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DIRECTORATE OF
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Intelligence Report

European Integration: The Communist Opposition

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INTELLIGENCE REPORT

European Integration: The Communist Opposition

Summary

During much of the postwar period, the Communist parties of Western Europe have strongly opposed the European integration movement, particularly the European Communities. Only the Italian Communist Party has accepted integration as a fact to which it must accommodate. It has sought and achieved meaningful representation in the EC's institutions, which, it hopes, will increase its influence both in Italy and in the community.

The French Communist Party—the only other party of significance in the communities—has, on the other hand, been tied to a rigidly anti-EC position which, until recently at least, Moscow has also espoused. It has stayed aloof from the EC's institutional machinery and has sought to prevent the Italians and the other Communist parties from participating actively. In opposing “supra-nationalism,” the French party has often made common cause with the Gaullists.

The differences in attitudes of these two Communist parties are unlikely to disappear overnight. But in the longer run it seems probable that the Italian viewpoint will prevail. As more and more economic, social, and political issues are dealt with on a European level, the Communist parties—like other parties—will have to go where the “action” is. Likewise, as industry in the enlarged community increasingly functions on a multi-national scale, the Communist-dominated trade unions will find they must compete with the free trade unions on a European scale. Even more important, as Moscow comes to recognize and accept the community structure based in Brussels, all local Communist parties, however conservative, will find it expedient to follow suit.

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"We Communists are in favor of a Europe where peace, security, and cooperation prevail. However, whether the Common Market consists of six or ten countries, it will remain a "little Europe" reduced to a group of capitalist countries under the sway of large private firms and under the tutelage of the United States through NATO. This little Europe was born as the result of the cold war. It does not ensure peace and security in Europe, but divides our continent. It does not guarantee our independence; on the contrary, it tends to liquidate our independence."

Georges Marchais—French Communist—March 1972

"Our opposition (to the Treaty of Rome) did not mean that we did not recognize the necessity of economic and political cooperation among the European countries and regions. Nor, on the other hand, has our opposition ever reached the point of denying or ignoring the reality which was coming into being, the reality of a process of economic integration, even if this process has been concretely controlled by important American and European monopolistic forces."

*Giorgio Amendola, Italian Communist Party—maiden
speech before European Parliament—March 1969*

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The Evolution of the Communist Position

1. The first moves toward European unification after World War II were bitterly opposed by the European Communist parties. All of them followed Moscow's lead in rejecting the Marshall Plan and its implementing agency, the Organization for European Economic Cooperation. They charged that the program would lead to loss of national sovereignty and "pauperization" of the working class, and that the real purpose of integration was the weakening of the Soviet Union.

2. The European community movement, which began with the Coal and Steel Community, was also anathema to the Communists. The French party played a prominent role in striking down the European Defense Community in the early 1950s. In its campaign against the defense community, general Marxist ideology centering on the class struggle took a back seat to the emotional issue of national sovereignty. It was the curious alliance of the Communist Party and the far right that helped kill the defense community.

3. When the Treaty of Rome, instituting the Common Market, was signed in March 1957, the West European Communist parties again loudly objected. They saw the EC as still another US tool to strengthen NATO, establish monopolistic control over West European economies, and weaken the Soviet Union. The Italian Communists, for example, claimed that the EC raised "the grave and real danger that the whole Italian economy, except for certain large monopolistic sectors, would be transformed into a great depressed area, with grave consequences for an important part of our population." Arguments against supra-nationalism were linked with anti-German sentiment to whip up nationalism and to mobilize both the left and right against the community. Again, the lines of the West European Communist parties followed the Soviet position.

4. The 20th party congress of the Soviet Union in 1956, at which the concept of differing roads to socialism was formally accepted, spurred on the divergent ideas of Palmiro Togliatti, leader of the Italian Communist Party. This provided the basis for the subsequent evolution of the Italian party's stand on the EC.

5. In late 1957, although the party was still attacking the EC, Italy's Communist-dominated labor union called for recognition of the possible benefits of economic integration, arguing that through participation in the EC, all European workers might be unified. The French Communist-dominated labor union quickly denounced the Italians for abandoning the

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fight to destroy the EC, but the Italians remained firm in their position and carried the dispute to the Communist international labor front. At a Communist labor convention at the end of 1961 the Italians declared: "While criticizing the method by which economic integration is being realized and the predominant role played (in it) by the monopolies, our position takes into account the fact that the Common Market exists and that we must consider it a reality within which to carry out a united struggle to protect the interests of the workers."

6. Soon after the Italian union took this radical new position, the Italian party's line also began to shift. Buttressed by its success in weathering French Communist and Soviet criticism of its divergence doctrine, the party became fully committed to a pragmatic approach to the EC. The Italian party recognized that its best opportunity to influence the course of events in Italy, and perhaps ultimately to attain a role in the government, lay in seeking a political ally. Thus, it could not ignore the strong commitment to the Common Market of all potential allies and their conviction that Italy's economic gains were attributable at least in part to its EC membership. The combination of these factors dictated a change in PCI attitudes toward the community.

The Year of Divergence—1962

7. By 1962 the divergence of Italian Communist views from those of all the other Communist parties with respect to the EC had become pronounced. This coincided with the initial, substantial progress of the Common Market, the clear signs of the economic advantages to its members, and Great Britain's decision to ask for membership. The Soviets, ever fearing a strong Western Europe unified on a Paris-Bonn axis, held a conference of Communist parties on modern capitalism in August 1962. The Italian party used the conference to make its strongest declaration yet of a policy of gradual renovation of the EC through recognition and participation. The French Communists continued their adamant opposition to the EC.

8. At the conference the Soviet Union had difficulty in straddling the opposing Italian and French views. The Soviets joined the French Communists in attacking what they saw as the political and possibly military objectives of the EC and its supposedly disastrous effects on the workers, but it also made a polite bow to the EC's contributions to productivity as a partial vindication of the Italian position. Khrushchev likewise conceded "the possibility of economic cooperation and peaceful economic competition, not only between separate countries with differing social systems, but also between their amalgamations."

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9. This mild endorsement of the Italian position was set back at the Communist World Federation of Trade Unions convention in October 1962. Here the issue of whether the EC should be dealt with along the pragmatic guidelines proposed by the Italians or in accordance with the traditional, dogmatic approach proposed by the French was resolved in favor of the French. The Italian union, however, obstinately abstained from voting on the conference proposals. In addition, it obtained the federation's sanction for the establishment of a labor bureau, consisting of representatives of the Italian and French unions and a Luxembourg trade union, in Brussels to "deal" with the EC. The French and the Luxembourg unions later backed out of the venture, but the Italians opened the office and, for the first time, began a dialogue between a Communist-run organization and the EC.

10. The events of 1962 largely established the pattern of Communist party relations with the European Communities for the next few years. In spite of the intransigence of the French Communists, the Italian party and union began an active search for representation in the EC. In 1963 at a meeting of EC countries' Communist parties, the French party was again able to prevent the Italians from fashioning a common Communist front in dealing with the EC. Only the Belgian Communists, perhaps because of the location of the EC's headquarters in Brussels and because the French stance had become too static, supported the Italian's call for unified action by Communist, Socialist, and Catholic forces to reshape the community.

Moves Toward Rapprochement

11. The contrast in the attitudes of the Italian and French parties toward the European Communities during the early 1960s was partly a function of leadership and partly a reflection of domestic situations. For several decades both parties had been controlled by strong men—Palmiro Togliatti in Italy and Maurice Thorez in France. Each had large and strong parties competing for a pre-eminent role in Western Europe. Thorez toed the Moscow line in order to advance his leadership goal. Togliatti, while also following Moscow's lead, adopted the pragmatic, diversified approach required by his domestic aspirations. The two were personally and ideologically antagonistic, and when both died in 1964, their parties carried on their ideological squabble.

12. When Khrushchev fell from power in 1964, the two parties reacted to the new leadership in Moscow in characteristically different ways. The French party after slight hesitation, accepted Khrushchev's fall; the Italians delayed their final "approval." But at the same time the French began to

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demonstrate more flexibility. In domestic politics, for example, by 1965 their loose arrangement for joint action with other leftist parties had grown into an alliance with the non-Communist left against De Gaulle in the presidential elections. This coalition provided the French party some escape from the isolation it had suffered since its exclusion from the government in 1947.

13. The French party also slightly shifted its position in international affairs. At meetings with the Italian party in 1965 and 1966, it accepted the Italians' principle of diversity, at least to the extent of recognizing the possibility of loose cooperation of the two parties on European regional matters. The Soviets probably were amenable to this slight change in the French party's position since they were then seeking "independent" allies in their dispute with the Chinese. The new leadership of the French party may also have been assuaging its youth organization, which had openly supported the Italian position on the EC.

14. In practical terms, this limited rapprochement had little effect on the French party's activities in the communities. The French Communist union did subsequently join the Italians in the labor bureau in Brussels, and the bureau was later officially recognized by the EC Commission. But this operation remained largely an Italian one. Although in 1969 the French Government designated Communist union members to an EC advisory group on the free movement of workers, the French Communists—unlike the Italians—have yet to obtain representation on the much more important Economic and Social Council. And, more important, Paris still has appointed no Communists to the European Parliament, whereas six members of the Italian Communist Party—appointed by the Italian Government—have been seated for nearly three years.

15. The "compromise" achieved by the Italian and French parties in their 1965-66 meetings did not, of course, mean "conversion" to the same European goals as the community's proponents. At the meeting in 1966 the two parties declared: "The Communists intend to conduct their struggle within the European institutions in order that they may *prevent integration* from blocking the kind of democratic reform such as nationalization that individual countries may wish to put through. They intend to strive for a *different policy* from that of cartels and trusts, so that Common Market institutions may lose their technocratic character, through active participation of representatives of trade unions and national parliaments vested with real power against whom there is no discrimination."

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16. Both the French and Italian parties have consistently argued against any concept of a closed community which could form a basis for an anti-Soviet bloc. Otherwise, the Communists have remained reserved, not only about existing community policies, but also about any further consolidation of authority and competence at the European level. If the communities should, however, provide a better opportunity for the parties to achieve their "social" objectives than are afforded by their national governments, then the Communists may well adopt a much more pro-European image. They also have argued in favor of diluting the community by making it an instrument of a broader all-European cooperation.

17. The French and Italian parties are, according to their stated policies, dedicated to the "democratization" of the EC. By this they mean that all political forces, including Communists, must be represented in the community. To attain this objective, they favor direct election of the European Parliament—the advisory body whose delegates are, under the present system, named by the national governments from their respective national parliaments. Because the present French Government has no intention of offering the French party a quota of seats in the European Parliament, direct election might very well mean a net gain in total Communist representation. However, should elections contribute to a general strengthening of European institutions—as many of its advocates believe—the power the Communists now have in Italy and France would be reduced at the European level because of Communist weakness in other community countries. Strengthening of European institutions would not aid Communist efforts to keep the communities "open" toward the East.

18. The performance of the Italian Communist delegation in the European Parliament has thus far given few clues to the effect an enlarged Communist presence might have. The delegation is too small to allow it to qualify under the Parliament's rules as a recognized party group that could propose policies and positions on its own. The delegates generally have joined their non-Communist Italian colleagues in defending Italy's industrial and agricultural interests when these have seemed endangered by the integration process. They have also voted against EC association agreements with Tunisia and Morocco, arguing that such agreements should be approved by the member parliaments, not by "European" agencies. To judge by the limited experience to date, aspirations for respectability and sensitivity to specific constituent interests may in the long run become as important as ideology in determining how the Communists will come down on specific community issues.

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The 70s—Toward a United Front?

19. European integration in the 1970s will create formidable challenges for the West European Communist parties. Among the issues they will have to face are: how to influence the European Communities as they not only enlarge but also proceed from economic integration toward closer political, foreign policy, and perhaps military cooperation; how to establish effective cooperation with other parties of the left in trying to influence the communities' development; how to ensure for themselves a leading role in a community-wide labor organization; and, finally, how to adapt to the evolving relationship between a unifying Western Europe and the countries of Eastern Europe—both in the immediate context of the projected Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe and over the longer term.

20. At present, all the Communist parties except the Italian, oppose the EC's enlargement. The French party is particularly vitriolic in its denunciation of the entry of Great Britain, raising the specter of advancing supra-nationality and "continued" American dominance of Europe. All the Communist parties in the candidate-countries, including the British party in tandem with the Labor Party, also oppose EC entry. Only the Italians see potential benefits from a combination of labor and leftist forces within the EC.

21. Whether the opportunities will be as great as the Italian party anticipates will depend on how the community evolves. The existing community, although no doubt contributing to the national economic gains which Italy has scored in recent years, has been no great help in resolving the regional economic and social problems that are a factor in the Italian party's continued strength. The EC's enlargement may very well aggravate the problems of some industry sectors and geographic regions. On the other hand, enlargement may make it possible for the EC to adopt industrial, regional, and social policies that would more equally distribute economic gains and co-opt local Communist issues. Many Italian Europeanists in fact believe that the escape from the present malaise of the Italian national government is a two-way devolution of authority—downward to the regions and upward to European institutions.

22. What happens in the area of European trade union organization will be especially important to the Communists. With the non-Communist labor movement still fractionalized in both the international and European regional arenas, a united front of labor—led by the Communists—offers great attractions. The free trade unions of the community have made only feeble

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moves in the direction of trans-national collective bargaining. But the Communists have their own local problems. Prospects for the unification of the Communist and non-Communist Italian trade unions, which might have inspired a similar trend at the European level, seemed fairly good a few months ago, but the tensions aroused by the Italian election campaign have again postponed any action.

23. Above all, the attitude of the Soviet Union toward the EC will continue to have a crucial bearing on the role of the Communist parties in the organization. Moscow's proposal for a Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, which was partly motivated by the Soviets' desire to slow the advance of integration in the West, has been dutifully supported by all of the West European parties. The Communist parties have also been involved in Soviet efforts to rally support in the West for such a conference. Various proposals for "peoples' conferences" are meant to serve as a vehicle for "united front" activities, which could be useful domestically as well as internationally.

24. Should Moscow come to recognize the "reality" of the European Communities—as Brezhnev's speech last month suggests—most of the Western parties would have to re-examine their own positions. As recently as January, the French, British, Danish, Norwegian, West German, Dutch, Austrian, and Finnish parties all denounced the communities and their projected expansion. Only the Italians and Belgians were asserting that abolition of the EC was no longer the point. The implications of a shift in the Soviet position would be especially apparent in the case of the French party. But it would also be significant elsewhere—in Britain, for example, where the Communists were a factor in the anti-EC position of the Trade Union Congress, and in Finland where the Communists have been busily organizing the campaign against any associative arrangement with the communities.

25. Moscow's acceptance of the EC could also have consequences, for the relationship between the Communist and the non-Communist parties. De Gaulle's special brand of Europeanism—independent and nationalistic—often had found favor with Moscow, and so helped assure a more quiescent French Communist Party. As Pompidou has slowly modified De Gaulle's European concept, however, the grumblings on the Communist left, as well as the ultra-right, have become increasingly audible. If Moscow should now accept the "reality" of the EC, the French party may have to pull in its horns.

26. On the other hand, the French party's opposition to the communities has long been an obstacle to the emergence of an anti-Pompidou

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coalition on the left. Although the French Communists—after visible squirming—have decided to campaign for “no” votes and the Socialists for abstentions in the French referendum on Britain’s accession, a new Soviet position on the EC may help narrow the gap between the positions of the two groups. Such a change on Moscow’s part could thus lead even the most intransigent of the Western European parties to adjust their positions, lest they, rather than the Italians, be considered out of step.

“The press comments extensively on Leonid Brezhnev’s statement that the Soviet Union does not ignore the real situation in West Europe, particularly the existence of such an economic grouping of capitalist countries as the Common Market. I, for my part, want to stress that this statement is an indication of the profound realism of Soviet foreign policy.

We French Communists also take into account the fact of existence of this organization. We demanded at one time that representatives of Communist parties of West European countries should attend Common Market assemblies. This is not of course in order to support the policy of capitalist monopolies but in order to fight it more effectively.”

Jacques Duclos—French Communist Party, after Brezhnev Speech

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