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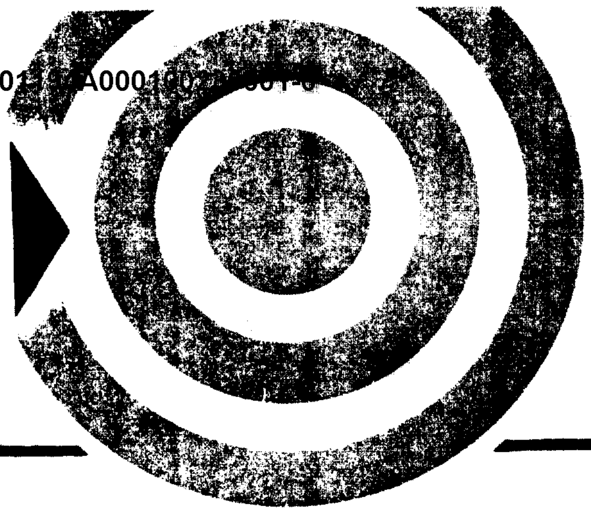
FEATURES



Communists in Democratic Clothing by Daniel Seligman, Fortune, March 1976

The attached article is an analysis of the current phenomenon of communist parties endorsing democratic principles and what this may mean to the United States, the West and the Soviet Union. The author deals principally with the communist parties of Italy and France whose participation in government is a possibility. Seligman also concerns himself with the parties of Spain and Japan whose participation is more remote. The author concludes that communist parties, in their present form, justify the concern of those who want to keep them out of the government, that they represent too great a risk. The article is not meant for replay but rather to provide Station personnel and covert action assets with a concise discussion of the ramifications of this development. (The two previous articles in this series dealt with the CPSU 25th Congress.)

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FINAL ARTICLE IN A SERIES

Communists in Democratic Clothing

Some of the largest Communist parties in the West say they believe in civil liberties, free elections, and a multiparty system. Do they mean it?

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by Daniel Seligman

Some time soon the American people may be focusing hard on a question that once would have seemed very peculiar indeed. Can Communists be democrats? Only a few years ago, the answer would have been—no, obviously not. Today it isn't obvious at all.

A number of Communist parties in the advanced industrial countries now claim to be democratic. They say that they are committed to a multiparty system in which civil liberties and cultural freedom would be guaranteed. They say that they have no interest in bringing anything like the Soviet version of Communism to the West, and they can, in fact, point to numerous instances in which they have criticized the Russians for acts of repression.

Whether they mean what they say would appear to be a matter of considerable significance. Communists talking about democracy have serious prospects of entering the governments of Italy and France during the next couple of years, and interesting longer-run prospects in Spain (where the party is now outlawed) and Japan. If even one of these four countries were governed by Communists, the political map of the world would surely be transformed in ways that Americans could not ignore.

The nature of the transformation is a matter of some controversy. Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger, who is skeptical about the Communists' profession of democratic beliefs, has argued that bringing their parties into government would undermine the free world's unity and resolve. On the other hand, those who believe that the "democratic" Communists really mean it sometimes argue that their participation in the democratic process would principally threaten Soviet interests. It is a real question whether the regimes of Eastern Europe could survive the spectacle of Communists entering a democratic government and later retiring from office after being defeated in a free election.

It should be obvious that the desirability of bringing Communists into government is an issue involving economics as well as politics. In principle, at least, they might turn out to be truly democratic, independent of the Russians, even willing to support NATO and the European Community—and *still* be a disaster for the West. It is most unclear what would remain of the market system in any country where "democratic" Communists came to power. They are generally committed to preserve a mixture of public and private enterprise, and they are certainly not emphasizing plans for any major nationalization of industry (indeed, the Italian Communists insist, just like the British Tories, that some industries now run by government should be denationalized). Still, their strident and demogogic rhetoric about the menace of multinational corporations does not sound encouraging.

Seventeen out of seventeen

It seems reasonable to ask whether Communists talking about democracy aren't simply engaged in a gigantic hoax, hoping that the talk will bring them to power but planning to revert to their normal totalitarian practices after achieving it. There is certainly a *prima facie* case for regarding totalitarianism as the norm. Seventeen countries have gone Communist over the years, from the Soviet Union in November, 1917, to Laos in December, 1975. There is today no political opposition or cultural freedom in any of the seventeen.

There is another reason to be skeptical. Over the years, Communists have been flagrant liars. And their doctrine has long proclaimed that any tactics are morally permissible in the war against the bourgeoisie.

Lenin was amazingly explicit about this. He denounced as "infantile" those party members who insisted on adhering to principled revolutionary positions, and said that the true revolutionaries were those willing "to resort to all sorts of stratagems, artifices, illegal methods, to evasions and subterfuges. . ." The Communist parties now professing to have been converted to democratic principles will not deny that they remain Leninists. On this count alone, it would seem reasonable to ask questions about their conversion.

Camping with the Russians

But the most compelling reason for skepticism lies elsewhere—in the ambiguous relationship between the democratically oriented Communist parties and the Soviet Union. While the party leaders frequently criticize the Russians, reject their guidance on many issues of common concern, and generally drive them crazy at international party conferences (see "Communism's Crisis of Authority," FORTUNE, February), the parties nevertheless insist on their underlying solidarity with the Soviet Union, as members of "the socialist camp." When a professed democrat says he belongs to a "camp" that admits totalitarians, it is natural to wonder about the depth of his commitment to democracy.

At the same time, it would be foolish to deny the possibility of democratic Communism. There is no inherent rea-

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son why Communist parties must be totalitarian. After Nikita Khrushchev's February, 1956, "secret speech," which shattered forever the mystique of Stalinism, the parties outside the Soviet sphere were free to create their own versions of Communism.

Their ideologies do not appear to represent an insuperable difficulty to the creation of democratic versions. Over the years, a sizable number of socialists have interpreted Marxist ideas, and for that matter Leninist ideas, in ways that allow for political freedom. Right now, Roy Medvedev, the dissident Soviet historian, is arguing learnedly and courageously for a reform of Soviet Communism in which political democracy would be based on Marxism-Leninism. (His argument is presented in *On Socialist Democracy*, the text of which was published last year in the U.S.)

Furthermore, Communists would appear to have some powerful incentives for moving toward democratic positions. It has become fairly obvious in the last few years that the most successful Communist parties—those that have attracted the most members and won the most votes—are precisely those that have moved the furthest away from Stalinism.

The Italian party, which was first and most emphatic in proclaiming its commitment to democracy, is also the largest in the West, with 1.7 million members. In regional elections last June, the party won a third of the total vote; in electoral support it is now generally considered the equal of the Christian Democrats, who have ruled Italy all through the postwar years. The Communists' secretary-general, Enrico Berlinguer, was voted the "most trusted" of all Italian politicians in a poll taken several months ago.

Meanwhile, the Communist parties that sound as though they are still selling the Soviet version of Communism (e.g., the U.S., Australian, and Danish parties) tend to be small and isolated sects. Thus there is a growing incentive for Communists to behave like democrats; and it seems reasonable to wonder whether this behavior might not be translated into a genuine commitment to democracy.

The politics of ambiguity

Political analysts trying to judge how the democratically oriented Communists would actually behave in office have generally paid special attention to the Italian Communist party. To a considerable extent, it is a model for the other "democratic" Communists. It has achieved this status, not only because of its electoral triumphs, but also because of a kind of intellectual preeminence in the Communist world.

The Italian party has a quite distinctive political style. It is a mass party, whose members are drawn from all segments of Italian society; yet to a remarkable extent it is a party dominated by intellectuals, and its postwar leaders have generally been men of some subtlety and imagination.

In several other European countries, and especially France, Communist party members tend to be concentrated in the working class and left-leaning intellectuals have been only fellow travelers. In Italy, the intellectuals are inside the party and among its leaders. Perhaps for this reason, the Italian party has had special success in rationalizing, indeed cultivating, the ambiguities that swirl around the idea of democratic Communism.

To a degree, the ambiguities reflect the fact that the party pursues somewhat conflicting objectives. Professor Donald L. M. Blackmer, a political scientist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a specialist in Italian Communism, has observed that three objectives have been paramount in the postwar era: preserving the unity of the party, preserving its ties with other groups in Italian politics, and preserving a measure of "solidarity" with the Soviet Union. But none of these objectives can be pursued wholeheartedly because each of them conflicts with the other two. Solidarity with the Russians, which makes it harder for Italian Communists to form alliances with other parties, has certainly lessened in recent years. At the same time, any forthright rejection of solidarity—e.g., sustained attacks on the Soviet Union by Italian party leaders—would upset many members and threaten party unity.

The Berlinguer leadership is adept at developing formulations that offer something to both the democrats and the totalitarians. For example, when the dissident Soviet physicist Andrei Sakharov was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize last fall, and was not allowed to leave the country to accept it, the party daily *l'Unità* expressed its regret. But the paper also held that he should not have got the prize in the first place and expressed "dissatisfaction with many of the positions that Sakharov sustains."

Is Zionism a form of racism? Certainly not, said *l'Unità*, at a time when the Soviet Union was supporting this proposition in the United Nations. However, the paper coupled this declaration with a reminder to its readers that Zionism was a "reactionary ideology which is used by imperialism."

Mapping the Italian road

It is hard to put a date on the Italian party's adoption of a democratic line. Party boss Palmiro Togliatti appeared to have an interest in moving toward some such line soon after he returned from exile in 1944. His speeches throughout the late 1940's emphasized the need for democracy as well as socialism and sometimes made the point that the "Italian road to socialism" would be different from the Soviet road.

However, it seems fair to say that the party did not seriously confront the issue of Stalinism, or develop its views on democracy, until after Khrushchev's 1956 secret speech. The intellectuals at the head of the party, including Togliatti himself, seem to have been genuinely shattered by the denunciation of Stalin (although there was surely an element of hypocrisy in their universal failure to admit to any prior suspicion that he ever abridged the civil rights of his compatriots). Some leaders responded by denouncing Khrushchev and defending Stalin against the charges; others accepted the charges and demanded that the party face facts.

Togliatti responded to the new tensions in the party characteristically—by equivocating. His position was a marvel of ambiguity. In defining the party's new relationship to the Russians, he elaborated the idea of "polycentrism,"

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i.e., the idea that there was no longer any one center of authority for international Communism. But then, during the prolonged argument about the Soviet intervention in Hungary, he generally supported the Soviet line. At the party's Eighth Congress, in December, 1956, he backed a resolution indicating that Italian Communists believed in the existing multiparty political system. But the discussion that accompanied this resolution made it clear that opposition parties were still deemed to be unnecessary after socialism had been attained.

Two external events in the early 1960's spurred the party to put the issue of democracy on the agenda again. One was the Twenty-second Congress of the Soviet party in 1961, at which Khrushchev renewed his attack on Stalin. Togliatti tried to argue that the attack was an internal Soviet affair, but his own central committee insisted that it had implications for the Italian party too.

The debate in the committee, which was impassioned, and which soon spread throughout the entire party, focused on the fact that Stalin had suppressed dissent within the Soviet party; it was this suppression, many Italian Communists contended, that had made possible his crimes. The implication drawn by the Italians was that there should be a greater right of dissent within their own party. It appears that the rights of *non-Communists* in a socialist society did not particularly interest the participants in this debate. Khrushchev had not dwelt upon Stalin's behavior toward ordinary citizens, but only his persecution of party members; and the Italian Communists seemed to agree with Khrushchev's definition of the problem.

Everyone supports the line

However, the wave of discussion finally subsided with the Italian party's constitution unchanged. It had always allowed in principle for dissent, but the rules had also required party members to support the party line after all the discussion was over. This requirement remained.

Another event that forced the party to rethink its views on democracy was a development in Italian politics often referred to as "the opening to the left." Until the early 1960's, Italy had been ruled by the Christian Democrats in alliance with various liberal and conservative parties; meanwhile, the Communists and Socialists had generally been allied in opposition. But as these alliances broke down, the Christian Democrats increasingly had to turn left, to the Italian Socialists and Social Democrats, for help in forming governments at both the local and national levels. This left the Communists concerned about being isolated—and the concern led them to place a special emphasis on their ties to the Socialists.

All of which represented a pressure on the party to adopt a more democratic look. Beginning soon after the secret speech, which had a profound impact on the Socialists too, leaders of that party began to taunt the Communists for their lack of credibility in claiming to be democrats. Socialist leader Pietro Nenni called for a "recognition of the inalienable and permanent value of democracy and liberty, without which even a revolution that transforms capitalist property into state or communal property results in reestablishing, in different forms, oppression and even exploitation of the workers."

Nenni went on to make another point: that even if the Communists accepted all this in principle, it would still be difficult for the Socialist party to believe in their sincerity so long as they continued to insist on their essential solidarity with the Soviet Union. The Communists responded to these criticisms, not by breaking decisively with the Russians, but by finding more and more occasions for disagreeing with them and for proclaiming their own democratic intentions.

The birth of a testament

One dramatic opportunity to do both occurred at the time of Togliatti's death, in the summer of 1964. Togliatti had gone to Moscow in August. He hoped to talk Khrushchev out of the world conference of Communist parties that the Russians, seeking to reassert their authority over the world movement, were then trying to organize. As Italian Communists tell the story, Togliatti was stood up by Khrushchev, who left word that he would be touring Siberia with Lord Thomson, the British publisher. While awaiting his audience with the Soviet leader, Togliatti decided to go to Yalta.

When he got there, he also decided to write a kind of "talking paper" for himself—a document that would spell out the Italian party's views on the world conference and other matters, including the party's relationship with the Russians. He is said to have written the 4,500-word paper at one sitting. Then, while it was being typed, he and his wife went to visit a nearby youth center. While they were there, he suffered a massive stroke.

When news of his stroke reached the Italian party, his deputy, Luigi Longo, hastened to Yalta. Longo presented Togliatti's paper to the Soviet leaders. He did not, however, tell them that he planned to have it published if the author should die (as he did a few days later). This omission doubtless spared Longo some unpleasantness. For Togliatti's "testament," as the document is now called, proved to be a sizable annoyance to the Russians—an annoyance presumably magnified by the fact that, before they had learned it would be published, they had announced to the world that the Soviet town of Stavropol, on the Volga, was to be renamed Togliatti.

Perhaps the most infuriating passage of all, from Khrushchev's point of view, was one denouncing the lack of freedom in the Soviet Union. Wrote Togliatti: "The problem that most demands our attention today, one affecting the Soviet Union as much as the other socialist countries, is especially that of overcoming the regime of restrictions and suppressions of democratic freedoms which was introduced by Stalin." The memorandum then noted that there appeared to be a strange "resistance" in the Soviet party to "the Leninist norms" that, Togliatti said, had once guaranteed "a wide liberty of expression and debate on culture and art, as well as in the political field."

Thus the Soviet leaders, who were already being denounced by the Chinese for trying to restore capitalism, were now getting it from the Italians for abolishing freedom. Much of the comment on the "testament" in Italy indicates that it has been remarkably effective in persuading non-Communists that the party stands for democracy.

An urge to compromise

In the last few years, all discussion of democratic tendencies in the Italian Communist party has had a new frame-

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work. In 1973, under the prodding of Berlinguer, who had become secretary-general the previous year, the party revised its political strategy. The strategy of alliance with the Socialists had been appropriate to an era in which the Communists were part of the opposition. But now, Berlinguer made plain, the party was strong enough to bid for a share of power. He proposed a great "historic compromise" in which the Communists would govern together with the Christian Democrats (and possibly the Socialists as well). The two parties by themselves would presumably have about 70 percent of the vote behind them and any cabinet they formed would be something akin to a government of national unity.

The Christian Democrats have thus far turned a deaf ear to the historic compromise, but the Communists appear certain that its time will come. In a period of boundless economic troubles, they believe, their party's rising electoral strength, and their iron grip on Italy's labor unions, will ultimately make it impossible for the Christian Democrats to govern without them.

They like our capital

In order to make the proposition more salable, they have worked in a variety of ways to emphasize their moderation and responsibility. Eugenio Peggio, who often speaks for the party on economic issues, says that the Communists "do not have any prejudice against foreign capital, and in particular American capital." In his office, where he sits beneath a portrait of Lenin, Peggio cheerfully proclaims that what is needed is more government *aid* to private enterprise, especially small and medium-sized companies.

In addition, the Italian Communists have signed a number of formal declarations with the Communist parties of other West European countries committing them all to democratic principles. A declaration signed by Berlinguer and Spanish Communist leader Santiago Carrillo last July proclaimed: "Socialism can only arise in our countries through the development and full achievement of democracy. This has at its base the affirmation of the values of personal and collective freedom and the guarantee of the principles of the separation between church and state, of freedom of speech, of the plurality of parties and the open dialogue between them, of the liberty of expression in culture, in art, and in science."

Clinging to contradictions

Do the Italian Communists mean it? It is hard to answer the question flatly; there is some evidence, at least, to suggest that they do not always know their own minds. Some years back, Togliatti complained about the damage done to the party by something called *doppiezza*. The word is sometimes translated as "duplicity," and, indeed, critics of the party often reached for the word in the course of arguing that Communists say one thing but mean another. However, Togliatti was referring to a somewhat different mental process—one that might be translated as "double-think."

The idea behind this usage is that many people seem to be perfectly capable of holding beliefs that are not logically compatible with one another. For example, they might believe (a) that socialism means freedom, (b) that the Soviet Union is a socialist society, and (c) that the Soviet Union is a repressive society. Many Italian Communists do in fact appear to believe all three of these propositions.

Intellectually active Communists tend to be pretty adept at this sort of thing. To begin with, dialectical materialism, the philosophy elaborated by Marx and Engels, lays great stress on the creative potential of clashing ideas. The dialectical process, in which the clash of thesis and antithesis leads to the "higher truth" of synthesis, provides a model of reality that sometimes seems to justify the holding of contradictory ideas.

Togliatti was surely right in suggesting that *doppiezza* was bad for the party. Yet the fact is that the roots of the problem go back to his own policies—to the politics of ambiguity that he embraced in the years after Stalin's death. And the problem is far from solved today. Indeed, the word that critics of the party reach for today is *ambiguità*. And their principal exhibit, today as in Togliatti's time, is the party's ambiguous relationship with the Soviet Union.

How can one possibly accept the democratic professions of those who voluntarily ally themselves with the rulers of a totalitarian society? Francesco de Martino, who heads the Socialist party, is as insistent today in demanding an answer as Nenni was in the late 1950's. And Luigi Preti, a prominent member of the Social Democratic party, has argued the point at length in a recently published volume assailing the idea of the historic compromise. Said Preti: "They must choose and have the courage to make a break. If they do not, they will remain the prisoners of irrationality and it will be impossible to inspire confidence and trust. They cannot claim credibility."

The importance of traditions

A somewhat similar point has been made by Antonio Giolitti, a former Communist who is now a prominent Socialist member of Parliament. Giolitti, the grandson of a pre-World War I premier, says that he does not doubt Berlinguer's own sincerity when he talks about democracy. But Leninist patterns of thought are so deeply ingrained in the political behavior of many Communists that it would be imprudent to trust them, he fears.

"I think of this hypothesis," said Giolitti recently. "They form a government. They take power. There is much debate and uncertainty over what they will do. Businessmen begin to send their capital abroad. Other parties demonstrate against the Communists and perhaps there is some violence on both sides. What will the Communists do in this situation? I am not sure—but I worry that their instinct will be to limit the freedom of others and to do anything that will enable them to avoid surrendering power. The other Communist parties will tell them: don't weaken, history is on our side. It is in this context that their Bolshevik traditions would make a difference. That is why they must repudiate those traditions."

Some critics of the Italian Communist party believe that its commitment to democracy is suspect on still another count. Leopold Labedz, editor of the London-based quarterly *Survey*, which runs scholarly articles about Communism, believes that the commitment does not square with the party's internal arrangements. The Italian party—and, it would appear, every other Communist party in the world—believes in "democratic centralism." In principle, this doctrine permits local cells and sections to

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discuss all questions confronting the party and to elect delegates to the policymaking conventions. Once policy is set, however, "democratic centralism" requires all members to support it in every detail; there can be no deviations, no factions, no journals expressing dissident ideas. The penalty for factionalism is expulsion from the party.

This is all quite different, it will be observed, from the tradition of democratic socialist (and, for that matter, conservative) parties, in which the standard assumption is that every member will have the right to maintain his beliefs and to argue them indefinitely. The British Labor party, for example, has a left-wing faction and a right-wing faction, and the party usually splits along various other lines any time it is presented with a complex new issue like, say, British membership in the European Community.

The Italian Communists, on the other hand, routinely expel their own dissidents, and there is no doubt that the threat of expulsion works to inhibit free speech within the party. Serious debate takes place only when the leadership itself is divided (which, of course, it has sometimes been).

Why is it monolithic?

In practice, as the history of Communism has repeatedly demonstrated, "democratic centralism" is a remarkably effective means of controlling the votes and ideas of the rank and file. Very few heads of Communist parties, and none in Italy, have been voted out of their positions, and when the leadership itself is united, it seems able to impose almost any ideas on the rank and file. Berlinguer had very little trouble, for example, in selling 1.7 million members on the idea of the historic compromise—i.e., on an alliance with their traditional enemy the Christian Democrats. All of which is why a party governed by the rules of "democratic centralism" doesn't really look very democratic to critics like Leopold Labedz. "If they really are converted to democracy," he asks, "why do they need this monolithic party? If they really believe in freedom for ideas, why do they begin by suppressing ideas inside their own party?"

The electoral successes of the Italian Communists have had a profound effect on the French [illegible] party. The traditions and political styles of the two are quite dissimilar. The French party was much slower to shake off the heritage of Stalinism and it is still more rigid and dogmatic in its approach to current issues. It is what students of Communism call a "triumphalist" party, i.e., the tone of voice of its press and leadership convey the impression of an infallible party marching from one smashing triumph to another.

Three months ago, party leader Georges Marchais had the misfortune, while speaking on French television, to commit this egregious slip of the tongue: "We would never accept the idea of decisions affecting the French people being made anywhere but in Moscow." With an embarrassed smile, he immediately corrected that to "in Paris." Since every word uttered by the leader in public is dutifully reprinted in the party's daily *L'Humanité*, some readers of that paper must have waited with special curiosity to see what treatment would be accorded the slip. But, typically, the paper refused to acknowledge the slip; it printed a "transcript" in which the sentence simply ended with "anywhere but in Paris."

The case for an overhaul

Despite its traditions, the French party too has been under increasing pressure to take a democratic line. The party has been slipping in by-elections and in the polls; it is now thought to command less than 20 percent of the French vote. The Communists are no longer the senior partner in the "union of the left"—their rather uneasy alliance with the Socialist party led by François Mitterrand (now thought to have 30 percent of the vote). The spectacle of an Italian Communist party pushing a democratic line and growing steadily stronger, while the French Communists clung to their Stalinist past and grew weaker, provided a rather convincing case for an overhaul in France.

It would appear that the decision for an overhaul was made sometime last fall. In November, Marchais joined with Berlinguer in issuing a declaration of principles that committed both to a vigorous defense of democracy. The declaration, which was in some respects even stronger than the one issued jointly by the Italian and Spanish parties, held that "all freedom resulting from the great bourgeois democratic revolutions . . . should be guaranteed and furthered."

It then specified what was involved in this freedom: "liberty of thought and expression, of press, of meeting and association, the right to demonstrate, to travel in and out of the country, the inviolability of private life, religious freedom, total freedom to express diverse ideologies and philosophical, cultural, and artistic opinion. The French and Italian Communist parties declare themselves in favor of the plurality of political parties—including the right of opposition parties to exist and to act, the free formation of majorities and minorities, and the possibility of democratic alternation . . ."

No return ticket

The reference to alternation (*l'alternance*) was of special interest to many French voters. At the time the union of the left was originally formed, in 1972, Mitterrand had demanded that the French Communists agree to this concept, i.e., that they explicitly acknowledge the possibility of their being voted out of office after they got in. The Communists tried to argue that the issue was quite irrelevant: it was impossible to imagine the French people turning against socialism once they had attained it, just as it was inconceivable that the people would ever have overthrown the original revolution and brought back the *ancien régime*. For several months, late in 1972, the Communists maintained grimly that there would be "no return ticket." Mitterrand stuck to his guns, however, and eventually they did commit themselves to the concept of *l'alternance*. The sequence of events did not exactly inspire confidence in the Communists' dedication to their democratic principles.

And, of course, the party remains totally committed to "democratic centralism" and the suppression of heresy in its ranks. Its ability to turn on a 10-centime coin, as several hundred thousand French Communists are doing right now, is astonishing. At the party's Twenty-second Congress, held in Paris last month, there was no real dissent from the new line, which features extensive criticism of Soviet repression, rejection of the "dictatorship of the proletariat," and a special emphasis on recruiting members from outside the working class.

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Only six years ago, at the Nineteenth Congress, the delegates were equally unanimous in turning down most of these ideas. They were being proposed by Roger Garaudy, a party leader who had been a Communist for thirty-five years. Garaudy was hooted when he spoke, stripped of all his party positions, and expelled shortly after the convention. It sounds paradoxical, but the very unanimity with which the French Communists have now embraced the democratic line is itself a reason for wondering whether they really mean it.

Two other Communist parties, those of Spain and Japan, also have some prospects of eventually participating in governments. Both have substantial support and appear to be growing in strength. But both also have some deep-seated problems and are distrusted by those whom they consider to be their natural allies. In addition, both must compete to some extent with splinter groups consisting of former members.

How to be respectable

The problems of the Spanish Communist party begin with the fact that it is illegal and obliged to function underground. The post-Franco regime has given no indication that it plans to legalize the party. In their efforts to gain respectability, the Spanish Communists have increasingly emphasized their independence of the Russians and their commitment to parliamentary democracy. In general, they have aligned themselves with the Italian Communists, but they have gone even further than the Italians in needling the Russians.

Last October, for example, Spanish Communist leader Santiago Carrillo gave an interview in Italy in which he speculated on the prospect that some of the democratically oriented West European Communists might come to power. Then he added, "We cannot ignore the fact that in Moscow this will be viewed with concern." The Italian Communists immediately disassociated themselves from this dig at the Russians.

Spanish party members who have insisted on remaining loyal to the Soviet leaders have been expelled (and have organized their own splinter group). The party's commitment to "democratic centralism" is one of the reasons its support of political freedom is distrusted by other parties on the left. Felipe Gonzalez, secretary-general of the Spanish Socialist Workers' party, observed recently that the "internal structure" of Communist parties is a clue to their real beliefs about democracy.

A hard line on the Kuriles

The Japanese Communist party has been able to operate legally ever since 1945, but it emerged as a mass party—membership is now up to 350,000—only in the last decade. There is no doubt that the Communists have been helped, in this period, by their formal endorsements of political democracy and their fierce insistence on independence from both the Soviet and Chinese Communists. Yet public-opinion polls suggest that large numbers of Japanese still view the Communists as totalitarians and foreign agents.

In part because of the need to demonstrate their independence, they have adopted an extraordinarily nationalistic platform. They are in favor of Japanese rearmament, for example. And while the conservatives who govern Japan have been asking for the return of some of the Kurile Islands, the Communists demand that the Russians give back *all* of them.

There is no doubt that the party is especially irritating to the Soviet leaders, who have connived at the establishment in Japan of a splinter Communist party that is more sympathetic to their own interests. The Chinese are plainly behind a second splinter party. And yet, in the face of all this ill will, the Japanese Communists insist that they are still a part of the same world movement to which the Russians and Chinese belong. Miyamoto Kenji, the Japanese party leader, observed blandly last year that the party philosophy "combines internationalism and patriotism." Like other "democratic" Communists, the Japanese party continues to cultivate the politics of ambiguity.

Will any Communist party ever be clear and credible in talking about its conversion to democracy? Given the fantastic changes that have already taken place in the world of Communism, it seems wrong to rule out the possibility. The historical process by which the "democratic" parties have reached their present positions is, after all, still unfolding.

And so some of the parties may ultimately do what has to be done to gain credibility. At a minimum, that means two changes. First, they must finally and unambiguously abandon solidarity with totalitarians—they must get out of "the socialist camp." Second, they must stop running their parties by the rules of "democratic centralism."

Those changes would presumably not come easy to the Communists, but there is no reason why non-Communists should settle for less. In their present form, the parties would appear to justify the concerns of those who want to keep them out of government. They represent too great a risk. END

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