-union line of the Workers Commissions, that is, the policy of national solidarity in the face of the crisis; (5) the proposal for a "convergence of the left for a progressive alternative," designed to assemble an electoral front to the left of the PSOE for the elections scheduled for 1986; (6) defending the unity of the party around the majority line of the Eleventh Congress.

The line taken toward the Socialist Party government is not a model of clarity. In his report to the October 1984 Central Committee plenum, Iglesias said: "On the one hand, we have to support those measures of the government that have a progressive or left meaning. On the other, we cannot make general or sweeping judgements of the PSOE, inasmuch as,

The facts of the crisis

In 1977, according to the official figures, the PCE had about 200,000 members. In the same period, the Workers Commissions claimed to have 1,100,000 workers affiliated. The PCE claims today to still have about 80,000 members. The real figures are on the order of 40,000 members. The Workers Commissions have less than 400,000 members. The PCE paper, *Mundo Obrero*, was a daily for a short period that ended in a financial catastrophe. At present it is a weekly with a press run of 35,000 copies. It has only 200 subscribers, one tenth the number that subscribe to *Combate*, the weekly paper of the LCR, the section of the Fourth International in the Spanish state.

The last congress of the PCE took place in December 1983, about a year after Carrillo's replacement by Iglesias as general secretary following the disaster of the October 28, 1982, elections. A few weeks before this congress, an internal crisis had broken out, dividing the party into two factions, the majority rallying around Iglesias, while the minority led by Carrillo acted as a public faction. The relationship of forces in the Central Committee was 44 to 32 in favor of Iglesias. Iglesias's position was consolidated relatively during the Eleventh Congress. In the new Central Committee, he had 71 against 38. But the report presented by Iglesias to the congress was approved by a majority of only ten out of 787 delegates to the congress.

At the Third Congress of the Workers Commissions in June 1984, the two factions ran separate slates for the Executive Committee. The Camacho slate (for the Iglesias line) got 53% of the vote, the Ariza slate (for the Carrillo line) got 28%.

The Carrillo faction has a public organ, the monthly magazine *Ahora*. It leads the party organizations in about a dozen regions and national areas, including the ones in Madrid and Euzkadi. In the Workers Commissions, it controls the Metalworkers Federation. In addition, Carrillo is the spokesman of the PCE's tiny parliamentary faction (four deputies).

The splits in the PCE began at the start of 1981 with the crisis in the PSUC (the CP in Catalonia), which culminated in the formation of the PCC (Party of Communists of Catalonia), described as pro-Soviet.

In January 1983, the Congress of Communist Unity was held. It founded the Communist Party, which wants to be called just that and nothing more. The general secretary of this party is Ignacio Gallego, who traditionally represented the most pro-Soviet positions in the PCE leadership. The slate that the CP presented to the Third Congress of the Workers Commissions got 15% of the vote.

The Gallego PC has about 10,000 members distributed very unevenly throughout the country. It is relatively strong in Catalonia, where it got slightly over 4% of the vote in the elections for the Catalan autonomous parliament in 1984. It is almost nonexistent in Euzkadi. It is rather large but in crisis in Asturias. It is influential in Madrid but not very stable. It has a biweekly paper, *Nuevo Rumbo*, which has a circulation on the order of that of the far left press. With the exception of Catalonia, its electoral scores are similar to those for the far-left currents, that is about 1%.

However, the creation of the Gallego CP is not the most dramatic expression of the centrifugal tendencies rending the PCE. In 1982, there was a split of the most Eurocommunist elements around such well-known leaders as Azcarate, Pilar Brabo, Alonso Zaldivar and some of the most popular intellectuals and artists in the party. The organization that they formed was called ARI (Association for the Renewal of the Left). It dissolved ingloriously a few months later. Some of its members went over to the PSOE. Others remained active as "independents." Some went back to the PCE.

As a result of Ballesteros and his supporters leaving for the Gallego CP [see article], another split is looming up in the PCE, which may be still more grave for the party than the preceding ones. Romero, the general secretary of the Workers Commissions in Agriculture and the key leader of the PCE in Andalusia (the PCE's other bastion, along with Catalonia), has formed a new public faction that calls itself the "Leninist Front." They have not concealed any of their aims, which converge with those of the Gallego PC. But in the last months, they have been conducting a special policy of alliances, backing one and then another faction of the PCE. For example, they supported the Iglesias faction at the Congress of the Workers Commissions. It seems that a split is now imminent.

THE PCE's ELECTORAL SCORES

	1977	1979	1982
Number of votes	1,655,744	1,940,236	828,928
%	9.3	10.9	3.9
Deputies	20	23	4

The PSUC got 18.6% of the vote and 25 deputies in the 1980 Catalan elections. It got 5.8% and six deputies in the 1984 elections. In the same period, the Communist Party in Euzkadi went from 4.01 of the vote to 1.4% and from one deputy to none.

as we have seen, currents are growing within the PSOE that challenge the governmental policy."

On the first and the last point, the failure of Iglesias' policy is evident. The PCE's "open door" is still being used more as an exit than an entrance. As for the unity of the party, it is more compromised than ever. As regards reinvolvement in social struggles, the most significant development is the party's involvement in the anti-NATO movement. But here the PCE had to pay the price for its delay, which was one of Carrillo's worst errors. On the other hand, given the characteristics of the anti-NATO movement in the Spanish state and the relationship of forces within it, the PCE can hope to play an important role but by no means to control it or impose conformity on it.

The questions of trade-union orientation can be summed up as follows: The majority led by Camacho (a supporter of Iglesias) did not get the means at the Third Congress of the Workers Commissions last June to apply systematically the social-pact line that it would have liked. The Socialist Party government is offering them scarcely any room for negotiating, and the ranks of the union would not tolerate a social pact in line with the dismal tradition of recent years.

The "convergence of the left" is not in itself an absurd idea. It is true that the PSOE's ultraright-wing policy is opening up a broad space to its left in which the PCE could try to form a sort of electoral front with the support of independents prepared to associate themselves with the rather frayed image of the party. But Iglesias directed this proposal first of all to forces to the right of him, that is to sectors that while moderate are fed-up with the policy of the PSOE. Moreover, and most important, in the present situation, the PCE has a minimum credibility as a party and very little capacity to attract support for such a proposition.

One of the party's best known intellectuals, Manuel Vasquez Montalban, has written that such a proposal would only have meaning if it came from "a reunified, stabilized, disciplined party, that is a party that before bringing about a convergence of the left first brought about a convergence of the Communists." Leaving aside the fact that for Vasquez Montalban the model for such a convergence is the Italian Communist Party or the PSUC of "the good old days," it is clear that the PCE would have to turn around its internal situation in order for such convergence to be a viable project.

However, the fundamental problem does not lie in the utopian character of such a convergence (which would involve the reintegration of the Gallego PC and respect for party discipline on the part of the Carrillo faction) but rather in its political content and the forces that are looked to for support. In fact, the social forces that are struggling against the PSOE government (which are called the

"social left" in Spain to distinguish them from the very weak "political left") are not going to identify themselves with the policy proposed and practiced by Iglesias. What he offers does not go beyond "opposition reformism," more or less tough in words but lacking the slightest firmness or decisiveness in deed, and maintenance of the particularly repulsive aspects of the PCE's traditional line — "anti-terrorism," strict respect for the army and for the king, etc. The PCE of Iglesias can improve its electoral scores, which are below the minimum, but it is in a poor state to fill the immense political vacuum that exists to the left of the PSOE.

The fundamental political difference the Carrillo faction holds with the Iglesias line is over what position to take toward the government. Carrillo says that the resurgence of the PCE can only come from systematic opposition to the government by the party in its own name. In particular, he opposes the party running in elections under any name but its own. As regards the need for systematically opposing the government, Carrillo has no lack of arguments. What he lacks is everything else.

To promote a recovery, you have to start on the movements that exist in fact and in some cases have a lot of strength, such as the anti-NATO movement, or the mobilizations against the industrial reconversions. You have to do real work in these movements to strengthen them and take advantage of opportunities to reach the level of generalization necessary to take on the government with a chance of winning.

The Carrillo faction is not doing anything like that, in particular in the Workers Commissions, which are its fundamental social base. The Metalworkers Federation, led by this faction, retreated at the crucial moment in the Sagunto struggle (3), when it was possible and necessary to move toward a general strike. Instead of doing that, it signed a bad agreement and condemned the struggle to defeat. The same thing looks as if it may happen in the struggle today in the shipbuilding industry.

Worse still, workers mobilizations are being manipulated as a consequence of the battle between the two factions of the PCE. On November 30, the Workers Commissions in Asturias, which are led by people close to Camacho, issued a call to struggle in a sectarian and ill-prepared way for the sole purpose of giving a boost to Gerardo Iglesias. The mobilization was a failure. On December 14 in Madrid, the Metalworkers Federation tried a similar operation, but in that case it was to give a boost to a public activity by its 'chief,' Carrillo. It is not hard to imagine the sort of negative effects such maneuvers will have on the workers movement.

The fundamental problem, both for Carrillo and for Iglesias, is that there is in practice scarcely any space for a "left reformist" line. At the moment, Carrillo is projecting a more anti-

imperialist language. He is making some positive references to the USSR. He is appealing to party patriotism against the "Liquidators." He has been making advances to the pro-Soviets, for the time being without getting any response. But there is nothing fundamental to distinguish the two of them from the program and strategy that provoked the crisis of the PCE. Therefore, the crisis will continue.

Who can gain from this crisis? In the long run, it may benefit Gallego's CP, but even that is not certain. In order precisely to try to win members from the PCE, since September the pro-Soviets have been conducting a very moderate policy, in particular in the workers movement, making as many compromises as possible with the sector led by Julian Ariza, who is linked to Iglesias, in the Workers Commissions.

Moreover, while there are undoubtedly very valuable activists among those joining Gallego, there are also "heads of clans" who have followed very tortuous political trajectories. And this is going to complicate the problems of political homogeneity that are already serious in this party.

In any case, the Gallego PC's electoral obsession, spurred by illusions about the possibility of repeating the Greek development (4), is a major obstacle to its evolving toward revolutionary positions. At the same time, all its emphasis on electoralism does not guarantee — quite to the contrary — that it will be able to gain entry into the exclusive club of the big parties.

When all is said and done, there is no use in speculating. The task for revolutionaries is first of all to understand the crisis of the PCE and to pursue the ideological battle against the demagogy that is flowing from its wounds, to take advantage of the new possibilities that have opened up for work in the mass movement, and to make specific alliances with this or that sector at the right moment. That is all.

The road to solving the grave problems of the left and the revolution in Spain does not lead through any of the wings of the feuding family of the PCE or a "convergence of Communists" without a communist policy. It leads through an extension of the anti-imperialist, anti-repression, and anti-war mobilizations and struggles and through building solidarity among working people. What is necessary is a convergence of these movements in action. It is in that way that the political and social forces can be built up to fill the empty space to the left of the PSOE. ■

3. For the history of this exemplary struggle, see "The Fight of the Sagunto Workers Against Industrial Reconversion," by Miguel Romero in *IV* No. 55, June 18, 1984.

4. In 1968, the Communist Party of Greece split. One faction, called the "Interior" were premature Eurocommunists. The other faction was a pro-Soviet one called the "Exterior." In the political battle that ensued between these two factions, the "Exterior" largely won out.

The spectacular decline of the French Communist Party

In July 1984, when the government of Laurent Fabius was formed, the French Communist Party (PCF) left the government in which it had participated since 1981 in the successive cabinets headed by Pierre Mauroy. Thus ended a stage in the party's history that saw a deepening of the crisis that affected every aspect of its policy and functioning. The PCF's electoral decline reached an unprecedented low. It was on the basis of an electoral defeat that the PCF accepted ministerial responsibilities in the first place, since in the June 1981 legislative elections, it got only 15% of the vote, as against 38% for the Socialist Party (PS).

Jean LANTIER

Three years later, on June 17, 1984, at the time of the elections for the European parliament, the fascistic organization, the National Front (FN) did almost as well as the PCF, both groups getting about 11% of the vote. But there is an aspect that is graver still in the crisis in the PCF's relationship with the working class. The plant cells, which have always been a key element of the base of the party are presently experiencing a decline in their public activity, their internal life, and their mass influence. And all these factors reduce the capacities of the PCF to organize and control the workers.

The crisis of the apparatus and the central leadership of the party is no less acute. Traditionally, the PCF has had an apparatus of 20,000 to 30,000 full-timers, which has been the backbone of the party and an effective instrument for squashing any tendency toward debate, or the emergence of any organized opposition. Today this apparatus has come under the blows of the crisis that is hitting the party. It is suffering first of all from a loss of posts and financial resources owing to the decline in the number of city governments held by the party, the number of party members, and the number of those who vote for its candidates.

Secondly, the apparatus is suffering from a loss of political effectiveness, because it is no longer able to decisively quash any public expression of opposition to the leadership. This was illustrated spectacularly by the unauthorized publication of the notes of Jean Kanapa (a member of the Political Bureau who died in 1978 and who had been the special secretary of former secretary general Waldeck-Rochet) dealing with the PCF's relations with Brezhnev and Dubcek during the Prague Spring in 1968. In fact, the group that carried out this operation was made up of PCF members.

(1) During the last plenum of the party Central Committee a previously un-

heard-of phenomenon occurred. In the vote on the draft resolution for the Twenty-Fifth Congress, scheduled for February 1985, there were six abstentions. Those who abstained included Pierre Juquin, a member of the Political Bureau and official spokesman of the party; Marcel Rigout, who was minister of training in the three Mauroy governments; and Felix Damette, a former specialist in revised Marxism assigned to helping the leadership with its pseudo-scientific political innovations.

Naturally, the PCF's electoral setbacks and its loss of influence in all areas deprive the leadership around Georges Marchais, the incumbent general secretary of the authority necessary to deal with the numerous expressions of opposition in the party. In the discussions going on in the PCF, it is the very future of the party that is at stake: its existence as a mass party is in the melting pot. Two prominent Communist intellectuals, Daniel Karlin and Tony Laine, have said that the PCF has to learn how to democratize its functioning or it will become simply the largest grouplet of the far left (2).

Finally, the PCF's political identity is affected by what historically is its outstanding feature, its special ties with the USSR. The PCF has chosen to give unconditional support to the intervention of the Soviet army in Afghanistan, just as it lined up with Jaruzelski at the time of the December 1981 crackdown in Poland. Among the masses of workers as well as among its own adherents, this total support for the USSR and Jaruzelski removes any credibility from the PCF's speeches about freedoms and about the "actually existing socialism" in the East European countries that it continues to defend. It also casts a shadow over the PCF's "socialism in the colors of France."

The PCF explains its present crisis as the delayed effect of two historic errors. The first of these was the resistance put up by Maurice Thorez — long time general secretary of the party, who loved to portray himself as "France's No. 1 Stalinist" — and by the party leadership at the time of the "de-Stalin-

ization" initiated at the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956. To back up this statement, the PCF's publishing house has recently published for the first time Khrushchev's report to the Twentieth Congress, the speeches of the 1956 leadership of the PCF (Duclos, Thorez, Frachon), and even a collection of texts by Leon Trotsky.

The second historic error, according to the PCF leadership, was to give priority for 25 years to unity with the Socialist Party alone, unity conceived of as a summit agreement between the two parties. The PS was always portrayed as capable of wanting to break with capitalism, which gave it a legitimacy that it was able to use to the detriment of the PCF.

The PCF always misses what is essential. In fact, the crisis cannot be explained as the result of these errors. It is the PCF itself that served as the stepladder for Mitterrand, when the latter was chosen as the single candidate of the left in the 1965 presidential elections. A politician who participated in every cabinet under the Fourth Republic, a figure in small formations representing the enlightened bourgeoisie, Mitterrand was backed by the PCF precisely to prevent a leader of the SFIO (French Section of the Workers International, the precursor of the PS) from becoming the common candidate of the left.

While the Seventeenth Congress of the PCF in 1964 had explicitly mandated the leadership to draw up a Common Program with the PS, the party leaders preferred to carry out a short-sighted operation, accepting Mitterrand as the candidate for the 1965 presidential elections. This enabled Mitterrand to serve as a shield for a Social Democracy discredited by its active participation in the Algeria war. At the time, the line of the PCF was that of a "united front among the parties that claim to represent the working class and unity of all republicans." (3) The goal was to eliminate the system of personal power by De Gaulle. The alliance with Mitterrand, in violation of the decisions of the congress, was sealed on the basis of a "feeling" against the Fifth Republic, against presidential power.

It was the PCF that took on the bulk of the campaign for the common candidate, who had no activist forces of his own. Mitterrand managed to force De Gaulle into a second-round vote. The PCF invested in this campaign the prestige it derived from having opposed the general's constitutional coup d'etat in

1. These notes have just been published in the book *Kremlin-PCF*, brought out by the Olivier Orban publishing house. The author named on the title page is "Jean Fabien", a collective pseudonym for the group of PCF members responsible for the work.

2. *Nouvel Observateur*, July 18, 1984.

3. Seventeenth Congress of the PCF: document cited in *Cahiers du communisme*, June-July 1964.

1958. Despite the Party's support for the bloody repression against the Hungarian workers councils in 1956, despite its rejection of the report on the crimes of Stalin, which it described as the report "attributed to Khrushchev," and despite its hiding behind a bourgeois candidate, it managed to escape from its isolation and introduce itself into the Fifth Republic's system of political alliances.

The prestige of having resisted De Gaulle also served as a protection for the PCF in May-June 1968, when nearly 10 million workers joined in a general strike. After first opposing the mobilization, the PCF and the country's biggest union confederation, the CGT, which it led, administered the strike in order to end it on the cheap in the deal that became known as the Grenelle Accords. While the mass movement was shouting its determination to throw out De Gaulle, the PCF was refusing to offer it a political solution based on mobilizing all the working people. De Gaulle was to write in his memoirs how much he owed to the CGT for its defense of the bourgeois order in France at that moment.

The PCF refused to recognize the power vacuum that existed for several days in May 1968 and to take advantage of it. To the contrary, it seized the first opportunity offered by De Gaulle, when he recovered from his panic, to divert the mass movement into the legislative elections, from which the right were the big gainers. The year 1968 was really a black one for the PCF because it was also the year of the Prague Spring. The note of "disapproval" sent by the party leadership to the CPSU after the intervention of the Warsaw Pact armies was quickly put out of mind by the same leaderships, retightening of control over the party, which was reflected in a reaffirmation of loyalty to the USSR.

After 1968, the PCF leadership devoted itself to building a credible political solution for the aspirations of the working class. But it did this in separation from any dynamic of social struggles, basing itself on elections and with the goal of regaining control of all the radicalized workers who had turned their backs on the party during the general strike. Despite all the blows the PCF suffered — the emergence of a strong far left and of the CFDT (which broke from Catholic unionism in 1964 and later was able to offer a trade-union alternative for those whose aspirations were aroused by May 1968) — the party was nonetheless able to win 21% of the vote in the 1969 presidential elections, when De Gaulle fell and Georges Pompidou came to power. At the same time, the SFIO, on the wane, got only 5% of the vote.

This sort of relationship of forces vis-a-vis the Social Democracy led the PCF to make an alliance with the renovated PS led by Mitterrand and the Left Radicals (a tiny bourgeois party). The result was the signing of the

Common Program of the Left in 1972.

The question of who was going to dominate this alliance arose immediately. In a book entitled *Ma part de verite*, which was published in paperback and thus by no means confidential, Mitterrand talked about his scheme for taking 3 million votes away from the PCF. He would ally himself firmly with this party because it had demonstrated its aptitude for class collaboration in 1968. He declared unambiguously his aim of building a new PS along his lines on the back of the PCF. (4)

In a report given in 1979 and kept secret up till 1975, Marchais pointed up the dangers this alliance held: "It is clear that the adoption of a Common Program and the perspective of a government in which the PS would play an important role will give the latter bases for its attempt to strengthen itself at our expense, if we fail to do what we have to do." (5)

Marchais must not have done what was necessary, because the PS moved ahead of the PCF in a series of legislative by-elections in October 1974. The immediate consequence of this was that in the Twenty-First (special) Congress of the PCF held in the same month the task given priority was to alert the party members about the dangers involved in the Union of the Left. But the effect of this was only to foster doubts inside and around the party about the sincerity of its commitment to the coalition.

Dictatorship of proletariat abandoned

On the programmatic level, the PCF's evolution brought it toward the PS, to such an extent that its own identity became obscured. While the Social Democracy was gaining the lead in the competition with the PCF, the latter publicly confirmed in 1976 what it had in fact done a long time ago. It formally abandoned the perspective of the dictatorship of the proletariat. This decision, along with the rejection of the term "Marxist-Leninist" and the adoption of the notion of "socialism in the colors of France", marked the start of a touching up of the documents. Over a series of congresses, especially the Twenty-Third in 1979 and the Twenty-Fourth in 1982, this provided the PCF with a reformist program close to that of the PS. Stalinism itself was condemned at these congresses. This evolution toward a more and more reformist course put the PCF in a position where it had difficulty differentiating itself from the PS.

In September 1977, the PCF split the Union of the Left, trying to prove that its positions were more radical than those of the PS. In fact, it sought to break the momentum of the coalition, which was leading the radicalized workers, in particular those who belonged to the unions, to step up their demands.

The breakup of the Union of the

Left, carried over into a division between the trade unions that persists today, led to the PCF reverting to the familiar anti-Social Democrat language. "There is no need for a political solution to win on the big social questions," the PCF and CGT leaders were to say. This was despite the fact that they themselves had explained before that "voting is struggle," that they themselves had subordinated mass actions against the right to the 1978 legislative elections, the last target of the Union of the Left.

Parallel to this, the PCF stepped up its "renovating" course, which destroyed any credibility for a split to the left from the alliance with the PS. Everything was abandoned — the Marxist theory of the state, the need for breaking from capitalism, the October revolution as a model, the working class as the fundamental class in society. The concept of breaking from capitalism was replaced by that of self-management.

Socialism was to be built without the prior destruction of the state, which the PCF no longer regarded as bourgeois. Management became a bosses' monopoly that had to be broken so that workers representatives could share in it alongside the bosses. The economic crisis became a vast plot by the French capitalists designed to sell out "Your industry" to foreign buyers. The defence of French industry became the central objective of the PCF. This phase of "sectarianism" toward the PS did not lead, therefore, to a return to "class struggle" language, quite the contrary.

The PCF entered the government in July 1981 in a position of weakness, after having campaigned against the PS. Subsequently, it endorsed all the government's austerity measures down to the last details. The party membership, from the ministers to rank-and-file trade-union activists were called upon to apply to the letter the principle of collective responsibility for the government. Before 1981, the party presented itself as the guarantor of the workers' interests in the Union of the Left, and then, starting in July 1981, it subordinated itself to the PS to the point of dropping any independent policy.

Afraid to come into conflict with the surge of unity that was reflected at the ballot boxes on May 10, 1981, the PCF fell into the tow of the PS. It had no choice. It had been aware of the Social Democrat trap since 1972, but it had no political means for escaping it. It became hopelessly caught, accepting all the government's anti-labor measures, such as attacks on social insurance and unemployment benefits, massive layoffs in the shipbuilding industry and in steel and coal, blocking wage increases followed

4. *Ma part de verite*, Francois Mitterrand, Fayard, Paris, 1969.

5. The report was published in the book of PCF leader Etienne Fajon, *l'Union est un combat*, Editions sociales, 1975.

by cuts in wages, the dismantling of the system of cost-of-living increases.

This policy followed by the PCF, which helped considerably to marginalize it, was aggravated by the choices the party made in international policy. In particular, the party twice demonstrated its loyalty to the CPSU, supporting the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan and Jaruzelski's crackdown. This avowed support for the CPSU played a large part in the PCF's loss of credibility in the eyes of working-class opinion. The combination of participating in the administration of capitalist austerity and support for the most repellent aspects of Stalinist repression led to the party losing in every sphere what remained of its prestige, which had already been declining for many years.

The official position, which attempts to explain the crisis of the PCF today as a consequence of the summit accord with the PS, does not stand up if you analyze the successive orientations adopted by the PCF since the start of the 1960s. Head-on opposition to the general strike in May-June 1968, the breakup of the Union of the Left in 1977, and a succession of zigzags did a good deal to discredit the party.

As for the celebrated "delay of 1956" (that is delay in recognizing the reality of Stalinism), that is at bottom only a diversionary explanation. Khrushchev reported Stalin's crimes, but the PCF rejected the indictment of the idol that it had helped to put on the pedestal. If, 28 years later, the PCF accepted these crimes, it was in order better to give its blessing to those committed by Stalin's successors in the Kremlin and in Warsaw.

The PCF is on the eve of its Twenty-Fifth Congress, which is to take place February 6-10, 1985. The gap between the leadership's preparatory document for this congress and the concerns of the masses of its adherents is striking. The main questions for the membership turn around the links with the USSR, the analysis of "actually existing socialism" in the East, the party's internal regime and democratic centralism, what attitude to take to the economic crisis and to the policy of the Fabius government.

Facing these questions, the leadership offers an introductory report whose essential function is to find a point of equilibrium within the leadership apparatus that will make it possible to avoid drawing a precise balance sheet of the past three years in government, to avert the deep-going debate that would result from that, and thus to block a challenge to the leadership grouped around Marchais, which has accumulated a damningly negative record.

Faithful to its tradition, the PCF leadership has no intention that any opposition should be able to develop within the party. From its standpoint, the party's most valuable assets are the cohesiveness of its apparatus and the

ability of the apparatus to back up the leadership in action. In the wake of the breakup of the Union of the Left in 1977, an opposition developed led by Henri Fiszbin, a member of the Central Committee and first secretary of the party's Paris federation. Its aim was to "renew" the party in the Italian sense of the term, that is, in line with the Italian party's Eurocommunist orientation.

Fiszbin expressed concern for salvaging the Union of the Left and demanded a democratic discussion. In July 1981, when the PCF leadership was finding its way back to the path of unity with the PS, he was expelled. Before "placing himself outside the party", according to the formula used by the leadership at the time, Fiszbin had started a bulletin called *Rencontres communistes*. It brought together, both inside and outside of the party, activists who had been involved with the party's former political weekly, *France Nouvelle*, which was liquidated because of dissident views in its staff after the breakup of the Union of the Left in 1977. The evolution of the current grouped around Fiszbin led to positions closer and closer to those of the PS.

PCF supports austerity

On May 10, 1981, the evening of the second round in the presidential elections, thousands of PCF members, as faithful Stalinists as you could find, did not vote for Mitterrand. For them accepting the turn meant by the electoral victory of the Union of the Left was out of the question. They had a presentiment of the negative consequences it would have for the party.

From 1981 to 1984, there was a continual debate in the party over the validity of having Communist ministers in the government, but it was carried on in a semi-official framework. The advantages accruing to the party from participation in the political leadership of the bourgeois state proved to be minute. On the other hand, every party member could see month after month that the PCF's endorsement of the austerity policy was progressively reducing the party's activity to nothing.

In the CGT, the challenge was raised essentially by activists loyal to the party leadership who wanted to oppose the government's austerity policy. So, in May 1984, two months before the PCF left the government, a national meeting of the CGT leadership, including the leaders of the industrial unions — practically all PCF members — showed an absolute majority for a general strike against the austerity policy being conducted by a government in which Communist ministers were involved.

At the rank-and-file level, the Communist activists in the CGT found themselves unable to defend their party's policy. A number of them found an out

in trade-union activity, which offered a refuge from the political disaster.

The bulk of the party activists got only a very temporary comfort from the PCF's departure from the government. "This is a green light for struggles," they thought. It did not take them long to recover from their illusions. No, the PCF out of the government did not break from the jumble of industrial counterplans, all of which placed themselves within the framework of administering the crisis. What is more, it expanded on them at length in national meetings of party structures, such as the cells in the nationalized enterprises, which represent 20% of the country's productive plant.

In the cells in regions that have become industrial deserts, in the cells facing attacks from the bosses, the PCF's line was subjected to wide-ranging and general criticism. The weekly *Revolution*, the successor of *France Nouvelle*, which was presented when it first appeared as a magazine for debate, reflected the discussions that took place in the regional leadership of the PCF in Lorraine, the area of the largest concentration of steel production.

Several members of the party's Central Committee, the former general secretary of the Communist Youth, leaders coming from plants expressed their concerns. The criticisms focused notably on the centralism of a by-gone age that remains in force in the party, on the fact that developing the political line of the party is reserved to members of the apparatus, on the unconditional support given to the USSR, and on the subordination of the party to the government.

A few days later, in September, the party's official spokesman, Pierre Juquin, challenged the taboo of "democratic" centralism and made a fervent appeal for a real debate. Then, former minister Marcel Rigout, one of the first to join the resistance during the second world war, expressed his regrets at the PCF leaving the government.

The September meeting of the Central Committee was marked by turbulent sessions. And for the first time, the party daily, *l'Humanite*, had to authorize Central Committee members to edit summaries of their contributions for publication later.

Finally, at the last meeting of the Central Committee, in November, the document opening the discussion for the next congress was not approved unanimously. The line proposed in the document was challenged by many speakers, in particular by the six abstainers already mentioned.

In the preceding debates that took place in the party, in particular at the time the commitment to the dictatorship of the proletariat was dropped in 1976 or after the breakup of the Union of the Left in 1977, the leading figures were often intellectuals, such as Althusser or Balibar. But this time there was a new development.

The discussion went through the



Georges Marchais at the Twenty-First Congress of the PCF. (DR)

apparatus and the party's working-class base, which was another reason for the party leadership doing everything possible to choke it off. Opening up a real discussion could have explosive consequences. If people once opened their mouths, the unity of the apparatus would be shattered.

Those who wanted an "Italian style" renewal of the party would run into direct conflict with a large part of the apparatus, in particular in the CGT, made up of unconditional supporters of special links with the USSR. Such a debate would have reverberations among the working-class rank-and-file, because the most clearly pro-Soviet leaders combine their loyalty to Moscow with radical anticapitalist talk about defending the workers demands.

The tack the party leadership took was to stand pat. But does the apparatus have the means to pursue its option? There is a force in the party that does not hesitate to turn to the non-party media to explain that it is necessary to take a "national" road to socialism in France, which would involve a break with the USSR.

Facing this operation, the network of pro-Soviet leaders and personalities built up by Jeannette Thorez-Vermeersch — widow of Maurice Thorez, a former member of the Political bureau, and an eminently authoritarian leader herself — reaches working-class and trade-union activists. The Marchais leadership seems incapable of keeping anything under control.

The PCF has already gone through "right" turns, which called for uniting the broad masses of working people behind a democratic, interclass program against fascism, as at the time of the Popular Front in 1938 or at the time of the "National Revival" after the second world war in 1945, or in 1965 against the personal power of De Gaulle.

The alliance with the PS was consummated in 1972 and again in 1981 on the explicit basis of a compromise involving the acceptance of a necessary stage of loyally administering the state apparatus in a way more in accordance with the social interest.

At its February 1985 Congress, the PCF will offer, as a new idea, the formula of "a new rallying of the majority of the people". What does this mean? It means not closing the door to a coalition with the PS but no longer making this the party's sole perspective. It means not rejecting a broader alliance based on the defense of French industry against the attacks of foreign firms. It means, case by case, building a broad front (elected officials of all hues, merchants and artisans, managers of small and medium-sized enterprises) around the defense of businesses threatened with closure in order to achieve an acceptable compromise.

This orientation got its first application in the Toulon shipyards, where the right and its elected officials marched in a workers procession, to the great chagrin of the strikers. This course is distinguished by its failure to offer any central political focus. There is no governmental formula, and in fact this question is not posed. It is, therefore, logical that the economic struggles led by the PCF or its proposals for alternative industrial solutions will turn endlessly like screws in a capitalist system from which the party no longer proposes any break.

The objective of this policy is to gain a foothold in industrial management. It is to reduce the social costs of reconversion, the need for which is not challenged. The supreme objective would be to get the bosses to invest at the same time in job creation, in the introduction of new technology, in improving competitiveness in harmony with increasing the number of jobs.

The example cited by Philippe Herzog, the PCF's chief economist and a member of the Political Bureau, in a letter addressed to the management of the automobile companies — not to the party organizers but to those of the capitalist hierarchy — was that of Fiat! To be sure, Philippe Herzog admits that the president of Fiat, Gianni Agnelli, has carried out layoffs. But, he adds, Agnelli has repatriated production processes that had been done abroad, he has recentered Fiat's activity in Italy with remarkable results. And in particular, he made a very

special observation for the French bosses, "Agnelli has put money into the operation".

What matter the *cassa integrati* (6), the victims of the 1980 defeat for the workers at Fiat? What matter the ousting of the most militant workers and the least productive ones, those worn out by decades on the job? The big boss has invested, and that is all that matters.

So, even before the PCF national congress, the CGT and the party are holding more and more meetings and playing up industrial schemes for "good" reconversions, "good" vocational education, making geographical mobility easier to impose on the workers, and increasing the competitiveness of French enterprises.

Such a line has two objectives that are linked to the leadership's option of standing pat. The first is to press the PCF members not to act except within the confines of immediate trade-union demands. Moreover, such demands should be justified by the increase in productivity they would mean if they were implemented.

It is clear enough that such an orientation excludes the perspective of a general strike and of building for such an action by unifying demands and struggles focused on jobs and wages. This is a return to the line adopted in 1977, after the breakup of the Union of the Left, which did not make it possible for the mass movement to organize to confront the central power.

The second objective itself reveals a real choice made by the present leadership of the PCF. Falling back on itself, saving what it can save, this leadership is waiting for the PS to discredit itself by having to take sole responsibility for the government. Then, it believes, a new situation would open up, making possible a reshuffling of the cards and the fading of the memory of the cycle initiated by the Common Program in the post-May 1968 period. This line cannot rally the party's working-class base nor even the apparatus for any length of time. Its sole advantage is that it offers the CGT a greater margin of maneuver to try to tap the discontent of the workers so as to rebuild its forces depleted by the support it gave to the government when the PCF was still participating in it.

The democratic aspirations revealed by the struggles and the demands that have been raised are sustained by a rejection of the sort of "socialism" the PCF identifies with, the socialism of Chernenko and Jaruzelski. Whatever price it has to pay for this with respect to public opinion, the PCF remains faithful to the "fatherland of socialism".

Of course, in the party's magazines, the October revolution is portrayed as a model for taking power that was over-generalized by Lenin, as the abandon-

6. "Cassa Integrati," laid-off workers paid out of a compensation fund, the "Cassa Integrazione."

ment of the dictatorship of the proletariat requires. In these same articles, which in are vogue on the eve of the Twenty-Fifth Congress, the PCF recognizes even that the socialist countries suffer from social conflicts, which is a shocking revision for a number of activists. Likewise, the enlightened spirits in the apparatus recognize Stalin's crimes and the deficiencies of democracy in the East European countries. But there is still a long way to go from that to writing the epitaph for the special relationship with the CPSU.

A clear break is impossible. It would lead immediately, as has been seen in many other parties in capitalist Europe, to the emergence of factions based on support for the USSR. To protect the USSR, the PCF is thus obliged to do a tight-rope act that borders on the grotesque.

The present decline of the PCF is unprecedented in the party's history. While it has experienced periods of retreat in the past, they corresponded to defeats for the working class. This time, to the contrary, the PCF's electoral decline and its loss of credibility and influence in the working class accelerated while the working class was showing its determination at the ballot box to get rid of the right. These negative developments have continued to deepen since.

To compensate for its setback, the Communist Party cannot shift into a phase of promoting struggles, without running the risk of setting in motion mobilizations that would go over its head. A prisoner of its need to maintain the internal equilibrium required for unity and survival of the apparatus, the PCF can only organize its retreat on the basis of what remains of its influence. It may be able to stem the decline in membership and the fall in its vote, but it has few means at its disposal for regaining its influence in the working class.

However, the Social Democracy is unable to profit from this critical situation. Bearing virtually the entire responsibility for the government itself, it is experiencing processes similar to those from which the PCF is suffering among its base of electoral supporters and activists.

In the not very distant future, the activists who challenge the PCF's present line will express themselves most clearly in the CGT. A number of them are waiting to see what happens at the Twenty-Fifth Congress to decide about their membership in the PCF. An accentuation of the present chauvinist course, playing up industrial counterplans cast in the framework of administering the crisis, the defense of "properly understood" profit, and all this linked to maintaining strict centralism and loyalty to the USSR — that is not a very attractive combination for the rank-and-file activists who are looking for a different sort of response to the problems of their party's decline. ■

ITALY

The PCI after Berlinguer

At least three events occurred in 1984 to make it an important year in the recent history of the Italian Communist Party (PCI). Firstly, the Party had to contend with the extraordinary struggle launched by the factory councils against the government decrees on the sliding scale of wages. Secondly, there was the death of Enrico Berlinguer, the general secretary of the Communist Party, who led and directed it in one of the most difficult decades of its history. And finally, there were the results of the European elections last June, which marked a real triumph for the Communist Party, placing it first in the country, ahead even of Christian Democracy (DC).

Elettra DEIANA

1984 also marked a sharp turn to the left by the PCI. In the recent period it has opted for a much clearer and more radical policy of opposition than in the past. This was especially the case in the campaign of obstruction carried out by the PCI in parliament against the Craxi government's decree on the sliding scale (1) and afterwards with the referendum initiative (2) for recovery of the four index points lost when the decree was made law. Without a shadow of a doubt these were very different decisions from the ones which its members and public opinion alike had learned to expect from the PCI over the years of the policy of national unity from 1976 to 1979 and, following that, in the long phase of 'constructive opposition' to various governments.

Parliamentary obstruction, which as a tactic had been forgotten for decades (the last great campaign of obstruction by the PCI was in 1953), along with the referendum for restoration of the lost index points are both initiatives that contrast strongly with the fetishisation of bourgeois institutions, of parliamentary sovereignty, and with the strict observation of the formal rules of democracy that have characterised the PCI up till now. The recourse to a referendum, in particular, taken on other occasions by the Radical Party or by Democrazia Proletaria (DP) or in other areas by the right-wing, has always been looked on with suspicion by the PCI. In fact referendums were even openly condemned as a means of corrupting and exploiting the 'fight for democratic policies'.

The accusation thrown at the PCI today by the Confindustria (the Italian bosses organisation), the government and the most moderate wing of the trade-union movement are all, for good reasons, of the same ilk. Nowadays, something seems to have destroyed the continuity of direct class collaboration practised by the PCI for so many years. Not surpris-

ingly, the attacks on it aim to call the PCI to order and to warn of the possible constitutional chaos and political confusion that the referendum could bring in its wake.

These were the arguments that the PCI used to present to its members and to the working class more generally to get them to swallow the worst aspects of its policies. But now the PCI had no other choice.

After engaging in months of exhausting negotiations with the three union confederations in an attempt to get agreement on certain restrictions of the sliding scale, the government was confronted last February with the decision of the CGIL to break off the talks. (The CGIL is the main trade-union confederation in industry. It is close to the PCI, but also includes Socialist and far-left members.)

The presiding committee of the cabinet, in the hands of the Socialist Party, with the agreement of all the other parties in the government (3) decided to go ahead with issuing a decree that removed eight points from the 1984 index. By this initiative, the Craxi government sought to achieve three objectives. It wanted to attack the sliding scale in accordance with the wishes of Italian employers who had been trying to do this for three or four years. It wanted to install a new system of relations with the trade-union movement in order to show that it could put a stop to the long period of exhausting mediation, neg-

1. This decree, adopted in February 1984 limited the recovery of wages in relation to inflation to 60 per cent for the year 1984. Furthermore it worked retro-actively. As a result, the four index points due from the last part of 1983 were suppressed. See *International Viewpoint* No. 51, April 23, 1984.

2. The Italian constitution provides the right for citizens to propose a referendum to overturn a law voted in parliament.

3. The present Italian government headed by the socialist, Bettino Craxi, comprises five parties: Christian Democracy, the Socialist Party (PSI), the Social Democratic Party (PSDI), the Republican Party (PRI) and the Liberal Party (PLI).

otiations and conflicting vetos that had characterised relations between the social partners. It wanted also to marginalise the left opposition and above all the PCI.

The reaction of the Communist Party was first of all to respond to the political project behind the Craxi decree. It showed that contrary to the hopes of the government and the Confindustria, the PCI commanded a huge organisational capacity in the country and an equally large social weight. But there was more to it than that.

The response of the PCI would not have been nearly as radical, at least in form, if the concern of the ruling group to safeguard the position and prestige of the party had not been reinforced by strong pressure from the base. The initiative came from the factory councils, from the most class-conscious sections of the CGIL apparatus, from the worker militants of the PCI and from several thousand factory delegates little inclined to let the government get away with making such a show of force. The Craxi decrees provoked a reflex action and mobilisation throughout the country. This movement both preceded and strongly influenced the parliamentary battle of the PCI.

Saint Valentine decree

Certain facts must be briefly recalled here in relation to the PCI's need to come to grips with a mass movement of enormous scope characterised by a strong tendency towards self organisation.

In the autumn of 1983 central negotiations were opened up between the unions, the Confindustria and the government with the aim of reaching an agreement on the sliding scale. In the minds of the government and the bosses it was simply a matter of further undermining the index mechanism in exchange for a few promises on employment and taxes. An extremely negative agreement, 'the Scotti accords' named after the then employment minister had been signed a year before by the social partners.

In this manner, according to the schema worked out by Craxi and the Confindustria the way would be open for the complete collapse of what was left of the 1975 sliding scale agreement. (4)

The CISL (the trade union confederation linked to Christian Democracy) and the UIL (the federation linked to the Social Democrat Party and the Socialist Party) immediately declared themselves willing to throw out the sliding scale completely. The CGIL, which was also represented at the negotiating table, whilst pretending to cooperate began little by little to harden its position and to insist on demanding more and more substantial guarantees and concessions from the government in exchange for the sacrifice of a part of the sliding scale.

Finally towards the middle of February, the CGIL withdrew from the neg-

otiations protesting against the attitude of the government but without giving clear marching orders to the workers. The other parties present never concluded an agreement. In fact, according to the Federal Pact that the CGIL, the CISL and the UIL had made ten years before, no agreement is valid unless it is signed by all of the three trade union confederations. The CSIL and the UIL were not prepared to take the responsibility of signing a separate agreement of such significance with the government. However, with their explicit endorsement, the government authorised the decree mentioned above, known as the Saint Valentine decree because it was made public on February 14, 1984.



Enrico Berlinguer. (DR)

The government's action sent shock waves throughout the Italian trade-union movement: the profound crisis in the United Federation was evidenced on this occasion in all its depth and irreversibility. From that day onwards, the more moderate sections of the union coalition and the leaderships of the CISL and the UIL as a whole had a perfect way of showing that the unitary path was impractical, and that from now on it was everyone for themselves.

The decision by the majority of the CSIL to withdraw from the negotiations created deep divisions, which have not yet been overcome, between the Communist component who were the main movers behind this decision, and the Socialist component, which completely supported the government's line.

The upshot of these events was that a vacuum was created in trade-union activity which the factory councils were able to fill. In this situation, the decisions and political behaviour of the worker and trade-union cadres of the PCI carried a decisive weight. They exercised an influence in the CGIL apparatus and outside it, in rank-and-file trade-union structures, amongst the workers and of course in the PCI.

In the CGIL bureaucracy several major contradictions began to emerge. On the

one hand there was a fear that they would come out of any conflict with the government with the role of the union badly weakened (the process had already begun in the preceding years). Most of all there was a fear that the CGIL would be politically marginalised. On the other hand, there was a strong pressure from the intermediary cadres most directly in contact with the base or who had a left-wing tradition. Those sections with a strong tradition of struggle in particular large sections of the FIOM (the engineering section of the CGIL) played a vital role in preventing the National Secretariat from signing the agreements on the sliding scale with the government. The CGIL leadership was even more afraid of increasing the tensions between itself and its working class base when it witnessed, during the long drawn out negotiations in Rome, the growth of the movement for self-organisation of the most militant workers through the self-convened assemblies. Affecting all the major towns this movement was expressed in city-wide assemblies of factory councils, in the regions and nationally, outside the structures of the union. The initiatives came from groups of factory councils or from one, particularly important, factory council.

In the course of this movement, there were two national meetings of the factory councils and a limited national coordination functioning between January and April. PCI members played a decisive role in taking initiatives, in organisational support and in political defence, as well as in the practice of 'auto-convocation' through which the unfolding strikes developed.

Differences on tactical considerations, on questions of orientation and on the various options open to them thus came to the surface among the PCI's worker militants. Some saw the self-organisation of the councils as a necessary step on the road to changing the union in order to give more room for action at the base. Others, on the contrary, were afraid that the councils had too much autonomy. This latter group agreed with the CGIL leadership and saw the councils movement as merely a tactical expedient for getting to grips with the situation ensuing from the crisis of the United Federation and to overcome as quickly as possible the internal contradictions in the CGIL between the Communists and the Socialists.

In other areas, but with the same objectives, the leadership of the CGIL and the PCI found themselves in agreement on the need to ride this movement and become its unique exponent at the trade-union as well as on the political and institutional level, in order to retake the initiative. This would reinforce their role, which had been threatened by the government's manoeuvre. For

4. This agreement improved on the sliding scale system by extending it and unifying the system of indexation for all categories of workers.

them it was a question, and this is what actually happened in the end, of wearing this movement out. They sought to deny it the possibilities for autonomy and self-organisation that were already underway. They had to prevent an uncontrollable social and political dynamic from developing. The PCI and the CGIL formally adopted the demands of the movement for the withdrawal of the decrees and for focusing on jobs. This was the most effective means of controlling the movement and of depriving it of its legitimacy in the eyes of the workers since in this way the CGIL and the PCI took the place of the factory councils which had traditionally taken the initiative in mass mobilisations. The fact remains that here they had to tackle a political and social phenomenon of enormous scope which put their credibility as an opposition party and as the main force on the left on the line, in front of millions of workers. The strength, determination and potentialities of this movement were manifestly very powerful. On the other hand, the CGIL had also great difficulty in giving a satisfactory response that would both harness and neutralise the movement's potential without causing splits in the long run. The PCI was therefore forced to become directly involved in the battle and throw all its strength and prestige into the balance.

In reading the PCI press in the last few months one would think that it really had had a change of heart in relation to factory councils and 'movementism'. But it was only a change of circumstance. In reality, the fact that the PCI put all its political and organisational resources into this fight was just to make it easier to take the political initiative away from the factory councils and the delegates and to deprive their actions of political legitimacy. The battle was no longer to be fought on the terrain of self-organisation or coordination of the factory councils or through strikes of a limited character. Now the important thing was to get one million people to Rome on March 24, 1984, something only the powerful apparatus of the PCI and the CGIL could do. Now it was a question of challenging the government in the parliamentary arena.

As a result, the government's anti-working class provocation was partially defeated when it was shown politically that an opposition to the government and a left one at that, actually existed and had to be taken into account. However, the workers lost less than anticipated because of the manoeuvres the Communist Party were able to pull. After the first decree was defeated in parliament, because of the PCI's obstruction, the government presented another one, which limited the blocking of the index to one six-month period. Thus it stole only four points instead of eight from the workers. This time the PCI gave up any thought of putting up a tough fight.

The PCI had, thus, accomplished a

grand stroke. It had proved that it was capable of great factual flexibility in its relations with the mass movement. It had managed to get its leading group as a whole to fall uniformly into step behind the tactic of obstruction, which had threatened to provoke irreparable splits. The PCI National Secretariat, in particular Berlinguer, had followed the activity of the parliamentary group step by step to make sure that the obstructionist tactic was correctly applied. It is well known that several Communist MPs and senators were not in favour of this action. But the fact that the struggle was, in the end, waged by everyone together strengthened the credibility of these leaders in the eyes of the members, of the left-wing electorate and in the eyes of the public as a whole.

The wave of feeling following the death of Berlinguer, which occurred several weeks after the March 24 mass demonstration and right in the middle of the European election campaign, gave the PCI once again a unique opportunity to assert itself. In an atmosphere of upturn in party activity, this helped to bring about a huge success in the June 17 elections.

But these points in the PCI's favour at the beginning of 1984 did not by any means resolve all the problems facing the party. On the contrary, in one way they made it more difficult to find a lasting solution.

National unity

Three basic elements are combined in the political choices facing the PCI.

— The reformist strategy which accepts the framework of the capitalist system, both on the level of the economy and in social relations, as well as on the level of political institutions. This strategy objectively entered a crisis a long time ago, following the disastrous effects of the economic crisis and the austerity policy adopted by various bourgeois governments. The extreme crisis of the regime and of the Christian Democracy gave rise, in successive waves, to the emergence of the so-called moral question. (5) But the PCI never challenged the capitalist regime: they were happy to adapt the demands and hopes of the working masses to the system, using the lowest kind of trickery for the purpose.

— Strong tensions in the activist base of the party. The PCI appears to be in good shape if you look at it from the electoral point of view. And despite some setbacks, in the course of the last few years it has achieved a certain stability. This is all the more true if you compare its ratings to the much lower ones of the other European Communist Parties. But this electoral stability, this political standing, this room for manoeuvre in relation to the mass movement, exist alongside big internal tensions, real political differences and conflicting pressures that build up and

explode on certain occasions, as happened last year in the case of the factory councils movement.

This means that the PCI is forced to make tactical readjustments, as was the case in the movement for the sliding scale and as will certainly be the case in the future.

— The PCI has drawn a negative balance sheet of the experience of national unity and the more comprehensive theory of the historic compromise. The failure of this experiment and the lack of any alternative perspective to put to the mass of workers and the electorate has reduced the PCI's role to the somewhat hazardous one of trying to 'freeze' the energy of the masses. This has already brought many problems and contradictions, and it is a key element in understanding the current choices facing the PCI.

The PCI is very much aware that the path of the alliance with DC is no longer practicable. The struggle of the last few years and the hopes that so many sections of society now place in the PCI (not only sections of the working class but also of the petty bourgeoisie) were evidenced in the electoral successes of 1975 and 1976. This was the time when the PCI decided to put into practice the theory of the historic compromise that had been worked out a few years previously. Thus, they found themselves part of a united national majority that supported a Christian Democratic government following the 1976 legislative elections. In these elections, the PCI made huge gains, whilst the bourgeois parties, especially the DC were in deep crisis.

The depth of the economic crisis, which began to become obvious at that time; the strength of the mobilisations and the lessons of Chile all convinced the PCI that it was not enough just to re-route the mass movement: it had to be stopped altogether. For the next few years the PCI seemed to be going along without mishap on this road. The PCI project definitely had some strong points: in Italy it had achieved electoral success; on the continent it had the prestige of the ruling group and especially of the general secretary, Enrico Berlinguer, with his theory of Eurocommunism and the so-called third road. But a crisis awaited it at the next turning.

In the 1979 legislative elections and in the local elections the following year, the PCI was in danger of falling into an irreversible decline. Sometime before, the ruling group had already drawn the lessons of the disillusion of its members and of the popular masses with the national unity strategy. The withdrawal of the PCI from the national unity majority went back as far as the Autumn of 1978.

5. At regular intervals, after big scandals the PCI always relaunched its campaign on the 'moral question' with the aim of showing that all the ills which beset Italy stem from the absence of integrity of its bourgeois leaders, forgetting to mention that such leaders are only a by-product of a regime based on exploitation and profit.

It was an empirical exit dictated mainly by a concern not to worsen relations with the whole sections of workers. This comes out explicitly in the theses for the Fifteenth Congress of the PCI in 1979. Here the difficulties encountered in relation to the unions and the FGCI (Federation of Young Communists) were underlined. The theses stated clearly that the party was facing serious problems 'in maintaining and consolidating, in a permanent way, and at each phase of the struggle, relations with all the different sections of the working population.' However, the correction of this orientation and the identification of the project of national unity as a major cause of the failure of the PCI's policies and of their electoral setbacks were not immediately forthcoming.

Berlinguer speaks out

The theses of the Fifteenth Congress spoke of the difficulties and tensions between workers and the PCI, but without explaining the causes. It was to be more than a year and a half before the PCI abandoned the strategy of the historic compromise completely. Enrico Berlinguer, the main theoretician of this strategy also presided over its burial. He did so in a famous interview given to the daily *La Repubblica* on June 28, 1980, in which he stated that 'After the legislative elections in 1979, we ran the risk of a defeat that would have brought us to our knees. Not so much through losing our say in things, although this is important, but rather, in another way: through the governments of national unity, we lost our direct and consistent contact with the masses. I can assure you that we will not enter into an experiment of this kind again.'

At the end of 1980, an official party document came from the leadership with a full correction. It said; 'Christian Democracy has shown itself incapable of bringing about the moral stabilisation of the state ... It is the task of the PCI to be the promoters and guarantors of a government that expresses and galvanises the superior energies of Italian democracy and draws competent and honest people together from all the different parties as well as from outside them.' It was in this way that the phase of the 'democratic alternative' was launched. This was a semi-strategic, semi-tactical concept that was different from the historic compromise but remained within the more general framework of the strategy of class collaboration practiced by the PCI. This perspective, elaborated by Berlinguer on several occasions is one of a multi-class government of 'honest people and true', of a government that can bring together people who may not be from the left but who would remain faithful to the constitution of the republic.

The break with the strategy of a special relationship with Christian Democracy was followed up with several more or less thorough self-criticisms of

the years of national unity. This in itself is symptomatic of a certain malaise brought on by the new policy in the party. There was no question of a linear break or of the beginning of a profound struggle to define the objective conditions for an alternative to Christian Democracy, in the class collaborationist form envisaged by the PCI.

The return to opposition did signify a partial change of the policies of the PCI in relation to subsequent governments. A certain workerist language from Berlinguer during periods of heightened class tension as for example in autumn 1980 during the Fiat struggle, was the evidence of an attempt to mend the divisions opened up in the years of national unity between the PCI and large sections of workers. At the same time, the attitude to the PSI became more critical, especially when the line of the new secretariat led by Bettino Craxi was confirmed and after this party was returned to government.

But the tougher stance of the PCI towards the government was in words only. The substance of the austerity line, theorised by Berlinguer in the period of national unity was not challenged in the following period. With great stubbornness, the workers were led down a dead end of 'sacrifices in exchange for jobs and increases in productivity.' In the name of this line, the PCI endorsed and justified and made others swallow the most anti-working class plans included in the austerity policies of the various bourgeois governments.

The need for an alternative

This defeat at Fiat in the autumn of 1980 had an important effect on the Turin workers movement and had some nasty consequences for the trade-union movement on a national level. This defeat was made possible because the PCI, whilst making a lot of noise in favour of workers in struggle, did nothing, in reality in the union, at a national level or in parliament to stop this attack on the workers by the boss of Fiat, Agnelli.

On the contrary, the PCI used its prestige and influence to force the acceptance of the infamous agreement — the Cassa Integrazione (6) under which 23,000 workers were laid off and have not returned to the factory. This agreement provoked anger among one of the key groups of workers in the country.

The same reasoning was applied to the sliding scale, which the bosses and the government had targetted since 1980 and which the workers had been defending with great tenacity for a long time. The PCI contributed resolutely on the ideological level and concretely, to break the 'taboo' of the sliding scale. In this way they disarmed the workers and gave the enemy the advantage.

As far as the question of government and the need for an alternative goes, the PCI has confined itself to general propaganda without any political cutting

edge. It is only on certain occasions that are especially explosive that a fighting alternative has been put forward. To take, for example, the emphasis the PCI placed on denouncing the Christian Democrats' mismanagement of the disasters brought on by the terrible earthquake which hit the Southern population in the autumn of 1980. On this occasion, the PCI was forced to say that 'nothing will ever be the same as before' and that the moral issues involved demanded a fundamental fight for an alternative.

On other occasions, the moral issue (such as the web of scandals and the consequent impotence of the regime typical of bourgeois administration in Italy) has constrained the PCI to adopt harder positions in the fight against the government and for a real alternative. But up until this year, it amounted to no more than a bit of noise to remind the public that the party was still there.

In the course of the last year and in particular in the last few months, the theme of an alternative seems to be coming to the fore again in the party's propaganda and in its internal debates. This element, when added to the general description at the beginning of the article, permits a greater understanding of the actual problems that the party faces and the direction it may go. Several factors come together here. The election results not only raised the PCI to the position of first party in the country, they also showed clearly the failure of Craxi's project. The possibility of building a strong Socialist Party does not exist in Italy today. It is not possible to build a party whose function would be to balance between the PCI and the Christian Democracy (as Craxi had hoped) nor a PSI based on the so-called secular alternative (PLI, PRI, PSDI) which would govern by isolating the left opposition. The electoral stagnation of Craxi's party, occurring at the same time as the reorganisation of the Christian Democracy shows the fragility of this scheme for a governmental alternative. The Communist factor remains key in the relationship of forces between the classes.

At the same time there is a deepening crisis of the regime, with increasing centrifugal pressures on the social bloc on which Christian Democracy's power has been based for decades. On the one hand, there are scandals and corruptions. On the other, there is the need for capitalism to attack middle layers of society and the petty bourgeoisie, as well as the working class, in order to be able to reaccumulate capital.

The conflict that has opened up recently over the government's proposals on taxation (drawn up by a Republican minister), which attempts to introduce certain very limited measures of control on the income of small traders, demon-

6. Cassa Integrazione: indemnification of workers who are laid off.

strates without any doubt the depth of the crisis facing the regime.

The need for capital to strike at certain sections of the middle classes who are traditional stalwarts of Christian Democracy opens up enormous contradictions, not only within the government but also within traditional alliances. If the Christian Democracy shows itself incapable of defending the privileges of certain sectors which it itself has created and provided for, for decades, it is inevitable that poor election returns will result. It is no accident that the Craxi government has found itself on the edge of the precipice several times in the last few weeks because of the tax issue. Contradictory interests, such as the desire for capitalist rationalisation on the part of the PRI versus the conservatism of Christian Democracy, have come out here. At the same time, the social bloc on which Christian Democracy rests is polarised around different positions, the consequence of which is the destruction of any kind of stability.

The small traders' strike against the tax proposals on October 29, the belligerent tone of their statements against the government and the trade-unions, which, with remarkable political short-sightedness, support the republican minister's measures, all illustrate a possible dynamic toward the break up of social stability such as has never been seen before.

At the same time the moral issues have also shaken up both the government and the more general equilibrium of society. The most recent illustration of this was the 'Andreotti affair', concerning a key personality within Christian Democracy. Andreotti was implicated very heavily in all the worst scandals of the regime (involving the Masonic Lodge P2, the Mafia etc.) (7)

Alliance of producers

In this framework, the PCI tried to believe and to make workers believe that its alternative proposal could constitute the pivot for new political alliances, new social blocs and a positive outcome to the crisis. In order to understand this, it is sufficient to follow the particular numerous statements put out by the PCI leaders in the last few months and reiterated by the new general secretary, Natta, in an interview in the weekly *La Repubblica* on 29 September, 1984. The PCI is hoping for a 'secular' alliance against Christian Democracy. Such an alliance must be supported by a further 'alliance of producers' that is between fair-minded employers and the working class. The 'alliance of producers', an old theme of the PCI's is being campaigned around with great insistence today, because the PCI is obliged more than ever, with the deepening of the crisis, to define precise political goals.

However, the PCI proposals are invalidated by internal contradictions. The first of these is that it is not possible to

reconcile the PCI's turn to the left with the relaunching of a governmental alternative. Both those perspectives spring from the accentuation of the crisis, but they correspond to antagonistic demands on the party. On the one hand, there is the need not to grow apart from the masses. And on the other, there is the need to maintain links with the bourgeoisie.

Mobilisations of the masses are of no use to the PCI in trying to get the 'alliance of producers' on the road. For, in reality there is a latent war going on between the so-called producers, which could break out into the open at any moment. The party's honouring its commitment to the working class would mean antagonisms that would explode with great violence as they did last winter. The PCI does not want this. It is not surprising then that after the return to work in September, in order to avoid social repercussions, the party endorsed the CGIL leadership's document, which virtually abandons the sliding scale. This document passes over the whole issue of a referendum on the restoration of the four index points, and takes an essentially passive stance toward processes that are developing rapidly and threatening thousands and thousands of jobs in virtually all areas.

This does not of course mean that if a big movement were to develop at the base, as was the case last year with the factory councils, that the PCI would not attempt to take the leadership of it. It simply means that such a choice does not conform to the strategy for a democratic alternative that the PCI is elaborating and for which the leading group in the party has to draw up more precise proposals than they have done in the past.

There is a further weakness. It is the illusion that has existed for many years that in Italy it is possible to separate income and profit. This goes hand in hand with the notion that is possible to stop speculation, parasitism, the Mafia, the Camorra (the Neapolitan mafia), and the sinister forces within the state apparatus linked to the Christian Democracy, by pandering to the forces within capitalism and advocating an alliance between these forces and the workers movement. This perspective has no structural, objective or political basis. The link between income and profit is in fact one of the inherent elements of Italian capitalism. Moreover, according to the PCI, the bosses should get rid of the only instrument of leadership they have at their disposal, Christian Democracy, and replace it with the Communist Party. This is absolutely impossible. The project of a secular social pole of attraction having failed, the Italian bourgeoisie are obliged to put their trust in Christian Democracy.

There is a further consideration to be taken into account: the struggle against Christian Democracy that the PCI will have to wage in order to flesh out its alternative perspective will, in the first

instance, draw together all the discontent and all the hopes of the working class, it could become a factor of social opposition and political instability that would be difficult to control, not only for the workers but even for those forces who look to Christian Democracy. The small businessmen's strike on October 29, is only one example of what could happen in Italy if Christian Democracy really found itself in the eye of the storm.

And if there is one thing that the PCI fears above all else and that they would do anything to avoid, it is precisely the break-up of the existing stability.

The position that the new PCI general secretary has inherited will not be easy to manage. Natta is doing it by situating himself in a line of continuity with Berlinguer, on the one hand, giving his backing to the new strategy for a democratic alternative, and on the other, looking for a way to maintain a direct dialogue with the working class. The adroitness that Berlinguer demonstrated on more than one occasion is certainly one of the most important ingredients for the success of the PCI. But the problems are still there and are bound to increase.

The decision of the PCI to place themselves on the left inside the trade union movement, against the Craxi decrees has certainly prevented splits and oppositions of any great scope from emerging. But it has not neutralized the process of differentiation that is becoming typical of the activity of the worker militants and Communists inside the trade unions in the factories and at a local level. From now on party discipline will count for little or nothing in the unions. Contradictory votes and proposals are nowadays a constant feature. Moreover, during the big movement of factory councils, the PCI had to pose as the direct representative of the workers, over the head of a union in crisis that could no longer play its role in channelling the pressure from the base. It was therefore forced to find its own solution to the problem through the parliamentary struggle, and it will do this increasingly in the future. For, as the social and political crisis deepens and as the structural crisis of the economy continues, political forces will play a preponderant role, taking precedence over trade-union ones. Therefore growing tensions and contradictions are apt to build up the pressure on the party. This is in a context, moreover, in which the party's waiting game, its stand-pat attitude, the policy of "freezing" the mass movement that it adopted after the end of its national unity policy, will run up against acute political, constitutional, and governmental problems. ■

7. Suspected of having helped the Mafioso banker, Sindona, to leave Italy to escape charges following his spectacular bankruptcy, Andreotti had to defend himself in front of parliament and managed once again to get round the problem. Several parliamentary groups were demanding his resignation from the post of foreign affairs minister.

Open warfare in the CPGB

The Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) is undergoing its most serious crisis since 1956. Just one year after its thirty-eighth congress, described as 'outstandingly successful and inspiring ...' by its national secretary, Gordon McLennan, the faction fight within the party has reached breaking point.

On the one side are the 'eurocommunists' who now control the Party's Executive Committee (EC), its apparatus and its theoretical journal Marxism Today (MT). On the other, are 'fundamentalists' grouped around Tony Chater and the party's daily, the Morning Star, which he edits.

Since the following article was written in December, 1984, events in the CPGB have taken a new and decisive turn. At its January meeting the Executive of the party expelled the editor, Tony Chater, the assistant editor, David Whitfield and four other members of the London District Committee: a special national congress of the party has been called for May 18, 19, 20.

Mick ARCHER

The CPGB has never been a mass party. Whereas many of its counterparts in Western Europe arose from splits in the mass social democratic parties, the CPGB was formed in 1920 through the unification of a number of small propaganda groups. Up until the British General Strike of 1926 it experienced a modest growth in membership to 10,730. With the defeat of the General Strike membership declined and it was only in the 1930s with the rise of fascism, the Spanish Revolution and the threat of war that it began to grow again exceeding 10,000 in 1936 and, according to official figures, reaching 17,756 in July 1939. The decisive growth occurred, however, after the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941 and the Anglo-Soviet Mutual Aid Pact of the following month. By the end of the year membership had reached 22,738 and in the first three months of 1942 a further 25,194 recruits were made. Official figures claim 56,000 members by December 1942, the height of the CPGB's influence. By now, however, the CPGB had gone over 100% to class collaborationism. It gave full support to the national government of Winston Churchill, denounced strikes and fought for increased production in support of the bosses war effort. From 1945 onwards the membership declined and although it picked up in the 1960s, by 1968 it numbered only 32,492.

The debates that opened up in the European communist parties during the 1970s represented a stage in the process of programmatic codification of the CPGB's reformist practice. In a number of ways the CPGB had pre-empted its European counterparts. Attempts to 'anglicise' the party had been evident since 1945 and were enshrined in the first version of its programme, the 'British

Road to Socialism' (BRS), which appeared in 1951. Approved personally by Stalin this document abandoned any talk of revolution, the destruction of the bourgeois state, soviets or the dictatorship of the proletariat. Instead it spoke of transforming '... capitalist democracy into a real People's Democracy, transforming parliament, the product of Britain's historical struggle for democracy, into the democratic instrument of the will of the vast majority of her people.'

When in 1975 the CPGB decided to open up discussion on a new draft of the BRS the Eurocommunists in its ranks definitely had history on their side. The changes they were to argue for were a logical extension of the party's practice and its programme over the previous 25 years. In January 1976, John Gollan, a former general secretary of the party took the first step by initiating a discussion in the pages of *MT* on 'Problems of Socialist Democracy'. The pretext for this was the twentieth anniversary of the Khrushchev revelations. The debate lasted a year and covered the dictatorship of the proletariat, the relationship between party and state in post capitalist societies, independent trade unions, the character of Stalinism and inner party democracy. With some justification one of the contributors argued 'This discussion is in substance not unconnected with the Italian Communist Party's policy of 'historic compromise' based on their pessimistic and negative estimate of the prospects for socialism in Italy. It is not unconnected with the attacks by the leaders of the Spanish Communist Party on the Portuguese Communist Party at critical moments in Portugal's national democratic revolution. More generally, it is connected with the decision of the French Communist Party to drop the

term 'Dictatorship of the Proletariat' from their rules and to decide at their next Congress what words to adopt in its place, and of the Japanese Communist Party to drop the words 'Dictatorship of the Proletariat' and even 'Marxism-Leninism'. Specifically this debate is preliminary to the discussion of the new, effectively fourth, version of 'The British Road to Socialism' (Fergus Nicholson, *MT*, December 1976).

Indeed, no sooner had this discussion been closed in the January 1977 issue of *MT* than the debate around the issues confronting the November 1977 (Thirty-Fifth) Congress began. By now the party had become polarised around virtually all of the central questions: the definition of the working class, pluralism, the revolutionary process and the concept of the 'broad democratic alliance' which was to replace the 'anti-monopoly alliance' in the earlier versions. For a section of the party determined to check this process of 'revisionism' it became a struggle for the future of the CPGB. In July, four months before the Congress, the most vehement critics of the new draft, based around Sid French and the leadership of the party's Surrey District, split. The CPGB claim this involved less than 2% of their 25,300 members whilst the New Communist Party, as they called themselves, claimed 65 branches nationwide.

Thirty-Fifth congress settles nothing

Those who opposed the new draft and remained in the CPGB went into the Thirty-Fifth Congress numerically depleted and identified with the 'splitters'. In an attempt to remit the new draft, and the 2,600 amendments submitted to it, to the 1979 Congress they mustered a mere 48 votes compared to the EC's 330. Yet it was also clear that the battle was not over yet. Firstly, against the advice of the EC, the Congress voted by 193 votes to 137 to establish a sub-committee to examine the ailing fortunes of the *Morning Star*. Secondly, it decided to establish a Commission on Inner Party Democracy (IPD) to report to its Congress in 1979. The confident conclusion of the Editorial in the January 1978 *Marxism Today*, now under the editorship of the 'Eurocommunist' Martin Jacques, that '... the overwhelming defeat of the sectarian challenge [to the BRS] marked a decisive defeat for this position in the Party's evolution,' was to prove somewhat premature.

The decisions of the Thirty-Fifth Congress settled nothing. Indeed the antics of a section of the EC, which was eager to minimise the division and the party's decline, merely obscured the different positions. What were the Eurocommunists trying to achieve?

It is impossible to give a full answer to this question within the scope of this article. However, central to the debate leading up to the Thirty-Fifth Congress and after was an attempt to get the

party to broaden its definition of the working class and to commit far greater resources to building alliances with the mass social and political movements we referred to earlier. This involved the Eurocommunists in arguing that whilst 'The individuals participating in these movements may be drawn from a number of different classes, ... because of the numerical preponderance of the working class it is from this class that the majority of participants are drawn.' Hence the concept of a 'broad democratic alliance' was a '... fuller and deeper ...' one than that of the 'anti-monopoly alliance' since '... it avoids the danger of the economic interpretation ... namely of an alliance at the economic level in which the content of the alliance is provided by a common economic antagonism to monopoly capitalism' ('Class Structure and Political Strategy', Alan Hunt, *MT*, July 1977). The 'fundamentalists' were horrified. As two contributors argued such a definition of the working class could extend to include '... clergymen; members of the army, navy and airforce; civil servants; High Court judges; university professors; and even our friends in MI5' ('Definitions of the Working Class', Ernest Eisler and Michael Seifert, *MT*, November 1977). The perceived danger was that this would lead to the party concentrating its efforts on recruiting and building amongst layers other than the industrial and commercial proletariat.

The forward march of Labour halted?

These debates had obvious repercussions for the CPGB's publications. Under the editorship of Martin Jacques *Marxism Today* moved to a bold presentation of the Eurocommunist interpretation of the BRS. When the sub-committee on the *Morning Star* reported in April 1978 it too called for a change in coverage to more clearly reflect the new version of the BRS. What next the 'fundamentalists' asked themselves. The answer came in the autumn of 1978. In the context of an upsurge of industrial militancy against the 5% pay norm, introduced by the Labour government of Jim Callaghan, historian Eric Hobsbawm produced an article in *Marxism Today* entitled 'The Forward March of Labour Halted?'. In a critical survey of the development of the British working class he focused on the limitations of 'trade union consciousness' and the economic struggle in a situation where the '... political class movement ...' was in decline i.e., the wages struggle was not reflected in a growth in membership of or support for the Labour Party, the CPGB or other groups on the left. Summarising the year long debate, after the General Election of 1979, he argued '... the present phase of militancy is overwhelmingly trade unionist and economic, mainly on the issue of wages ... What is unclear is the type of relation which exists between

wages and the political struggle and how the wages struggle is to be integrated into the wider struggle of which it is only one part. I believe that this is the crucial problem which faces the labour movement today.'

Mike le Cornu, a shop steward at Heathrow airport, drew out the conclusions the party's 'intellectuals' seemed unprepared to state. In April 1979 he wrote 'Perhaps at this late stage we can adopt a self-critical posture and really examine whether there was a failure on our part to apply a creative Marxist analysis to the new situation. We may well conclude that our party and the left in the labour movement should have been united in mobilising the rank and file to mount the greatest pressure to ensure that the politically progressive demands contained in the Social Contract were carried out by the Labour Government.' In other words communists should have campaigned for the social measures Labour promised and accepted wage restraint in return!

At the same time as Hobsbawm was striking out against 'economism' another CPGB theoretician was engaging in a new analysis of 'Thatcherism'. Stuart Hall's conclusion was that 'Thatcherism' was '... something qualitatively new in British politics,' which had '... succeeded on the back of a deep and profound disillusionment among ordinary people with the very form of social democratic 'statism' to which previous governments, in their different ways, have been committed.' The left's response therefore necessitated 'The formulation of a new conception of socialism ...' '... the unification of the working class ...' and '... the construction of a historical alliance which alone is capable of constituting the "social force" which could turn the tide of "Thatcherism" ' ('Thatcherism — a new stage', Stuart Hall, *MT*, February 1980). What content the Eurocommunists would fill these formulas with was anybody's guess.

Developing this notion of an historical alliance has occupied centre stage in the debates of the CPGB since that time. True, from the General Election of 1979 up until Thatcher's re-election in 1983, there were other issues on which the CPGB divided: the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, where the minority won 43% of the vote at the 1981 Congress against the critical stance of the EC; Poland, where again the EC took a critical stance, provoking one critic to assert that there were those in the party '... for whom hatred of the Soviet Union and the Party leaderships in Eastern Europe is a ruling passion. Their politics have the same social roots as Trotskyism and in this respect produce equally poisonous fruit with perhaps fewer red berries.' ('The Crisis in Our Communist Party — Cause, Effect and Cure', Charlie Woods, 1983). But the debate over the historical alliance encapsulated the political divisions that emerged in the debate around the BRS. Once again the Eurocommunists made the running using the pages of *Marxism Today*. Their starting

point was Thatcher's victory in 1979 and the steady decline in Labour's share of the vote, a phenomena Hobsbawm addressed as 'Labour's Lost Millions'. Their conclusion was that this was no mere electoral swing but the product of a series of long term developments involving '... fundamental, structural, historical and ecological factors ...'. A fundamental recomposition of the working class was underway fracturing the old relations of representation. Many of the practices of traditional sections of the working class had in fact exacerbated this problem. The Labour Party could not defeat 'Thatcherism' on its own. It had to '... construct a historic bloc of forces for progressive change'. Labour had to build a broad set of alliances based on new policies, new practices and new structures. The question left unanswered was how would such a bloc express itself electorally. For many who followed the debate the answer seemed obvious. Frequent references to the period of the Popular Front and to popular coalitions underpinned by the CPGB's support for proportional representation pointed to a governmental coalition embracing the '... entire potential support for democracy and for a better society'. Such a formula could clearly extend to all anti-Thatcherite forces including the newly emergent Social Democratic Party/Liberal Alliance.

Factional struggle intensifies

It was in the context of this debate that the existing divisions in the CPGB became public. In September 1982 *Marxism Today* carried an article by Tony Lane entitled 'Trade Unions: caught on the ebb tide'. Analysing a series of problems confronting the trade unions he devoted a section to what he termed the crisis of legitimacy in the unions. This crisis, he suggested, was in part a product of the unions themselves. Talk of unions '... continuously contriving shabby compromises where equity is subordinated to exigency' and of shop stewards '... sharing in the expense account syndrome ...' and using '... their positions as a stepping stone to promotion to charge-hand and foremen' was more than many CPGB trade unionists could tolerate. But the response took the unpredictable form of a public attack on the article, and on *Marxism Today* for printing it, in the *Morning Star* by the CPGB's national industrial organiser Mick Costello. Printed with the support of the *Morning Star's* editor, Tony Chater, it confirmed that the paper was under the control of the 'fundamentalists' and that they were prepared to use it in the factional battle that was taking place. The EC censured Tony Chater and Mick Costello, who then resigned his post as national industrial organiser for 'personal reasons' to subsequently be appointed as *Morning Star* industrial correspondent by the Management Committee of the People's Press Printing Society (PPPS)

(1). Given that the PPPS was nominally a self-governing co-operative the 'fundamentalists' increasingly used this body to justify the *Morning Star* presenting a line at variance with that of the EC.

The Thirty-Eighth Congress of the CPGB brought out the full organisational and political crisis in the CPGB. Membership of the party, which was 18,458 at its Congress in 1981, had declined to 15,691. However, even this figure is illusory. Dues payments for 1982 indicated there were only 8,270 paid up members in a situation where the dues levy is 60p per month. In the case of the YCL membership had fallen from just under 1,000 in 1981 to 623. In the General Election of June 1983 the party had polled 11,598 votes in 35 constituencies (an average of 331) compared with 16,858 in 38 constituencies in 1979 (an average of 444). As its resolution on trade union work noted '... many workplace branches have been lost through closures and sackings in basic industries.' Indeed only 34 had delegates at the conference according to the credentials report. Finally circulation of the *Morning Star* was down to approximately 30,000 with at least half of these being 'overseas sales'. The notable exception to this trend was *Marxism Today* which had increased its circulation from 4,500 in 1979 to an average 10,500 per month.

In the debate around the key resolution on the party's future work, 'The General Election and the Challenge Facing the Labour Movement', a series of amendments tabled by the 'fundamentalists' on alliances, electoral policy, existing socialism (a euphemism for the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries) and *Marxism Today* were defeated resulting in the substantive resolution being passed with just two votes against. More significantly the EC's position on 'restoring the relationship' between the Communist Party and the PPPS was carried with 155 votes for, 92 against and two abstentions, giving the Eurocommunists 62% of the votes cast and the 'fundamentalists' 37%. Finally, in the election for the new EC both Tony Chater and Mick Costello were left off the recommended list of the Elections Preparation Committee and failed to get elected.

In the aftermath of the Thirty-Eighth Congress the factional struggle in the CPGB intensified. The focal point of this became the fight for control of the *Morning Star*. The newly elected EC decided that the paper's editor and deputy editor Tony Chater and David Whitfield, should resign to be replaced by candidates supporting the EC's line. This, they stated, was essential if the editors '...responsibility of ensuring that the paper carries out its role of advocating and fighting for the policy of the Communist Party is to be effectively fulfilled.' The response of the 'fundamentalists' was to dig in. The Management Committee of the PPPS then refused to meet with the EC to discuss the substance of their resolution. Instead they pressed ahead with their plans to revamp the paper by installing a new £650,000 press, launching

a shares drive and establishing a national network of readers' associations. At its March meeting the EC, not surprisingly, concluded that '... an improvement in relations between the Party and the PPPS requires changes in the composition of the Management Committee'. The stage was set for a further battle at the PPPS' June 1984 Annual General Meeting (AGM).

By now those CPGB members who still had a sense of humour were referring to the battle as the 'Star Wars' saga. The EC, however, wasn't laughing. In April it published the first in a series of detailed accusations alleging that the *Morning Star* editor was censuring the publication of pro-EC correspondence in the columns of the paper. In May the EC took a further report on the paper, drew up a resolution for the forthcoming AGM of the PPPS and endorsed five candidates for election to its Management Committee. The main thrust of the resolution was to relieve Tony Chater and David Whitfield of their present or any similar responsibilities at the *Morning Star*.

The PPPS AGM meetings (seven were held in different parts of Britain) were a total disaster. The resolution drawn up by the EC was ruled out of order leaving EC supporters with the task of trying to include it in the agenda of each meeting. In Glasgow, where some 600 people turned up, the meeting had to be abandoned when fighting and scuffles broke out. One contributor to *Focus*, a monthly publication catering for CPGB activists, complained of disgraceful barracking and brawling at the Wembley meeting which she acknowledged '... was the least disorderly of any of the seven ...'. In July the EC discussed the matter again and decided to campaign for a Special General Meeting (SGM) to resolve the issues under dispute. Supporters of the EC succeeded in collecting the necessary 1,000 signatures and in the November issue of *Focus* which gave a detailed list of incidences where it alleged the *Morning Star* had been guilty of '... suppressing or delaying publication of Communist Party statements, refusing the right of reply, and manipulating the correspondence columns ...'. The response of the Management Committee was to refuse to convene the SGM in October and to urge its supporters to boycott any meetings convened by the requisitioners. Nevertheless, the SGM meetings were held. The result of the voting was that the four resolutions presented by the EC were overwhelmingly passed, no doubt in part due to the policy of boycott implemented by the 'fundamentalists'. In the case of the resolution proposing the appointment of EC nominees as editor and assistant editor the vote was 1,272 to 33.

The problems of the CPGB are far from over, however. In the twelve months since the Thirty-Eighth Congress there has been a further decline in membership of the party, in the size of the YCL and

in the circulation of the *Morning Star*. Meanwhile factional warfare then spread to 1984's District Congresses (the CPGB is divided into 16 districts). On Monday November 26, the *Morning Star* reported that the London District Congress, which had been convened for the weekend of November 24-25, had been adjourned after just five hours when the party's general secretary, Gordon McLennan, led a walk-out. This incident arose because of a decision by the EC that the Congress should not elect a new District Committee as '... malpractices had taken place ...' in the election of delegates in two of the London branches. 'Fundamentalists' at the Congress were clearly not prepared to accept such a decision without at least registering their opposition.

The *Morning Star* ran this story under the headline 'London Communists demand restoration of their democratic rights'. Instead, according to the *Guardian* of December 3, the EC '... censured 150 London delegates, suspended 22 members of the London District Committee, including three members of the national executive, and sacked three members of the London district staff ...'. The ball is now in the EC's court. In January it will meet to discuss what further action to take. Already at the November EC, Martin Jacques in his report on the 'Political Situation and the Labour Party Conference' had argued that a major growth in the CPGB's influence was 'intimately bound up with the defeat of the sectarian positions within the party and the creation of a new unity — one we have hitherto never enjoyed — based on the politics of the BRS.'

Martin Jacques' report also spelt out the next steps in the party's public activity. Of particular interest here is the increasing attention the Eurocommunists are paying to developments within the left of the Labour Party. The emergence of Eurocommunism was, of course, coincidental with the growth of the left in the British Labour Party in the period of the 1974-79 Labour government. Indeed many of the CPGB's major debates directly referred to these developments, particularly those that took place around Thatcherism, alliances, proportional representation, 'Labours Lost Millions' and coalitionism after the General Election defeats of 1979 and 1983.

But these defeats also had a profound effect on sections of the Labour left. In 1981, the Labour Co-ordinating Committee (LCC) was already engaged in a critical reappraisal of its role as a component of Labour's left. In January the Labour Party Special Conference had endorsed a number of the major Constitutional changes they and other sections of the left had been fighting for. This had led to the split which resulted in the formation of the Social Democ-

1. The PPPS was established by the CPGB in the 1950s as a self-governing, cooperative ownership scheme. Its purpose was to raise funds for further development.

atic Party (SDP). This, and the defeat of Tony Benn in the deputy leadership contest in October, prompted the LCC to subsequently argue that '... by the 1981 Deputy Leadership contest it was clear that there was a stalemate in the Party between right and left.' (*Labour Activists*, Newsletter of the LCC). The LCC's solution was to look for a new consensus. After the election defeat of June 1983 they became the champions of the struggle for unity. But the unity they sought was not a return '... to the years of stalemate, and freeze the party into another period of suspended animation. These are the conditions in which only the ultra-left and the ultra-right in the party will appear active, and in the long run can only serve to weaken the Party as a broad coalition ... Indeed we need a debate aimed at a new basis for a genuine unity of purpose and trust in the party'.

A political convergence between the arguments of the CPGB and the LCC became evident, with joint events on the debate around 'Labour's Lost Millions' being organised. In fact, increasingly, the CPGB identified the LCC with what it now called 'the broad left' in the Labour Party; whereas figures like Tony Benn, Ken Livingstone and papers like the *Militant* and *Socialist Action* were associated with the 'hard left'. Martin Jacques returned to these distinctions in his November 1984 EC report. Having congratulated Neil Kinnock for recognising '... that this Toryism was different from the previous post-war Toryism, in contrast, for example, to Tony Benn's position on this issue,' he turned his attention to the state of the broad left and the CPGB's influence. 'One of the things that struck me forcibly at the Labour Party Conference was, from a number of different angles, the role of the Party [CPGB] in this context. Firstly, negatively speaking, there was the weakness, or virtual absence indeed in many fringe activities (which are of a peculiar importance to a Labour Party Conference) of a broad left position in respect either to the moralistic/ideological leftism [the hard left] described earlier, or the right. The broad left in the Labour Party remains very weak, and essentially a pragmatic rather than a worked-out, theoretically-based strategic position. How these debates lacked the input of a communist perspective! His conclusion was '... we need to find more points of political contact and intervention with the Labour Party.' Such a perspective will undoubtedly focus on the LCC in an attempt to build an alliance of forces within as well as outside of the Labour Party based on the political positions the Eurocommunists have developed. This will be made all the easier by the fact that many of the individuals who have left the CPGB over the past period have done so under the impact of the growth of the Labour left, have joined the Labour Party and are clearly associated with the LCC. Here, however, the CPGB faces a further prob-

lem. How does it implement such a perspective without many of its members drawing the conclusion that the best way of presenting a communist perspective in the debates raging in the Labour Party is to leave the crisis ridden CPGB and to join the Labour Party as individuals?

Besides constituting a strong alternative pole of attraction to CPGB militants the growth of the Labour left has also indirectly affected the political debate in the CPGB. In the first place this has been evident in the debates around 'Labour's Lost Millions' which has led leading figures on the Labour left such as Tony Benn, Ken Livingstone and Eric Heffer to publicly criticise the analysis of the Eurocommunists. In an article on *Marxism Today's* recent discussion weekend the *Morning Star* gleefully reported a section of Tony Benn's speech where he attacked '... the pessimism of certain labour movement commentators in the wake of the 1983 election defeat ...' and '... was critical of a section of the Communist Party, which he saw as "lining up with the Labour right." ' (*Morning Star*, November 5, 1984). But this impact, along with the crisis in the CPGB itself, now shows signs of going deeper. In the case of some militants it has encouraged a re-examination of the classical positions of Marx and Lenin which have then expressed themselves, often in a distorted form, in the debates. This is clearly reflected in the publications of two substantially smaller factions with the CPGB, *Straight Left* and *The Leninists*, both of whom produce public journals. These 'comrades' certainly don't mince words. *Straight Left* has, it seems, existed for about five years. It is sharply critical of the CPGB's electoral policy arguing that 'It confuses our supporters to ask them to choose between two working class candidates without solving the problem of the Labour Party'. In the opinion of *Straight Left* the present divisions in the party are merely two sides of the same coin. At the Thirty-Eighth Congress of the CPGB, *Straight Left* waged a public campaign in the party by circulating a pamphlet by veteran member Charlie Woods stating these criticisms and calling for support for a 'Political Alternative List' in the EC elections. As he argued 'There is no future for us grubbing around in the intrigues of the present St. John Street set [CPGB headquarters]. No future in trying to re-make the same omelette.' For this breach of EC decisions, party rules and normal practice and a refusal to name his collaborators Charlie Woods, who was 83 years of age and had been in the CPGB since 1922, was expelled along with three of those responsible for the circulation of the alternative list.

The *Leninists* are a more recent formation. Unlike the *Straight Left* group they identify the present crisis in the CPGB as an element of a worldwide crisis in the international communist movement and that '... there can be no denying that

our Party's centrism from the mid 1920s carried the seeds of the right opportunist cancer that looked set to weaken it unchallenged in the 1950s until along came the galloping clap of Eurocommunism to give it a helping hand to the Party's liquidation.' The *Leninists* are committed to squeezing '... out this opportunist pus' which, they argue, characterises the reformism of the Eurocommunists, the trade union bureaucratic tailism of the Chater/Costello faction and the Labourphilia of *Straight Left*. To that end they openly proclaim the need to recruit to the party '... on a Leninist basis.' Whilst pro-Soviet the *Leninists* distinguish between the USSR and the CPSU and have a clearer appreciation of the concept of the labour bureaucracy. In particular they have made a clear break with the national chauvinism of the CPGB on the issue of Ireland where the political evolution of Provisional Sinn Fein, the developing dialogue between them and sections of the Labour left and the growing support for Sinn Fein electoral candidates has placed great pressure on the CPGB and its co-thinkers in Ireland. However, in May this faction also came under the EC spotlight and it was decided '... that Party members should not contribute to or sell the *Leninist* and that Party journals should not advertise it, nor Party bookshops stock it.'

One of the striking lessons to be drawn from the present crisis in the CPGB is, of course, the importance of inner party democracy. Ironically when the Eurocommunists wield the club of 'democratic centralism' the procedures they are applying are the ones drawn up by the Commission on Inner Party Democracy for the 1979 Congress. This commission was chaired by Mick Costello. But the particular form of inner party democracy applied by the CPGB makes no provision for tendencies or factions based on clear political platforms; no provision to circulate platforms or resolutions counterposed to those of the EC; no provision for minority representation on leadership bodies such as the EC or PC. There is little surprise, therefore, that when major differences do emerge they take the form these have. But this too is beginning to be aired. Writing in the March 1984 issue of *Focus* Nigel Kelsey argued that what the present situation in the party revealed was '... that the rules and practices of the Party do not measure up to this kind of situation ... In the absence of public platforms, groups become secret factions ... The "politics" of the EC/PPPS differences are glossed over, and it still has the impression of personalities and "legalistic" argumentation which are the hallmark of the pre-Congress statements which were only made public after months of "secret" disagreements.' Whether the CPGB as a whole will be able to draw similar conclusions remains to be seen but if the most recent incidents are anything to go by the party is running out of time. ■

Dutch CP splits

There is no doubt that the Netherlands Communist Party (CPN) is now experiencing the gravest crisis in its entire history. It is true that it has managed to draw up a program for the first time since the second world war, after a discussion that went on for years. But this program, entitled "A Dutch Road to Socialism", was adopted by a party that is only a shadow of its former self. For years, the CPN has been divided by a factional struggle between the "Renewers" and the "Horizontalists". For the first, the new party program is too conservative, or rather not reformist enough. For the others, the program represents an unacceptable break from the party's Stalinist past. The party is virtually paralyzed, and its apparatus is collapsing. The number of members has declined dramatically.

The CNP's journal, De Waarheid ("Truth") is on the verge of bankruptcy, although it now presents itself as a paper for the entire workers movement and not just the CPN. On the electoral level also, the party is experiencing one setback after another. In the 1970s, the CPN still had seven deputies. It has only one left after the last legislative elections of September 1982. Finally, the party's activity in the plants has practically disappeared, and its youth and women's organizations are moribund. While the capitalist crisis is growing worse, the CPN seems incapable of intervening in the social and political arenas.

Jan Willem STUTJE

From the start of the Cold War up to the 1960s, the CPN was in a position of isolation. And it was not able to benefit from the resurgence of workers struggles in the 1970s. The influence the party had in the working class was the result of the base it achieved among workers coming from an anarchosindicalist background in the 1930s and its recruitment of the Social Democratic activists that it won in the wake of the second world war.

Not only is the membership of the CPN now elderly, but they are concentrated in the old industries, such as shipbuilding and steel, which have been hard hit by the crisis. The CPN has been able to overcome this structural weakness by building its organization in the advanced industries, such as chemicals, electronics, and communications.

A similar balance sheet can be drawn as regards the CPN's relations with the mass movement. Both in the movement for the defense of the environment and the women's movement, the CPN's influence is marginal. The party's painful reorientation, which at least partially neutralized the prejudices against these movements within its ranks, could not eliminate the suspicion that had been aroused. For example, on the question of women's oppression, the CPN has adopted quite clear feminist positions, but this happened only after a lot of feminists had left the party in disillusion.

The fact that the CPN has been unable to extend its influence is not only due to the slow and hesitant way in which it oriented toward the mass

struggles. More decisive is that its reformist policy, seeking to form coalitions even with the bourgeois parties, is incompatible with defending the interests of the oppressed.

For example, while the CPN was in the city government in Amsterdam, the squatters were forcibly expelled from their houses. And when the party leaders call for cutting wages in the framework of reducing the work-week, they cannot expect great support from trade-unionists.

Finally, when the CPN continues its defense of "actually existing socialism," that does not enhance the party's prestige. Likewise, when well-known leaders of the CPN claim that Eastern Europe is a paradise because women there have jobs and are not oppressed, it is natural that feminists are leaving the party.

The crisis hitting the CPN now is incomparably more serious than the previous conflicts the party has experienced. This is not only because of the number of currents that are contending and the large loss in members but above all because it is inconceivable that the departure of any one of these currents would open the way for the party to pull itself back together.

The combination of the crisis in Eastern Europe with the one in the capitalist countries will continue to give rise to tendency conflicts, and it is impossible to say how the struggle in the party is going to end. Probably, the CPN will break down into two or three parts. One part would want to go back to the old-style CPN. One would be favorable to a rapid fusion with two small radical left parties, the PSP and the PPR. (1) And another part might try to rebuild

an independent, "renewed" Communist Party influenced by reformist and Eurocommunist ideas.

In any case, we are now seeing a continuous process of differentiation among the various currents. The reasons for this differentiation becomes more clear when you consider the origin of the currents involved and their political development.

We have seen that under the impact of the decline of some industries, the CPN's weight in the working class has grown progressively smaller. This trend has been reinforced by the large increase in unemployment over the 1970s in certain regions where the CPN was traditionally influential, such as the Groningen region, and by the destruction of old working-class neighborhoods in some cities. This process was masked for some time by the fact that the CPN kept its image as a working-class party.

Thanks to this image, and above all the extreme weakness of the revolutionary currents in the Netherlands, the CPN managed to recruit among new radicalized nonproletarian strata, in particular among the students. This development created contradictions because these young radicals came into a party that had until then lived in sectarian isolation and had barely begun the process of de-Stalinization that got underway in other CPs in 1956.

These contradictions became apparent after the party's disastrous setback in the 1977 elections, when its vote fell from 4.8% to 1.7%. Two factors explain this defeat. First of all, while in other CPs the discussion on Eurocommunism was breaking out, the leaders of the CPN were tightening their ties to Moscow. The CPN had been conducting a zig-zag policy toward the Social Democratic government of Joop den Uyl (1973-1977). In less than four years, the CPN went from "constructive opposition" to the Social Democracy to sectarian criticism of it, and then ended up adopting an electoral platform that called for the CPN participating in the government alongside the Socialists.

Finally, during this period, the CPN definitively lost its influence over the youth movement when it took responsibility for the violent clearing of the houses occupied by activists opposing the building of a subway in Amsterdam.

The reaction of the CPN leaders to their setback in the elections was twofold. First of all, Paul de Groot, unchallenged leader of the CPN for forty years, was dumped. He wanted the party to remain faithful to Moscow and to restrict the petty-bourgeois elements, that is, the members coming from the new social layers, to a purely secondary role. It was the fear of losing these new

1. The Pacifist Socialist Party (PSP), founded in 1957; and the Political Party of Radicals (PPR), founded in 1968, have become the representatives of the new social movements that have developed since the 1960s. They have, respectively, three and two deputies in the parliament.

adherents that obliged the CPN leaders to oust their historic chief. Secondly, the leaders decided to permit a certain liberalization of the party's policy. It is clear that this reflected a desire to present the CPN as a democratic and respectable partner for a future coalition with the Social Democratic party (the PvdA, the majority party in the Dutch working class).

However, what had only been the beginning of an attempt to modernize the party touched off an uncontrollable process of decomposition. Although the leaders tried to rebuild homogeneity in the party in the debate for the February 1984 congress around a reformist program, this attempt failed, for historical as well as political reasons.

To start with the historical reasons, the CPN had never really undertaken a process of de-Stalinization. The leaders distrusted the revelations in the report made by Khrushchev to the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU in 1956, which exposed Stalin's crimes. And few forces in the party were ready to take up Moscow's new line. Those that there were were easily ousted from the party in 1958, before they could develop any substantial critique of Stalinism.

The PCN's flirt with Peking, which created tensions with the CPSU in 1962, showed that the leaders felt able to maintain an authoritarian and ultra-bureaucratic attitude toward the members, regardless of the growth of debate in other European Communist parties. This isolation and attachment to Stalinist dogmatism lasted until the beginning of the 1970s. After 1977, a belated de-Stalinization process occurred, and this was in a party that was by no means prepared organizationally or politically for the debates that would result from this.

To take up the political reasons why the attempt to restore homogeneity failed, the three issues that provoked conflicts were feminism, Poland, and the social and political struggles in the Netherlands. Because of its antibureaucratic dynamic, feminism played a big role in opening up debate. For the renewers, the demands of the women's movement became a pretext for breaking with a class position on certain crucial points. Their desire to facilitate the access of women to the labor market linked up with a readiness to accept lower wages for women. For this reason, it was the trade-unionists above all who opposed including the demand for a 35-hour week in the party's new program.

For a part of the "Horizontalists" (orthodox activists), this question of the workweek and, more generally, the fact that feminism was considered a theory comparable to Marxism and therefore able to serve as a theoretical basis for the CPN was what led them to form a faction going outside the party.

At the CPN's special programmatic congress in February 1984, the "Horizontalists" formed a new organization, the

League of Netherlands Communists (Verbond van Communisten in Nederland — VCN), open to former adherents of the CPN, as well as to any other activist.

The process that led to this split had begun some time before. In fact, for two years the "Horizontalists" had been presenting themselves as a public faction of the CPN with their own meetings and a monthly publication of their own. It was above all the events in Poland, the CPN's condemnation of Jaruzelski's crackdown and the resolute support for Solidarnosc that provoked the formation of this faction. The impact of this issue was increased by the fact that the party's attitude toward the events in Poland, combined with its critique of Eastern Europe in general, led it to adopt a neutralist attitude in the peace movement. So, it not only came out against the Pershing missiles but also against the SS-20s, while the "Horizontalists" approached the struggle for peace in class-struggle terms.

However, the most important basis on which the "Horizontalists" organized their adherents was their critique of the ideas of the "renewers" about the CPN's policy in the unions and its policy of coalition with the Social Democrats.

They saw the party's passivity toward social and economic struggles, the vanishing of its activity in the factories, and its readiness to accept wage cuts as all aspects of a failure to meet the need for conducting an independent Communist policy, and as concessions to the trade-union leaders and the Social Democrats. This process, they argued, would lead to the liquidation of the CPN. This view was reinforced by the appearance of a group among the "renewers" in 1981 that declared in favor of a fusion with the PSP and the PPR.

These extreme "renewers", who also organized outside the party, hoped that afterwards they could reinforce the left of the PvdA. Although the party leaders were against such a perspective, their readiness to make concessions was not any the less for that. So, for the June 1984 European elections, the CPN found itself on a common slate with the PPR, the PSP, and the Greens. Words such as "socialism" and "working class" were notably absent from their common program. On the question of NATO, the program talked only about abolishing "both blocs".

On the question of the EEC, the program stressed the perspective of democratizing its institutions.

The moderate renewers, who lead the party and run the paper *De Waarheid* are trying to take initiatives that can get the party out of its inertia. Quite recently, they decided to initiate a campaign against the policy of the Lubbers cabinet (the right-wing government in power since 1982). The regional committees were left free to see with what political parties the CPN could collaborate on this question. In some cities, they have even

invited the Socialist Workers Party (SAP, Dutch section of the Fourth International) to join with them.

On the other hand, the CPN has adopted a sectarian attitude toward the "Horizontalists", a section of whom are organized in the VCN. Although there is no question of massive expulsions from the CPN, these activists find themselves de facto outside the work of the party. Despite the size of a pro-Moscow wing in this current, which includes the majority of the leaders, it is not a united Stalinist faction.

For various reasons, some groups of activists are attracted by the current represented by the VCN, in particular because they are looking for class positions, because they are unhappy about the CPN's passivity, and also because they think that the "Horizontalists" are the heirs of the militant party that they think the CPN once was. Often the people attracted are active trade-unionists who do not know what to do in today's CPN.

A few weeks ago, the leaders of the VCN decided to launch a new Communist Party a year from now. According to them, the present CPN does not deserve the name of a Communist Party, and they are convinced that the party can no longer be salvaged. However, a section of the "Horizontalists" still in the CPN have declared against this perspective and are continuing to fight to change the party's leadership and policy.

With the formation of the VCN, we have seen the first split in the history of the Dutch Communist Party. While the new organization exists in most of the country's major cities, its major base is in Amsterdam, and to a lesser extent in Rotterdam. It has about a thousand members, who include veterans who reject any break with the USSR, as well as trade-unionists, and some youth attracted by the militant language of the leaders of this current.

It is hard to predict how the VCN will develop. It can be observed that the few initiatives that it has taken have been strongly marked by bureaucratic methods and organizational sectarianism, and that, for the moment, its support for the Soviet model is total.

In the future, there may be a convergence between the VCN and the "Horizontalists" who have remained in the CPN. In the meantime, the latter have every chance of regaining some of their lost positions, in particular because of the demoralization that prevails in the ranks of the renewers. If this happens, we can expect to see the departure of a part of the renewal wing for the PvdA.

The result of the present turmoil may well be the stabilization of a situation in which there will be two Communist parties, one more or less "renewed" and the other more or less Stalinist, neither of which has any real base in the working class. ■

The PCP - the exception to the rule

The Hotel Victoria in the center of Lisbon is an old edifice in Mussolini's neo-Roman style, which became the rage in Salazar's Portugal. It is where the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP) has its headquarters. This image out of the 1940s fits like a glove a party that has managed, not without some difficulty, to endorse all the positions of the USSR at a time when the other Communist parties are trying to distinguish themselves from Moscow.

The PCP did not hesitate, in accordance with its line of unconditional support from the first for Jaruzelski, to organize a meeting of friendship between the PCP and the Polish Communist Party in one of its strongholds.

Portugal is a country that strongly proclaims its historical originality. The PCP has run this claim up its own flag pole. The most recent expression of it was the "Portuguese road to socialism" in 1974-75. But the country's most original feature may in fact be the PCP itself, a party of the 1940s in 1984.



Lisbon March 1975. PCP rally with Alvaro Cunhal. (DR)

Nuno PINHEIRO

One of the reasons generally advanced to explain the decline of the Communist parties in West Europe and their distancing themselves from the USSR is that the model of Soviet socialism has lost its attraction for workers who, despite the crisis of capitalism, retain a standard of living higher than the average for the Soviet population, without the problems of bureaucratic repression.

However, Portuguese wages are the lowest in Europe, the minimum monthly wage being less than 100 US dollars. Inflation reached a rate of 33% in 1983, while wages rose by only 18%. The number of unemployed exceeds 750,000 in a country of 10 million inhabitants, and only one unemployed person in ten gets even the derisory unemployment benefits that the state provides. It is now

known that 150,000 workers are continuing to work to keep their jobs, although they have not gotten any wages for many months.

Health services and social assistance housing, aid to the aged, and more recently education have deteriorated severely. So, while Portuguese workers may feel closer to their cousins who have emigrated to France or Germany, the USSR does not seem so repellent to them as is claimed. We will see if that is sufficient to explain the exceptional position of the Portuguese CP in the European workers movement.

To understand the situation of the PCP today, it is essential to go back into the tumultuous and little known history of the Portuguese workers movement and its organizations. Despite the belated character of Portuguese industrialization and the smallness of a working

class scattered in small shops, attempts to organize the workers began by the middle of the nineteenth century. They culminated in the formation of the Socialist Party (section of the First International) in 1875.

Despite the existence of this party, at the end of the century, the majority of the working class were drawn into the radical bourgeois republican movement that was to overthrow the monarchy in 1910. The SP never became anything more than a small group of intellectuals without influence or roots in the working class. This situation persisted until the disappearance of the SP in the 1930s.

With the SP paralyzed and tied to the bourgeois republicans, the anarchists were able to emerge as the major proletarian current in the period between 1910 and 1923, in which the working class organized, achieved consciousness, and struck out for class independence.

PCP formed

The most advanced working-class activists were in the ranks of the anarchists, and it was out of this current that the PCP was to emerge. In 1919, the Portuguese Maximalist Federation (FMP) was formed, which grouped around the journal *Bandeira Vermelha* activists whose common denominator was sympathy for the Russian revolution and the conviction that "being bolsheviks ... does not mean renouncing libertarian ideals." (*Bandeira Vermelha*, September 3, 1919.)

The dictatorship of the proletariat was accepted as inevitable, but the need for a revolutionary party was still not well understood. After a number of the founders of the FMP were lost, the PCP was formed from this current in 1921. Its political positions were still rather confused. For example, it still did not accept democratic centralism. Its political perspective was one of immediate revolution. This went so far that the party considered that the street demonstrations that took place in Lisbon in 1924 meant that the stage of the February revolution had already passed.

In reality, Portugal was not only the European country furthest removed from Russia geographically. It was also the furthest away from any possibility of a revolution. The activists became demoralized and left the party. The first years of the PCP were to be marked by grave internal crises which, in the absence of a democratic internal life, led to the intervention of the Communist International.

While this intervention helped to bring about political clarification, especially after 1924, it also went hand in hand with the fading away of the party, which in 1925 joined in an electoral front with the Republican Party but did not elect a single deputy.

The bottom line in the balance sheet of the period was that the party that had had a thousand members in 1921 (prob-

ably an exaggerated figure) was reduced to 500 members in 1924 and seventy members after the military coup d'état of 1926 (1), even before it was touched by repression. In 1929, it had no more than thirty members.

From the coup d'état of 1926 — which went off without meeting hardly any resistance from the workers — until it was reorganized in 1929, the party continued to decline, having no perspective other than the hope of a republican coup d'état. The reorganization was based on the marine arsenal union and on a delegation that visited Moscow for the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution.

The delegation included Bento Gonçalves, a young arsenal worker, who was not yet a member of the party but would become general secretary two years later, in 1929. The party's historical continuity was, thus, very thin, and its political orientation was to change in tune with the shifts of the Communist International.

The PCP then entered its "third period." (2) In the almost complete absence of the Social Democracy, the PCP organ, *O Proletario*, accused the anarchists of social fascism!

The period from 1926 to 1934 was one in which the regime grew stronger. But it was also one in which the PCP built up the possibilities for its future, mainly because the anarchists and the republicans were content to sit back and wait for a "countercoup" that never came.

On January 18, 1934, a general strike was launched against a decree by the regime aimed at putting an end to the independent unions that had maintained a semi-legal existence up to that time. The PCP and the anarchists collaborated in the strike. Although it was defeated, it was one of the decisive episodes in the resistance to the dictatorship.

After these events, with a sharpening of the repression, the anarchists disappeared almost entirely, and the PCP was forced to work in the strictest clandestinity. For the party, this was the time of the transition from the "third period" to that of the popular front. (3) At the time, its literature was marked by phrases such as "class against class" and "the united front from below," and also "people's democratic revolution," while in practice the party reconciled the "united front at the top," and the search for alliances with the liberal bourgeoisie, with organizing a soviet in *Marinha Grande*, a small working-class town in the center of the country.

However, after the organization of the "League Against War and Fascism" in 1934, the PCP became firmly ensconced in the following year in the popular-front line. This was marked by the organization of a series of fronts designed in particular to bring in the petty bourgeoisie. After the party leadership was jailed in 1935, a period of organizational confusion opened up, in which two separate versions of *Avante*, the party's central

organ, appeared, and relations with the USSR were cut.

The situation was clarified by a new reorganization in 1941. This was consolidated by the Third Congress of the party in 1943, which put in place a leadership that has remained essentially the same to this day. From the party of 1929, to say nothing of the one of 1921, virtually nothing remained.

The war years were fundamental in the building up of the party. This period was marked both by the party's participation in workers struggles and by the organization of the Movement of Antifascist National Unity (MUNAF) and the Democratic Unity Movement (MUD), antifascist fronts with liberal bourgeois sectors.

Remaining the only opposition to the dictatorship after the war, with attempts to reorganize the SP proving fruitless, the PCP managed to build up its strength despite the repression of the 1950s. Cunhal spent almost all the 1950s in prison.

At the beginning of the 1960s, the colonial wars started. The PCP opposed desertion, which was assuming massive proportions, expressing a radicalization of the youth. The disorientation of its activists, which was the consequence of this line, was aggravated by the appearance of new international poles of attraction, first of all China.

Cunhal's return

The Sino-Soviet split produced the first split in the PCP, a Maoist one. Then there was the impact of the Algerian and Cuban revolutions, which gave rise to currents advocating armed struggle. Finally, there was the influence of May 1968 in France. It was in that period that the far-left organizations were formed, which the PCP sought to counter by forming the Armed Revolutionary Action group (ARA) and carrying out anti-colonial sabotage actions.

In 1968, Salazar was forced to step down because of illness. The new dictator, Marcelo Caetano, promised a liberalization, which aroused the hopes of sections of the opposition. Although this perspective led to total disillusion, the workers made some important gains, in particular with the election of some opposition trade-union leaderships. In 1971, this gave rise to the formation of Intersyndical, the trade-union confederation led by the PCP, which is today by far the largest of them all.

In the final period of the dictatorship, there was a growing radicalization of the working-class and the youth, which even affected the young officers, who later would take the initiative in overthrowing the regime.

Although there had been an unsuccessful coup attempt only a month before, when the coup d'état of the young officers came on April 25, 1974 (4), the PCP did not believe in the possibility of the regime being overthrown by the

military. In a communique issued a few days before the April 25 revolution, it said: "All illusions about an easy overthrow of the fascist dictatorship will not bring this any closer. Rather they delay its actual overturn, and remove many Portuguese from the struggle." (Political Documents of the Central Committee, 1965-74.)

In fact, the party was not prepared for the new situation, and it had no perspective going beyond the overthrow of the dictatorship. From the organizational stand-point, it had at most 5,000 members and about 100 full-timers, concentrated essentially in Lisbon and Alentejo, the agricultural area to the south and east of the capital. The leadership consisted of about twenty members elected by the Central Committee in 1965. All of them were full-timers, and many were in prison or exile, like Alvaro Cunhal himself, the party's first secretary, who re-entered Portugal on April 30, 1974.

Cunhal's return was presented as a new version of Lenin's arrival in Petrograd in April 1917. The PCP's prestige was clearly considerable. That could be seen by the press run of the first legal *Avante* — 500,000 copies, which must be an all-time record for the Portuguese press. But this circulation was to fall to 100,000 copies in 1975, then to 85,000 in 1976, and finally to about 40,000 today.

In the early period of the revolution, the PCP's tactics were designed mainly to put as many of its activists as possible in the key places in the state apparatus, while the mass movement was advancing and very rapidly going beyond the limited objectives of the PCP's strategy of "national democratic revolution." Unconditioned by the "discipline," "moderation" and "responsibility" that are the stock in trade of the reformist parties, the Portuguese masses thought that everything was possible, and calls for moderation did not work.

The PCP participated in the first governments. In addition to getting the Ministry of Labor, it got Cunhal named minister without portfolio. He, thus, got the same status as Mario Soares, the leader of an SP formed less than a year before, which had no base among the workers, and barely 200 members; and Sa Carneiro, leader of the People's Dem-

1. As a result of this coup d'état by the right-wing military, the parliament and the parties were dissolved and the press subjected to censorship. Antonio Oliveira de Salazar, appointed minister of finance in 1928, became premier in 1931, and established a dictatorship that was to last until the revolution of 1974.

2. Between 1928 and 1934, the ultraleft line of the Communist International, called the line of the "third period," involved an ultrasectarian attitude toward the Social Democratic parties, which were denounced as social fascist.

3. In 1934, and in particular at the Seventh Congress of the Communist International in 1935, the Communist parties adopted the "popular front" line, which advocated alliances with bourgeois "democratic" forces against fascism.

4. On the revolutionary process in Portugal in 1974-1975, see the article by Francisco Louca in *International Viewpoint*, No. 52, May 7, 1984.



Portugal, April 1975. Mague engineering factory. (DR)

ocratic Party (PPD), which was then in formation.

In the eyes of the PCP, this represented the confirmation of the alliance of anti-monopoly strata in the national democratic revolution — the working-class (PCP), the petty bourgeoisie (SP), and the middle bourgeoisie (PPD) — as the PCP put it explicitly! Since the PCP did not believe that it was possible to establish a bourgeois democratic regime, its objective was a “national democratic regime,” the expression of an alliance of the classes cited above, which would make possible a peaceful transition to socialism.

Two developments were to shake up the party at the time. On the one hand, there was an enormous increase in membership. It went from less than 5,000 at the start of the revolution to 15,000 in July, to 50,000 in September, to more than 100,000 in May of the following year, and 115,000 in September of the same year. Today it is 200,000. The apparatus was suspicious of the new members.

Although Cunhal said in his reports to the Seventh and Eighth congresses (1974 and 1976) that no distinction should be made between members who joined before and after 1974, the fact is that the October 1974 congress did not even elect a new leadership. It simply reconfirmed the leadership elected in 1965 with the addition of a few co-opted members.

The second disturbing factor was that the mass movement was tending to go over the barriers placed in its way. At the time of its October 1974 congress,

the PCP had not yet understood this, but certain special features were already beginning to appear in the process underway — workers control; structures of self-organization, such as the Workers Committees; and land occupations. Nothing of this was reflected in the documents of the congress.

In the congress, the stress was put on strengthening the “democratic state,” which was to be accomplished “by placing in the key posts persons enjoying the total confidence of the democratic forces.” (Cunhal’s report to the Seventh Congress.)

The land occupations and the spread of workers and neighborhood committees were seen by the PCP only as an additional opportunity for putting pressure on the state apparatus. So, in February 1975, it promoted the formation of the first People’s Assembly in Almada. But this assembly was reduced to being merely a front for the party in the typical Stalinist style.

In the conditions of the time, it was necessary to take account of the military question. The alliance of the people and the Armed Forces Movement (MFA) became for the PCP the expression of the alliance “anti-monopoly strata.”

Once again, the social clivages widened, especially after the attempted rightist coup d’etat on March 11, 1975. Caught between its position as a government party and the acceleration of the mass movement, the PCP found itself in a difficult position. It wanted to appear to be the driving force in the process, when

at the same time it was doing its best to divert it and hold it back, in the name of non-existent class alliances and of gaining strategic posts in the state apparatus.

After March 11 and the breakup of the alliances that could limit the revolution, the PCP and the SP turned their main fire on each other. The conflicts sharpened in the armed forces, while potential dual-power organs spread, even though their centralization remained very limited.

As we have seen, the PCP participated in some of these bodies, or even gave impetus to them. In the organizations of the far left, the illusion then appeared about the possibility of “forcing” the PCP to become revolutionary. At the same time, according to Cunhal’s report to the Eighth Congress in 1976, sections of the party supported an alliance with the “ultraleftists.”

In August 1975, the Revolutionary Unity Front (FUR) was formed. It included, besides the PCP, the People’s Democratic Movement (MDP), which was controlled by the PCP; the movement of the Socialist Left (MES); the Revolutionary Party of the Proletariat (PRP), the People’s Socialist Front (FSP), the League for Revolutionary Unity and Action (LUAR); and the International Communist League, Portuguese section of the Fourth International. A few days later, the PCP left the FUR to seek an alliance with the moderate military officers close to the Socialist Party.

The autonomous organization of the masses was already going beyond what the PCP considered the acceptable limits. The organs of “people’s power” were beginning to get an idea that they could be something quite different than pressure groups. People began to talk about a National People’s Assembly, which would be a decisive body in a future state power.

The autonomous soldiers movement became a factor of regroupment, and dissipated the illusions still placed in the MFA, attracting to its own demonstrations large strata of workers, including supporters of the Socialist Party. The pre-revolutionary situation was beginning to assemble the conditions for transforming itself into a revolutionary one.

These possibilities were cut short by the coup d’etat of November 25, 1975. (5) For the PCP, this event meant the loss of some of the positions it had gained. But at the same time, it removed the “ultra-leftist” danger, thanks, in particular, to the destruction of the autonomous soldiers organizations.

The PCP’s attitude toward the coup d’etat has been the subject of many controversies. The SP right has accused it of trying to take power. However, the fact

5. A coup d’etat carried out by a coalition of the right and center in the armed forces, whose real leader was the future president, Ramalho Eanes. This coup d’etat reestablished the authority of the bourgeois state and paved the way for the establishment of a parliamentary regime. See the article by Francisco Louca cited above.

is that the PCP did not even mobilize its members to respond to the coup. The confessions, as is often the case, appeared later. Thus, in his report to the Eighth Congress in 1976, Cunhal acknowledged that the coup was not as unfavorable as it had seemed for the party: "The tendency that took hold during the stabilization of democracy (one of the indices of which was PCP members remaining in the government after November 25) ran counter to the plans of the reactionaries."

To "reinforce the democratic state," stability was preferable to instability, and, henceforth, it was better to concentrate on not losing too many positions in the state apparatus. In fact, the PCP's positions were lost little by little. To try to preserve its positions, "the PCP has the analytical clarity, the serenity in action, and the necessary courage to combat mutual suspicion, to argue for a rapprochement of the sectors that have come into conflict, to defend all possible forms of cooperation between the people and the armed forces." (Cunhal's report to the Eighth Congress.)

Such appeals by the PCP did not, however, get much of a response. It did hold on to its ministerial portfolios, but a lot of its members were "purged" from their jobs, while the "military left," the left in the MFA, lost nearly all its positions. The bourgeoisie would then be able to do without the loyal services of the Stalinists.

For a « national democratic revolution »

The far left believed in the possibility of a socialist revolution. The FSP wrote: "1975, year of the revolution." But Cunhal and his party never envisaged going so far. That is why the party first secretary said in his report that the Portuguese revolution was not over and would not end until democracy had been definitively consolidated. The duplicity continued. He called not only for defending the regime, but the term "revolution" was still used in the report to satisfy and deceive the masses.

The stabilization was to score two points. In April 1976, a constitution was approved that reflected the contradictions of the previous year. Despite the loss of most of the gains of 1975, this constitution was and continues to be one of the PCP's main hobby horses. In this way, it presents the image of a party of stability and democratic order. In the same month, in the elections for the Assembly of the Republic (parliament), the PCP saw its vote go from 12.5% to 14.6%. It gained 20,000 votes in the working class area of Setubal, and increased its parliamentary delegation from thirty to forty deputies.

The second step in the stabilization was accomplished in June 1976, with the election to the presidency of Ramalho Eanes, the general who led the military operations on November 25. In these elections, the PCP ran one of its leaders, Octavio Pato, who took a line of non-

confrontation with Eanes. The PCP lost about half its vote to Major Otelo de Carvalho, the hero of April 25, who was supported by several organizations of the revolutionary left.

In the official theses of the PCP, the "People-MFA Alliance" was always presented as the driving force of the revolution. But the party found itself more and more in the tow of the state apparatus, and, after the formation of the SP government headed by Mario Soares in 1976, it fell more and more behind Eanes personally.

From 1976 to the present, the dominant features in the PCP's policy have been support for the constitution and for Eanes. This was particularly marked at the time of Eanes' reelection in 1980.

The trade-union movement, whose size was quite modest before April 25, remained a poor relation in the most intense moments of the revolutionary period. It was really built up on the basis of resistance to the anti-labor offensive launched in 1976. Identified with this struggle and the gains of the revolution, the PCP continued to grow until it reached a membership of about 200,000 and 20% of the vote.

The PCP's sectarianism toward an SP that has launched many attacks against the workers is one of the causes of its growth. However, given the lack of clear perspectives for action on the part of the union leaderships, which are mainly tied to the PCP, and with the workers growing weary of being used as a means of pressure without being offered any solutions, the working-class resistance began to ebb. This was particularly marked after the two general strikes of 1982, which achieved only limited success because the PCP-dominated union leaderships refused to call for unity in action with other unions linked to the SP. Since then, the trade-union movement has remained relatively paralyzed, and the PCP has experienced a certain stagnation.

If these developments are going to weigh on the future of the PCP, more important still will be the political questions that are inevitably going to arise in the coming years. Reference to the past is a constant in the language of the PCP, to a past that combines anti-fascism and the period of the revolution. This takes the form of calling for defending the gains of April and for preventing the return of fascism. This whole line is reflected in the strategy of "national democratic revolution." But this line is losing its relevance and its credibility, and its effect in agitation is weakening. The course of winning key positions in the state apparatus is also proving more and more futile.

This is the basic reason for the PCP's ever more open support for Eanes, and even for an Eanes party. There have been several attempts since 1978 to set up an Eanes party in various forms, and such a party will certainly run a candidate in the 1985 presidential elections. Since Eanes cannot legally run for a third term,

we are seeing an internal struggle in this current over the choice of candidate.

Playing the card of "Eanesism" is a risky operation for the PCP. The unions that it controls are losing strength and prestige. The party is isolated, and a lot of its members are raising the question of what use the party serves. For the time being, the PCP is trying to influence the "Eanesist" current by concentrating its fire against the candidacy of Madame Pintasilgo. She was premier for three months in 1979, and represents the "Eanesist" left, without being any less a bourgeois candidate.

Not only would the PCP prefer a military candidate, but it fears the impact on its own ranks of Pintasilgo's populist style. Whatever happens, the PCP has little chance of exercising any influence in the choice. Already in 1980, it gave its votes to Eanes without getting anything in exchange. And the same thing will probably happen in 1985. The "Eanesists" have no reason to pay for the PCP's votes when they can get them for nothing.

In the coming year, besides the presidential elections, there will be municipal elections. Since November 25, 1975, "community politics" has been one of the main bases of illusions about the possibility for gradually gaining control of the state apparatus. This has been encouraged by a series of successes by the PCP in municipal politics.

However, the electoral pattern may change in two ways in the coming elections. On the one hand, the appearance of an "Eanesist" party could take votes away from the PCP. On the other, the formation of a coalition between the SP and the PSD (Social Democratic Party, a bourgeois party presently in the government with the SP) could move ahead of the PCP in quite a number of municipalities. These two factors could combine to bring about a substantial weakening of the PCP's municipal base.

The PCP is having more and more difficulty in fulfilling the principal functions of a reformist party. It is not in a position to engage in dialogue with the government. Its trade-union bureaucracy is less effective. The whole offensive toward the "Eanesist" current is, in fact, designed to break this isolation.

With or without portraits of Stalin — which in fact the PCP has never used in its public campaigns — and no matter how much it is tied to the USSR and denounces the Eurocommunists as traitors, the PCP will have to transform itself into a reformist party more and more integrated into the bourgeois state. The old leadership that harks back to the days of Stalin and Molotov will have to open up for dialogue.

The PCP already played a decisive role in saving the bourgeois system, and even though today the bourgeoisie is turning its back on the party ungratefully, it may need its services again. The party's margin for maneuver is already narrow, and it may be still more so after the upcoming elections.

Stalinism - the mongrel offspring of Marxism

John MEEHAN

Tariq Ali ed., *The Stalinist Legacy - its impact on Twentieth Century World Politics*, Penguin, 1984.

This book is a fine collection of Marxist essays with an informative introduction by Tariq Ali. Authors include Trotsky, Ernest Mandel, Tito, Nicolas Krasso and Joseph Smrkovsky.

The book does not try to give simple formulas. The Soviet Union has not achieved socialism, nor is it a capitalist state. It is in transition between capitalism and socialism, controlled by a conservative bureaucracy which fiercely resists movements seeking greater democracy.

Stalin's 'socialism in one country' had to be built in the 1920s and 1930s with machine guns and concentration camps. Tariq Ali notes in his introduction that most right wing critics of the USSR conveniently ignore the first victims of the Stalinist Terror, tens of thousands of communist revolutionaries. One of the most moving pieces in this collection is the memoir written by 'MB' called 'The Trotskyists in Vorkuta Prison Camp'.

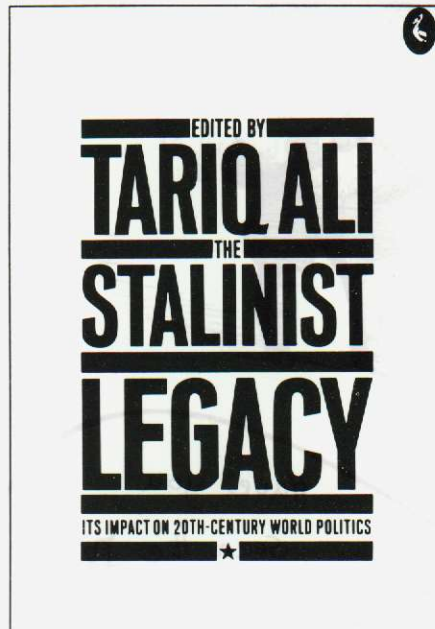
In autumn 1936 the Trotskyist prisoners met to discuss the meaning of the frameup trials of Zinoviev, Kamenev, and others. Women and men who had participated in the revolutionary movement for over three decades 'voluntarily confessed' they had been police agents for several years, they were agents of Hitler's Nazis, and so on.

Guevorkian, leader of the Trotskyist political prisoners at Vorkuta, warned his comrades they faced a dire personal future: 'Remaining proletarian revolutionaries to the very end, we should not entertain any illusions about the fate awaiting us. But before destroying us, Stalin will try to humiliate us as much as he can. By throwing political prisoners in with common criminals, he strives to scatter us among the criminals and to incite them against us. We are left with only one means of struggle in this unequal battle: the hunger-strike.'

Nearly 1000 political prisoners, most of them Trotskyists, went on hunger-strike for 132 days. But the Trotskyist prisoners won their demands. In March 1937 they were informed all their demands (would) be satisfied.

As Guevorkian predicted, the prisoners were eventually executed. Hundreds marched through the freezing winter snow to their deaths, singing the Internationale.

A man who worked closely with Stalin during the 1930s later commented:



'Confessions of guilt of many arrested and charged with enemy activity were gained with the help of cruel and inhuman tortures.' The witness's name was Nikita Khrushchev, General Secretary of the USSR CP from 1954 to 1963. The quote is taken from his famous secret report to the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party in 1956. The entire speech can be found in Tariq Ali's wide-ranging selection.

Khrushchev believed Stalin's terror had gone out of control. No one was safe from the paranoid secret police apparatus. It was only a partial break; thousands were rehabilitated, but they did not include veteran revolutionaries who led the Bolshevik party to victory in October 1917. The frame-up indictments against Trotsky, Bukharin, and several others have still not been repealed.

The first break in the Stalinist monolith came with Tito's excommunication in 1948. During the Second World War Tito's partisans led a mass liberation movement to victory over the Nazis and their native capitalist collaborators. The Soviet Army did not have to set a foot in Yugoslavia. It was different in the rest of Eastern Europe: the Soviet Army chased out the crumbling Nazi armies, effectively winning the world war. Stalin had a free hand in his 'buffer state' between his own borders and Western Germany. At Yalta Churchill and Stalin cynically divided up Europe between West and East ... and Yugoslavia was to be a 'fifty/fifty' zone.

What were the partisans to do: make a 'fifty/fifty' deal with the capitalist Nazi

collaborators they had already overthrown? The Yugoslav revolutionaries said 'No Thanks' and took power, making Yugoslavia a workers' state. Stalin was furious about this 'ultra left' provocation which might sting the Western imperialists into an attack on the 'socialist homeland' of the USSR. Tito was condemned as a 'Trotskyite counterrevolutionary', an 'agent of imperialism', and so on.

A Soviet invasion was a serious possibility. The Yugoslav answer was simple and effective: the entire population was armed. The Soviet Union had overwhelming military superiority: but an invasion would have met fierce popular resistance. Stalin backed down.

The Yugoslav example of a socialist revolution supported by the masses was repeated in China, Cuba and Vietnam; before our eyes it is happening today in Nicaragua. No longer is there one isolated 'socialist fortress' with a string of satellites; there are two, three, many revolutionary beacons.

Some genuine revolutionaries worry about criticizing the USSR too much because if they achieve a socialist victory in their own country, they will have to get material support from the Soviets against imperialist attacks. They also worry that a crisis in the workers' states - like we have recently witnessed with the rise of Solidarnosc in Poland - might offer the imperialists a chance to roll back the gains of the post-capitalist states.

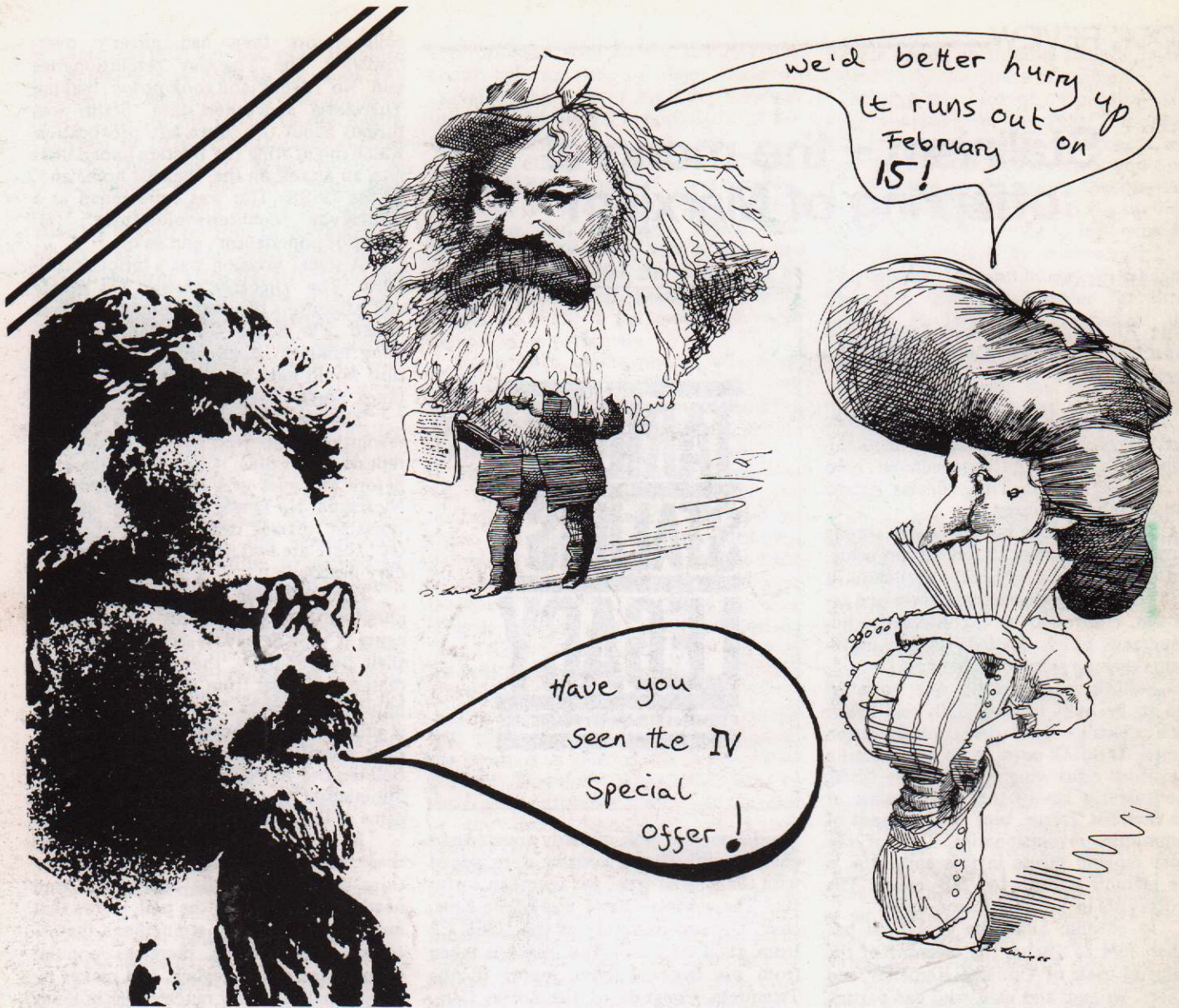
In a small way Nicaragua disproves these worries completely. The recent elections there, where the Sandinistas won nearly 70 per cent of the poll, shows that increased democracy strengthens the socialist revolution. It increases popular support for a new regime, and makes international solidarity much easier in every country. That is a huge factor stalling the vicious USA imperialists.

Of course if we had a living example of democratic socialism in a developed country like Czechoslovakia or Poland the impact would be very great. Despite all the hypocrisy of the Thatchers and Reagans about Solidarnosc, a revolutionary workers' overthrow of a European Stalinist bureaucracy would be a devastating blow against the capitalists.

In any event the bureaucratized workers' states are going through a serious internal crisis, paralleling the capitalist economic crisis. It is only a matter of time before a Solidarnosc type regime is established. And what will they think of people who refused their support in the hour of need, calling them 'fascists' and using other dirty slanders.

The book takes up these and many other issues. There is but one criticism to be made which is that an essay on women in the Stalinist states could have been included.

The book shows that the advance of socialist revolution is not a dilemma for anti-stalinist revolutionaries: it is the other way round. Each breakthrough means that the Stalinists have more difficulty, but the workers and their allies have more opportunity. ■



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