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► **To cite this version:**

Frédéric Heurtebize. Eurocommunism and the Contradictions of Superpower Détente. Diplomatic History, 2017, 41 (4), pp.747–771. 10.1093/dh/dhx036 . hal-01640676

**HAL Id: hal-01640676**

**<https://hal.parisnanterre.fr/hal-01640676>**

Submitted on 28 Oct 2022

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## Eurocommunism and the Contradictions of Superpower Détente\*

“The dangers of détente is that it makes Communism respectable and therefore adds to the drawing power of the Communist groups,” Richard Nixon observed less than two months before his resignation.<sup>1</sup> Though he did not mention them specifically, the president was referring to the communist parties of Italy and France—later dubbed Eurocommunist—which in the 1970s came close to participating in governing coalitions in Rome and Paris. From the Truman presidency onwards, Washington had implemented the policy of containment to avert such an outcome. The NSC’s very first report dealt with Italy’s fragile political situation; likewise, some of the CIA’s first missions focused on preventing the Communist Party of Italy (PCI) from coming to power in the 1948 general election.<sup>2</sup> In the immediate post-war years, France too generated concerns because of its strong communist party (PCF) and communist-dominated labor union the Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT).<sup>3</sup> Overall, containment had been successful in keeping the communists out of governing positions in both countries. Yet, as détente became the new Cold War paradigm, the specter of communism haunted Western Europe again. Recent historiography has vastly improved our understanding of détente. Stimulating scholarship has reassessed the origins, nature, and demise of détente in a quantitative, qualitative, and truly transnational effort to write an international history of that critical episode of the Cold War. Nonetheless, with notable exceptions, only limited attention has been paid to Eurocommunism, a phenomenon that, this paper argues, emerged

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\*I would like to thank Jussi Hanhimäki, Thomas A. Schwartz, and two anonymous reviewers for their helpful suggestions on earlier drafts of this article.

1. Memorandum of conversation (hereafter MemCon): Nixon, Scowcroft, Rumor, June 26, 1974, NSA MemCons 1973–77, box 4, Gerald Ford Presidential Library (hereafter FL).

2. Kaeten Mistry, *The United States, Italy and the Origins of Cold War: Waging Political Warfare 1945–1950* (Cambridge, 2014); Mario Del Pero, “The United States and ‘Psychological Warfare’ in Italy, 1948–1955,” *Journal of American History* 87, no. 4 (2001): 1304–34.

3. Gérard Bossuat, *La France, l’aide américaine et la reconstruction européenne, 1944–1954*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1997), 99–139; William Hitchcock, *France Restored: Cold War Diplomacy and the Quest for Leadership in Europe, 1944–1954* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1998), 41–54; Alessandro Brogi, *A Question of Self-Esteem: The United States and the Cold War Choices in France and Italy, 1944–1958* (Westport, CT, 2002), 5, 17, 25–26.

as an unwanted and vexing consequence of the policy that both superpowers devised.<sup>4</sup>

Détente was consecrated in May 1972 during the Moscow summit. A seemingly bold development, it was, most scholars now agree, conservative in nature. Détente was supposed to reduce the risks of a nuclear showdown, foster a more predictable relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union, and also help both superpowers recoup after a decade marked by internal turmoil and global upheavals. For American leaders, it represented a strategy to remain at the diplomatic helm of world affairs while Washington was still bogged down in Vietnam. The relaxation of tensions made sense domestically too: the public was war fatigued and Congress had grown reluctant to appropriate the funds requested for a war aimed at fighting communism in Southeast Asia. It did not follow that containment was to be dropped; rather it was to be managed differently as American preponderance waned relative to that of Soviet Russia—or so it seemed.<sup>5</sup>

Nixon's and Kissinger's new approach reflected a reassessment of U.S. power. But it also recycled a policy that major Western European allies had initiated. In 1966, General De Gaulle had publicly called for "*détente, entente et coopération*" with the Eastern Bloc, an approach his successors at the Élysée pursued. Soon enough, most Western European capitals had followed suit.<sup>6</sup> "The winds of détente have

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4. Silvio Pons, *Berlinguer e la fine del comunismo* (Turin, 2006); Silvio Pons, "The Rise and Fall of Eurocommunism," in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, vol. 3, ed. Melvyn Leffler and Odd Arne Westad (New York, 2010), 47–65; Frédéric Heurtebize, *Le péril rouge. Washington face à l'eurocommunisme* (Paris, 2014); Alessandro Brogi, *Confronting America: The Cold War between the United States and the Communists in France and Italy* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2011), 304–46; Irwin Wall, "Les États-Unis et l'eurocommunisme," *Relations internationales*, no. 119 (2004): 363–80. See also more focused studies: Maud Bracke, *Which Socialism, Whose Détente?* (Budapest, 2007), 322–63; Umberto Gentiloni Silveri, *L'Italia sospesa: La crisi degli anni Settanta vista da Washington* (Turin, 2009); Lucrezia Cominelli, *L'Italia sotto tutela. Stati Uniti, Europa e crisi italiana degli anni Settanta* (Florence, 2014); Irwin Wall, "L'amministrazione Carter e l'eurocomunismo," *Ricerche di storia politica* 9, no. 2 (2006): 181–96; Laura Fasanaro, "Neither in One Bloc, Nor in the Other: Berlinguer's Vision of the End of the Cold War," *Visions of the End of the Cold War in Europe, 1945–1990*, ed. Frédéric Bozo et al. (New York, 2010), 163–76; Olav Njølstad, "The Carter Administration and Italy: Keeping the Communists Out of Power Without Interfering," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 4, no. 3 (2002): 56–94; Roberto Gualtieri, "The Italian Political System and détente (1963–1981)," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 9, no. 4 (2004): 428–49.

5. Jeremi Suri, *Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Détente* (Cambridge, MA, 2003); Mario Del Pero, *The Eccentric Realist: Henry Kissinger and the Shaping of American Foreign Policy* (Ithaca, NY, 2010), 29–42, 77–100; Daniel J. Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed: The Remaking of American Foreign Relations in the 1970s* (New York, 2015), 41–67; Vladislav Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2007), 207–15; Vladislav Zubok, "The Soviet Union and Détente of the 1970s," *Cold War History* 8, no. 4 (2008): 427–47; Jussi Hanhimäki, "Conservative Goals, Revolutionary Outcomes: The Paradox of Détente," *Cold War History* 8, no. 4 (2008): 503–12; Thomas Schwartz, "Legacies of Détente: A Three-Way Discussion," *Cold War History* 8, no. 4 (2008): 513–25.

6. Frédéric Bozo, *Two Strategies for Europe: De Gaulle, the United States and the Atlantic Alliance*, trans. Susan Emanuel (Lanham, MD, 2000); Marie-Pierre Rey, *La tentation du rapprochement. France et URSS à l'heure de la détente, 1964–1974* (Paris, 1991); Jussi Hanhimäki, "Détente in Europe, 1962–1975," in *Cambridge History of the Cold War*, vol. 2, 214–15.

blown so strongly from East to West that except for Germany most Europeans no longer fear the threat from the East,” Nixon complained upon returning from Europe in July 1967. “The consequences of this change are enormous as far as NATO is concerned.”<sup>7</sup> Five months later, the Atlantic Alliance acknowledged the new climate and vowed “to pursue the search for progress towards a more stable relationship in which the underlying political issues can be solved. Military security and a policy of détente are not contradictory but complementary,” the “Harmel Report” asserted.<sup>8</sup> In 1969, Chancellor Willy Brandt’s closest aide Egon Bahr informed Kissinger that Bonn would conduct *Östpolitik* despite the White House’s skepticism. Indeed, the national security adviser feared that Germany’s aspiration for reunification might incite Brandt to make concessions to the Soviets, thus setting Bonn on a neutralist slope that would hurt NATO’s cohesion.<sup>9</sup> With détente, then, Washington bandwagoned with its European allies but snatched the helm from their hands.

Soviet leaders, especially in Brezhnev’s entourage, gradually favored détente, first with West Germany and later with the United States. By the late 1960s, Moscow too was licking its wounds. Moscow needed trade with the West to address economic stagnation. Likewise, the Kremlin realized that the prestige of the USSR had suffered from growing international awareness of the Gulag, the plight of dissidents, and the brutal 1968 Prague intervention. With Suharto ousted in Indonesia and the rout of Egypt and Syria in the Six-Day War, Moscow had received diplomatic and strategic setbacks. As Vladislav Zubok has convincingly shown, however, those were not the predominant factors. In the end, what tipped the balance was Brezhnev’s personal and emotional commitment to the relaxation of tensions.<sup>10</sup>

The White House and the Kremlin contemplated détente as a superpower arrangement and discouraged the autonomous initiatives emerging from their respective spheres of influence. Yet, in a pattern similar to human rights, Eurocommunism demonstrates that détente slipped from both superpowers’

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7. Address by Nixon to the Bohemian Club, July 29, 1967, *Foreign Relations of the United States* (hereafter *FRUS*), 1969–1976, vol. I, Foundation of Foreign Policy, 1969–1972, eds. Louis Smith and David Herschler (Washington, DC, 2003), doc. 2.

8. Report of the Council of NATO, “The Future Tasks of the Alliance,” December 13–14, 1967, accessed July 3, 2014, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_26700.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_26700.htm).

9. Gottfried Niedhart, “U.S. Détente and West German *Ostpolitik*: Parallels and Frictions,” in *The Strained Alliance: U.S.-European Relations from Nixon to Carter*, ed. Matthias Schulz and Thomas A. Schwartz (Cambridge, 2010), 23–44; Giovanni Bernardini, “West German-American Relations and a New ‘Order of Peace’ for Europe, 1969–1970,” *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 8, no. 1 (2010): 19–31; Jean-François Juneau, “The Limits of Linkage: The Nixon Administration and Willy Brandt’s *Ostpolitik*, 1969–72,” *International History Review* 33, no. 2 (2011): 277–97.

10. Silvio Pons, *The Global Revolution: A History of International Communism, 1917–1991*, trans. Allan Cameron (Oxford, 2014), 255–72; Zubok, *Failed Empire*, 192–226.

grip to take a life of its own.<sup>11</sup> The purpose of this article is to connect the parallel developments of détente and Eurocommunism. To be sure, the Italian and French communist parties' evolution in the 1970s resulted primarily from domestic political strategies. Nonetheless, it could hardly have come to fruition without the relaxation of tensions that began in Europe in the late 1960s and that both Washington and Moscow championed in the early 1970s.

#### WHAT WAS EUROCOMMUNISM?

The term Eurocommunism was coined in June 1975 by Frane Barbieri, a Yugoslavian journalist, in the Italian daily newspaper *Giornale nuovo*. Eurocommunism referred to the ideological evolution at work amongst Western European communist parties around the mid-1970s. Initiated by the PCI and adopted to a lesser extent by the French PCF, it was characterized by the formal adhesion to the principles of Western democracy such as free elections, political pluralism, respect for individual liberties, and peaceful alternation of power. Meanwhile, those communist parties became more openly critical of the Soviet Union, a trend that had started over the 1968 Soviet intervention in Prague and intensified at the height of Eurocommunism between 1975 and 1977. That change resulted from the idea of devising national roads to socialism in a Western European context and aimed at garnering a larger electoral base supporting left-wing policies. Those communist parties interpreted the oil shock and economic stagflation that ensued in most of the West as evidence of the “crisis of capitalism.”<sup>12</sup> The time was ripe for socialism, they claimed, but for socialism of a new kind. On the one hand, Soviet-style socialism had become too unpalatable to be replicated in the West; on the other, they held, social democracy had failed to reform capitalism. Eurocommunism featured both a domestic and an international dimension: domestically, it was a response to the need for a middle road or “third way” to socialism adapted to each country and a tactic to reach governing positions; at the transnational European level, it was an attempt to define that “third way” in common terms and to promote it as an alternative to Soviet-style socialism without, however, severing ties with the International Communist Movement (ICM).<sup>13</sup>

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11. On human rights, see Sarah B. Snyder, *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War: A Transnational History of the Helsinki Network* (New York, 2011); Nicolas Badalassi, *En finir avec la guerre froide. La France, l'Europe et le processus d'Helsinki* (Rennes, 2014); Angela Romano, *From Détente in Europe to European Détente: How the West Shaped the Helsinki CSCE* (Brussels, 2009); Daniel C. Thomas, *The Helsinki Effects: International Norms, Human Rights, and the Demise of Communism* (Princeton, NJ, 2001); Jacques Andréani, *Le piège: Helsinki et la chute du communisme* (Paris, 2005).

12. Jean Kanapa, Comité central, “Vers la conférence des Partis communistes d'Europe capitaliste,” January 18–19, 1974, 261J2/50, Archives du PCF (hereafter APCF), Archives départementales de Seine-Saint-Denis, Bobigny (hereafter AD93). See also Richard Lowenthal, “Moscow and the ‘Eurocommunists,’” *Problems of Communism* 27, no. 4 (1978): 38–42.

13. Marco Di Maggio, *Alla ricerca della terza via al socialismo: I PC italiano e francese nella crisi del comunismo, 1964–1984* (Naples, 2014).

The advent of socialism no longer originated in revolutions, but in alliances with long-despised “bourgeois” parties. In France, the PCF formed the Union of the Left (*Union de la gauche*) in June 1972 with the Parti socialiste (PS). In Italy, PCI Secretary Enrico Berlinguer envisioned a bolder project: a historic compromise, i.e. a broad coalition including the Christian Democrats. Under his leadership beginning in 1969, the PCI increased its respectability, widened its electoral base, and scored up to 34.4 percent of the vote in the 1976 general election—to both Washington’s and Moscow’s dismay. The Communist Party of Spain (PCE) also was a major—and perhaps the most polemical—actor of Eurocommunism. With Santiago Carrillo, especially during the transition period from Franco’s death in November 1975 to the first democratic general election in June 1977, the PCE emerged as one of the most vocal critics of Soviet communism, causing a scathing reaction from Moscow. Given its relatively poor showing at the polls (9 percent of the votes), the West never regarded Carrillo’s party as a major threat. That’s why this article emphasizes the importance of the Italian and French parties, by far the most powerful communist parties in the West.

In both parties, a first *aggiornamento* took place in the second half of the 1960s after the death of PCI secretary Togliatti and PCF secretary general Thorez. In Italy, Luigi Longo developed the idea of an “Italian way to socialism” that Togliatti had sketched out in his “Yalta Memorial.” Abroad, the PCI leadership started a dialogue with Western European social democratic parties, thus demonstrating a degree of openness unique among Western communist parties.<sup>14</sup> In France, the PCF’s opening was limited to the domestic scene, but it was significant. Under Waldeck Rochet’s authority, the party reached out to the socialists, allowing François Mitterrand to run as the candidate of the Left in the 1965 presidential election.<sup>15</sup> For both communist parties, the 1968 Soviet intervention in Prague was shocking. For the first time, they publicly disapproved of Soviet foreign policy. During the “normalization” period that followed the Prague intervention, however, criticism became less outspoken within the PCI and was entirely silenced in the PCF. As Rochet’s health deteriorated, Georges Marchais gradually came to the fore. Although he only officially became secretary general in December 1972, his leadership heralded a return to dogmatic orthodoxy and full loyalty toward Moscow as early as 1969.<sup>16</sup>

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14. Michele Di Donato, *I comunisti italiani e la sinistra europea. I PCI e i rapporti con le socialdemocrazie, 1964–1984* (Rome, 2015), 32–38, 55–72.

15. Stéphane Courtois and Marc Lazar, *Histoire du Parti communiste français*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 2000), 333–53; Gérard Streiff, *Jean Kanapa, 1921–1978. Une singulière histoire du PCF*, vol. 1 (Paris, 2001), 449–77.

16. Courtois and Lazar, *Histoire*, 361–67; Valentine Lomellini, *Les Relations Dangereuses: French Socialists, Communists and the Human Rights Issue in the Soviet Bloc* (Brussels, 2012), 25–35, 53–59, 78–86; *L'appuntamento mancato: La sinistra italiana e il Dissenso nei regimi comunisti, 1968–1989* (Florence, 2010), 7–33; Di Maggio, *Alla ricerca*, 119–54; Bracke, *Which Socialism?*, 131–272.

In Italy, by contrast, Enrico Berlinguer succeeded Luigi Longo in 1969 as PCI secretary and furthered the party's reflection on an "Italian way to socialism." Berlinguer spelled out his vision in a series of articles published in the party's weekly magazine *Rinascita* in the fall of 1973. As Pinochet's coup against Allende's *Frente Popular* had just demonstrated in Chile, he noted, a socialist-communist alliance was too narrow to preclude a conservative backlash, especially in the tense political atmosphere of the "Years of Lead" characterized by right- and left-wing terrorism.<sup>17</sup> Hence the necessity for a "Historic Compromise" (*compromesso storico*): a more comprehensive coalition including the Christian Democrats, Italy's largest party and the PCI's chief adversary. Only then, he contended, could "an Italian way to socialism" safely be explored.<sup>18</sup> Berlinguer and the more progressive members of the leadership saw the international climate as conducive to that endeavor. Détente, they felt, presented an opportunity to alter the Western European status quo that, since the inception of containment, had barred the communists from cabinet positions in Rome.<sup>19</sup>

Though the French communists had always wholeheartedly supported the "Homeland of the Revolution," they too resented Moscow's static conception of détente. Like their Italian comrades, they intended to benefit from the new international climate to take their chance at governing. In July 1974, Marchais assured Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) ideologue Boris Ponomarev that his party was committed to building a "Western European, truly developed socialism" and that Moscow and Warsaw Pact countries "should not meddle in this." In public opinion, including communist sympathizers, he added, Soviet and East European socialism appeared ever more repulsive.<sup>20</sup> In May 1975, Marchais announced that the party was dedicated to building "socialism in French colors."<sup>21</sup> Until the November 1975 PCI-PCF meeting in Rome, however, the French enjoyed poor relations with their Italian comrades. The respective leaderships notably disagreed over the behavior of the Portuguese Communist Party after the Revolution of Carnations.<sup>22</sup>

After the PCI-PCE meeting of March 1975, the November French-Italian summit marked the true beginning of Eurocommunism as a transnational phenomenon. "In our struggle in developed capitalist countries, [we] realize that we

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17. Guido Panvini, *Ordine nero, guerriglia rossa. La violenza politica nell'Italia degli anni Sessanta e Settanta* (Turin, 2009).

18. Enrico Berlinguer published three installments in *Rinascita* regarding events in Chile under the broad theme "Riflessioni dopo i fatti del Cile." See "Imperialismo e coesistenza alla luce dei fatti cileni," *Rinascita*, September 28, 1973; "Via democratica e violenza reazionaria," *Rinascita*, October 5, 1973; "Alleanze sociali e schieramenti politici," *Rinascita*, October 12, 1973.

19. Bracke, *Which Socialism?*, 323–51.

20. Anatoly Chernyaev, "The Diary of Anatoly S. Chernyaev: 1974," National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 471, trans. and ed. Anna Melyakova, accessed December 4, 2015, <http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB471/>.

21. Georges Marchais, Comité Central, May 27, 1975, 261J2/51, APCF, AD93.

22. Gianfranco Pajetta and Giorgio Amendola, *Direzione* meeting, April 23, 1975, direzione, mf. 203, 353-55, PCI Archives (hereafter APCI), Fondazione Istituto Gramsci (hereafter FIG).

face common challenges that require common solutions,” the joint declaration stated. That commanded devising a socialism that respected “all the liberties, resulting either from the great democratic and bourgeois revolutions or from the great popular struggles led by the working class.”<sup>23</sup> The change within the PCF owed much to mounting irritation over the Kremlin’s implicit support of France’s center-right president Giscard d’Estaing, but also to Jean Kanapa’s increasing clout in the party. Kanapa, a former Stalinist, had become disillusioned with the Soviet Union. During his stay in Moscow as *L’Humanité’s* correspondent in the early 1960s, he had found Soviet leaders mediocre and cynical. As head of the Communist Party’s International Department (*Polex*) until his death in 1978, he was the intellectual driving force behind the party’s short-lived and inconsistent commitment to Eurocommunism.<sup>24</sup>

Beyond embracing “bourgeois” liberties and forming unorthodox alliances with long-despised parties, Eurocommunism entailed relinquishing key tenets of Marxism-Leninism such as the dictatorship of the proletariat. Where international affairs were concerned, Eurocommunism required striking a middle way that was neither anti-American nor anti-Soviet. “The essential interest of the Italian people today is not to fight for a unilateral exit from NATO but for détente, for disarmament, and for the gradual overcoming of the East-West divide,” Giorgio Napolitano declared in December 1974.<sup>25</sup> The Eurocommunists vowed to keep their respective countries within NATO if voted into governing positions. In June 1976, PCI Secretary Berlinguer went so far as to assert that he felt “safer” west of the Iron Curtain to build socialism.<sup>26</sup> In its search for domestic and international legitimacy, the PCI made an effort to reach out to American academics but also to diplomats and intelligence officers. As head of the PCI’s International Department in the 1970s, Sergio Segre had constructive discussions with CIA station chief Robert Boies, a liberal who personally viewed the role of the communists in Italian politics favorably.<sup>27</sup>

Equally remarkable was the Eurocommunists’ overt challenge to Soviet-style communism and to the CPSU’s vanguard role. In June 1976, the Pan-European conference of communist parties was held in East-Berlin, an event Moscow hoped would display a show of unity. Alas, the Eurocommunists brazenly defied the Soviets’ authority. “The truth is that there is not and cannot be a guiding state

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23. Quoted in Bernardo Valli, *Gli Eurocomunisti* (Milan, 1976), 218–19.

24. Streiff, *Jean Kanapa*, vol. 2, 47–128.

25. Giorgio Napolitano, *direzione* meeting, December 5, 1974, *direzione*, mf. 083, 478–79, APCI, FIG.

26. “Communist Wants Italy in NATO” *Washington Post*, June 16, 1976, A16; Jean Kanapa, “A ‘New Policy’ of the French Communists,” *Foreign Affairs* 55, no. 3 (1977): 291.

27. Report from Segre to Berlinguer and Novella, June 9, 1972, estero, mf. 65, 1403–4 and Report from Segre to Berlinguer, Novella and the Secretariat, August 13, 1974, estero, mf. 80, 401, APCI, FIG; Sergio Segre, interview with author, Rome, April 6, 2009; Heurtebize, *Péril rouge*, 63–70.



or party,” Berlinguer declared.<sup>28</sup> Human rights violations east of the Iron Curtain also became the target of both communist parties. Well into the 1970s, the parties had kept a low profile. That was particularly true in France where the party considered reports on the plight of Soviet dissidents and *refuzniks* as anti-Soviet propaganda, a position that had soured relations with the socialists. Things changed in the middle of the decade. In November 1975, the PCF called for the release of Leonid Plyushch, a mathematician interned in a psychiatric hospital. One month later, it condemned repression in the Soviet Union after a scathing report on the Gulag was aired on French television. In 1977, both parties criticized the treatment of Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia, and later denounced the Moscow and Prague trials. Nonetheless, the Eurocommunists’ attitude proved ambivalent at best. Neither party wanted to alienate Moscow beyond repair and, therefore, did not positively embrace the cause of dissent.<sup>29</sup>

Eurocommunism proved a precarious concept indeed. How could communist parties establish a capitalist-friendly socialism without adopting a reformist outlook, which in essence they still rejected? How was a “third way” possible within the International Communist Movement? Communist leaders never solved such predicaments, least of all through a common and sustainable approach. “There is no such thing as Eurocommunism,” Harvard scholar Stanley Hoffmann asserted. “There are three separate West European parties which have one thing in common: They have put some distance between themselves and Moscow. Apart from that, each one of the parties continues to behave in a way which is dictated largely by the party’s own past and by the political and economic situation of that country.”<sup>30</sup> That, along with conceptual instability of Eurocommunism, explains why the phenomenon never really gelled into a durable coherent transnational alternative to Soviet communism. After the March 1977 “Eurocommunist Summit” held in Madrid in support of Carrillo, the movement gradually unraveled.

At its peak, however, the nature, meaning, and implications of the Eurocommunist phenomenon were hotly debated in academia.<sup>31</sup> While the most liberal observers welcomed it as the emergence of a “socialism with a human face” and a potential threat to the Moscow-dominated ICM, the

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28. Michael Getler, “Europe Summit Rebuffs Soviet Leadership Role,” *Washington Post*, July 1, 1976, A1.

29. Lomellini, *Relations dangereuses*, 87–128; Lomellini, *Appuntamento mancato*, 83–130.

30. Stanley Hoffmann, “Western Europe in 1978: Political Trends in U.S. Policy,” Hearings before the Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East of the Committee on International Relations, July 12, 17, and August 3, 1978 (Washington, DC, 1978).

31. Among the many volumes published in the 1970s and early 1980s, see Roy Godson and Stephen Haseler, *Euro-communism: Implications for East and West* (New York, 1978); Austin Ranney and Giovanni Sartori, eds., *Eurocommunism: The Italian Case* (Washington, DC, 1978); George Schwab, ed., *Eurocommunism: The Ideological and Political-Theoretical Foundation* (Westport, CT, 1981); Rudolf Tökes, ed., *Eurocommunism and Détente* (New York, 1978); Vernon V. Aspaturian, Jiri Valenta, and David P. Burke, eds., *Eurocommunism between East and West* (Bloomington, IN, 1980); James E. Dougherty and Diane K. Pfaltzgraff, *Eurocommunism and the Atlantic Alliance, Special Report* (Cambridge, MA, 1977).

conservatives and neoconservatives, whose fledgling movement was then coalescing, saw it as a wolf in sheep's clothing and, therefore, as an insidious development.<sup>32</sup> But for most observers, Eurocommunism remained a puzzle: "If you listen to the Italian Communists," the *Chicago Tribune* wrote in May 1976, "you conclude that (1) they are not Communists at all or (2) they are lying. They sound like free enterprise enthusiasts who love democracy with all their heart."<sup>33</sup> If the French communists were regarded as unreformed and not truly "Eurocommunist," their Italian comrades received positive assessments from correspondents, most of whom took a benign view of the consequences that the PCI would bring to Italy's policy and international alignment. "There was always this joke in the foreign correspondents' informal club that the Italians were lousy Fascists and would have been lousy Communists as well," Jim Hoagland recalls. "They valued ideas and a certain way of living more than a political ideology."<sup>34</sup>

In both countries, the communists—and the marxist left in general—enjoyed much prestige and held formidable sway in unions, the press, and academia as well as among intellectual and artistic circles.<sup>35</sup> The PCI's influence was more pervasive as it extended to television, through the Rai 3 TV channel, which it controlled, and, to a limited extent, to the Ministry of Justice, which Togliatti had briefly held after World War II. With over a million and a half card-carrying members in the 1970s, three times as many as the PCF, the PCI's hold on society was more ubiquitous.<sup>36</sup> In local politics, not only did the PCI run municipalities, it also governed whole regions such as Tuscany, Emilia-Romagna, and Umbria, and three more after the 1975 election. Both foreign observers and Italians broadly viewed communist-run cities and regions as showcases of good government. "Local

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32. For positive appraisals, see Joan Barth Urban, "Contemporary Soviet Perspectives on Revolution in the West," *Orbis* 19, no. 4 (1976): 1359–402; Peter Lange, "What Is to Be Done with Eurocommunism," *Foreign Policy*, no. 21 (Winter 1975–1976): 224–40; Peter Lange and Maurizio Vanicelli, "Carter in the Italian Maze," *Foreign Policy*, no. 33 (Winter 1978–1979): 161–73; Peter Lange and Sidney Tarrow, eds., *Italy in Transition: Conflicts and Consensus* (London, 1980); Peter Lange and Maurizio Vanicelli, eds., *The Communist Parties of Italy, France and Spain: Postwar Change and Continuity* (London, 1981). For negative appraisals, see Mauro Lucentini and Michael Ledeen, "Italian Communism at Home and Abroad," *Commentary* 62, no. 5 (1976): 48–54; Michael Ledeen, "The 'News' About Eurocommunism," *Commentary* 64, no. 4 (1977): 56; Richard Pipes, "Liberal Communism in Western Europe?," *Orbis* 20, no. 3 (1976): 595–97; Hadley Arkes, "Democracy and European Communism," *Commentary* 61, no. 5 (1976): 38–47; Walter Laqueur, "Euro-Neutrality," *Commentary* 69, no. 6 (1980): 21–27; "Eurocommunism and Its Friends," *Commentary* 62, no. 2 (1976): 25–31. On the advent of neo-conservatism, see Justin Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism: The Biography of a Movement*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA, 2010).

33. "Italy's Fateful Election," *Chicago Tribune*, May 24, 1976.

34. Jim Hoagland (*Washington Post* correspondent for Western Europe, 1975–79), interview with author, Washington, DC, November 3, 2008.

35. Pascal Ory and Jean-François Sirinelli, *Les intellectuels en France. De l'affaire Dreyfus à nos jours*, rev. ed. (Paris, 2004), 337–52; Nello Ajello, *Il lungo addio: intellettuali e PCI dal 1958 al 1991* (Rome, 1997).

36. Marc Lazar, *Maisons rouges. Les Partis communistes français et italien de la Libération à nos jours* (Paris, 1992), 398.

administrations in the red belt are models of efficiency and honesty compared to the average elsewhere in Italy,” the American embassy admitted in September 1974.<sup>37</sup>

#### A PROBLEM FOR WASHINGTON AND MOSCOW

Eurocommunism proved a thorny issue for Washington during the Nixon, Ford, and Carter presidencies. Kissinger, in particular, did not believe that the PCI's seemingly moderate communism presented a lesser danger to American interests. For him, the Eurocommunists actually proved “more dangerous than non-moderate Communists.” “[I]f they appear responsible they will be a bigger threat to democracy in the long run,” he told Italian President Giovanni Leone.<sup>38</sup> The secretary of state worried that a moderate communist party would manage to broaden its electoral base and get cabinet portfolios more easily. All things considered, the Nixon administration felt it was better off with a traditional, hardline communist party, which would appeal to fewer voters and remain a marginalized, if vocal, agent of the political scene.

Largely regarded as the “soft underbelly” of the Western Bloc, southern European allies received much attention from the White House from an early stage.<sup>39</sup> Italy had always been viewed as a fragile partner who called for periodic American interventions to keep it from turning red.<sup>40</sup> For instance, Kissinger was worried about the consequences of Salvador Allende's election in Chile in 1970; Santiago, he feared, could become a beachhead of Soviet and Cuban presence in Latin America. But he was equally concerned that a successfully elected marxist government in Chile might “have an impact on—and even precedent value for—other parts of the world, especially in Italy.”<sup>41</sup> One reason for such concerns rested

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37. Telegram 13042 from Rome to the Department of State, “Reflections on the Current Italian Political Scene,” September 20, 1974, Access to Archival Database (hereafter AAD), National Archives (hereafter USNA).

38. MemCon, Kissinger, Andreotti, November 4, 1975, doc. 01823, Digital National Security Archives, George Washington University (hereafter DNSA); MemCon, Ford, Kissinger, Leone, Moro, September 25, 1974, NSA MemCons 1973–77, box 6, FL.

39. Memorandum Nixon to Haldeman, Ehrlichman, and Kissinger, March 2, 1970, *FRUS*, 1969–1976, vol. I, doc. 61.

40. Leo Wollemborg, *Stars, Stripes, and the Italian Tricolor: The United States and Italy, 1946–89* (New York, 1990); James Miller, *The United States and Italy, 1940–1950: The Politics and Diplomacy of Stabilization* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1986); Kaeten Mistry, *The United States, Italy and the Origins of Cold War*; Mario Del Pero, “American Pressures and Their Containment in Italy during the Ambassadorship of Clare Boothe Luce, 1953–1956,” *Diplomatic History* 28, no. 3 (2004): 407–39; Alessandro Brogi, “Ike and Italy: The Eisenhower Administration and Italy's ‘Neo-Atlanticist’ Agenda,” *Journal of Cold War Studies* 4, no. 3 (2002): 5–35; Leopoldo Nuti, *Gli Stati Uniti et l'apertura a sinistra. Importanza e limiti della presenza americana in Italia* (Rome, 1999); Gentiloni Silveri, *L'Italia sospesa*; Heurtebize, *Péril rouge*, 33–70, 109–58, 193–230.

41. Memorandum Kissinger to Nixon, “NSC Meeting, November 6 – Chile,” November 5, 1970, in National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 437, ed. Peter Kornbluh, DNSA, doc. 4, accessed July 7, 2014, <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB437/>.

in his negative appraisal of Italian political leaders. “Kissinger was not at all convinced that there was an Italian politician who could stand up against [communist] pressures,” former Assistant Secretary of State Arthur Hartman recalls. “They were always looking for compromises here and there which would bring them under control of Moscow.”<sup>42</sup> Giulio Andreotti himself admits that his party’s attitude was then ambiguous. “Foreigners had a hard time understanding what we were doing. Sometimes we seemed to stand firm [on the communist issue], but then later we turned to a more accommodating position. That was not reasonable.”<sup>43</sup>

Kissinger’s concerns were chiefly fueled by the consequences that the PCI’s membership in a cabinet coalition might have on Italy’s loyalty to the Atlantic Alliance.<sup>44</sup> Since the end of World War II, Italy had hosted a number of U.S. military facilities, making it one of Washington’s most faithful allies. Equally preoccupying was the possibility of a domino effect in other European countries, especially in France and Portugal. NATO’s security and very existence would be threatened.<sup>45</sup> For the secretary of state, such a prospect was intolerable. “We don’t care if they sign on NATO in blood,” he bluntly told Prime Minister Aldo Moro in August 1975. “Having the communists in the Government of Italy would be completely incompatible with the continued membership in the Alliance.”<sup>46</sup>

Kissinger believed the participation of communist ministers in the French or Italian government would entail a gradual neutralization—or “Finlandization”—of Western Europe. “There is a difference between a Tito in Yugoslavia who splits the Communist world and a Tito in Italy which is a disruptive factor for NATO,” he asserted. “De Gaulle was a nuisance and he was independent but he was of the West, and when the chips were down he was with us. An Italian Tito would be of the East. He would quarrel with Moscow but basically he would be on its side.” Where France was concerned, the secretary told Mitterrand, the worst-case scenario was “not the possibility that France may leave the Alliance, but that France could stay in the Alliance with Communists occupying significant governing posts.” In his view, such a situation would have blurred the clear-cut East-West divide and would have insidiously undermined Western cohesion from within.<sup>47</sup>

Such an outcome, Kissinger held, would spur Capitol Hill to drastically reduce the funds dedicated to Western European security and to withdraw American

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42. Arthur Hartman, interview with author, Washington, DC, November 6, 2008.

43. Giulio Andreotti, interview with author, Rome, June 17, 2009.

44. Henry Kissinger, *Years of Renewal* (New York, 1999), 626–34.

45. MemCon (draft), Ford, Kissinger, Pope Paul VI, June 3, 1975, NSA MemCons 1973–77, box 12, FL; MemCon, Kissinger, Sonnenfeldt, Hartman, Rumor, Gaja, Manzini, “Secretary’s Luncheon for Foreign Minister Rumor of Italy,” September 22, 1975, doc. 01789, DNSA.

46. MemCon, Ford, Kissinger, Moro, August 1, 1975, doc. 01723, DNSA.

47. MemCon, Kissinger, Sédar Senghor, May 1, 1976, doc. 01941, DNSA; MemCon, Mitterrand, Kissinger, November 25, 1975, Archives de la présidence Giscard d’Estaing (hereafter 5AG 3)/182, Archives nationales (hereafter AN). See also MemCon, Ford, Kissinger, Giscard, Sauvagnargues, May 17, 1976, NSA MemCons 1973–77, box 19, FL.

troops. Given Congress's insistence on "burden sharing" in the mid-1970s, the secretary's concern made sense.<sup>48</sup> After all, why should the United States spend taxpayers' money to avert a red threat in Western Europe if Italian and French voters willingly brought communists into their governments? A pessimist by nature, Kissinger envisioned a bleak future: "If things go on as they are, we will be out of Europe in ten years . . . The Europe of NATO may be finished. And the Europe of the EC will find its future in anti-Americanism . . . NATO just might simply turn into a U.S.-German alliance."<sup>49</sup>

The Carter administration's attitude towards Eurocommunism was initially more nuanced but also more confusing. During the 1976 presidential campaign, Jimmy Carter had made it clear that his foreign policy would differ from that of his predecessors. For Zbigniew Brzezinski, then his campaign foreign policy advisor, Kissinger's diplomacy had been "committed to a largely static view of the world, based on a traditional balance of power." It had been "oriented toward preserving the status quo" instead of reforming it, a view that the so-called Sonnenfeldt Doctrine seemed to confirm.<sup>50</sup>

As opposed to Nixon and Ford, the democratic candidate promised to steer clear of interventions in the domestic affairs of allied nations and—not unlike the Eurocommunists, though with different goals—intended to make détente a more dynamic process. "We felt more confident that we could exploit the internal weaknesses of the Soviet system to alter the status quo in Europe and to give détente a more forward-looking dimension," Brzezinski explains. Therefore, "cultivating some Eurocommunists like the [former] Italian president Giorgio Napolitano, who then was an important official in the Italian Communist Party, made strategic sense."<sup>51</sup>

Brzezinski's favorable opinion about Eurocommunism—at least initially—stemmed from his regarding it as a trump card in the East-West strategic game. The former head of the European section at the NSC under Carter, Robert Hunter, recalls that both the United States and the Soviet Union were suspicious of Eurocommunism. However, he argues, "the Russians were more concerned than we were because this could show that a European communist party could become, as it were, 'democratic.'" For Hunter, "the Italians weren't subservient to Moscow and Moscow didn't want Italy to be a pole of attraction for some countries within the bloc. Think of Budapest in '56 and Dubcek in '68: They weren't anti-

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48. John Oneal and Mark Elrod, "NATO Burden Sharing and the Forces of Change," *International Studies Quarterly* 33, no. 4 (1989): 436–56.

49. MemCon, Kissinger, Sonnenfeldt, Hartman, Bremer, Helman, "European Affairs," April 30, 1975, Records of the Office of the Counselor, Record of Helmut Sonnenfeldt (hereafter HSP), box 11, Record Group 59 (hereafter RG 59), USNA. On Kissinger's pessimism, see Barbara Keys, "Henry Kissinger: The Emotional Statesman," *Diplomatic History* 35, no. 4 (2011): 587–609.

50. Zbigniew Brzezinski, "America in a Hostile World," *Foreign Policy*, no. 23 (1976): 73. See also Campbell Craig and Fredrik Lovegall, *America's Cold War: The Politics of Insecurity* (Cambridge, MA, 2009), 292–94.

51. Zbigniew Brzezinski, telephone interview with author, November 24, 2008.

communist but they presented a model Moscow couldn't handle."<sup>52</sup> Eurocommunism was thus regarded as a wedge driven into the ICM; in the long run, it could not only tear Western European communists further apart from Moscow, but also undermine the Soviets' authority within their own sphere of influence.

To that end, Brzezinski doubled the appropriations for Radio Free Europe (RFE), for him the best means to influence political change east of the Iron Curtain.<sup>53</sup> The radio station aired programs that exposed the Eurocommunists' ideas, thereby providing Eastern Europeans with access to potentially subversive concepts. RFE's director supported that approach: "There is a strong possibility that in the near future Eurocommunism will become more attractive to an influential part of East-European elites, and hence destabilizing to the existing order, than Yugoslav revisionism was in the Fifties," he told a congressional committee. After all, two signers of the dissidents' group Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia, Mlynar and Hajek, had made it public that Eurocommunism was their "strongest card" in their struggle against the regime.<sup>54</sup>

In Rome, with a spirit of openness that contrasted with his predecessors, U.S. Ambassador Richard Gardner invited socialist and communist artists to his residence for cultural events.<sup>55</sup> "We expected a lot from Gardner," Sergio Segre concedes.<sup>56</sup> Yet, the Carter administration's new outlook did not mean that Washington willingly condoned the PCI's entering the Italian government. "The policy was perhaps too sophisticated to be easily understood," Gardner admits. "It was nuanced: 'We will not interfere in the ways that our predecessors had by paying all those right-wing politicians, we will not deny visas to the communists, we will open a dialogue with them; *but* it is still our preference not to see them in power.'"<sup>57</sup> Unfortunately, the nuance was lost on many Italian observers, especially among the proponents of the *compromesso storico* who interpreted the administration's lack of firm opposition as implicit acquiescence. "We didn't want to be branded as the bad guys," Robert Hunter says.<sup>58</sup> That apparent shift in attitude distressed many in Italy and in the United States. Ambassador Roberto Gaja warned Brzezinski that Italy was "approaching a fundamental crisis" and that

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52. Robert Hunter, interview with author, Arlington, VA, November 6, 2008.

53. Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle. Memoirs of the National Security Adviser: 1977-1981* (New York, 1983), 300; Nicholas Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency* (New York, 2008), 362.

54. "Hearing before the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe," 96th Congress, 2nd session on Implementation of the Helsinki Accord, vol. XII, March 25, 1980 (Washington, DC, 1980), 39; Jiri Valenta, "Eurocommunism and Eastern Europe," *Problems of Communism* 27, no. 2 (1978): 48-49.

55. Richard Gardner, *Mission Italy: On the Frontline of the Cold War* (Lanham, MD, 2005), 61-62, 77, 84.

56. Sergio Segre, interview.

57. Richard Gardner, interview with author, Washington, DC, September 23, 2008.

58. Robert Hunter, interview.

its resolution “may depend on signals from the United States.” “The *interpretation* of US actions is what is important,” he insisted.<sup>59</sup> Former radio broadcaster George Urban was blunter in urging Washington to voice its opposition to the historic compromise. “[A] single paragraph in a speech by the U.S. president might work wonders,” he wrote to Brzezinski. “What the Italians cannot live with is a sense of abdication on the part of the U.S. They expect to be told (to put it quite crudely) which way their opportunism should be directed.” As the PCI’s entry in the Italian government appeared imminent in November and December 1977, the State Department felt compelled to clarify the administration’s stand concerning Communist participation in West European governments.<sup>60</sup> “Our position is clear,” the January 12, 1978 statement went. “We do not favor such participation and would like to see Communist influence in any Western European country reduced.”<sup>61</sup>

For both strategic and domestic policy reasons, the Carter administration did not want to go down in history for “losing” Italy. Political trends in Europe were “ominous,” Brzezinski warned the president: “[W]e could see major Communist advances in Europe, and then an important backlash at home with the administration being criticized for doing too little too late.”<sup>62</sup> Although initially favorable to Eurocommunism as a tool against the unity of the ICM, Brzezinski, like Kissinger, eventually feared hostile reactions in Washington where the president’s foreign policy increasingly came under attack. From then on, as Gardner himself confessed to a French diplomat, the ambassador’s mission consisted in “making the Italian-American community confident that the Carter administration could choose the appropriate tactics to the keep the communists out of power.”<sup>63</sup>

In France, the administration followed a similar course. At first, in keeping with Carter’s policy of non-intervention, the American executive could not appear to be interfering in France’s domestic affairs. On March 21, 1977, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance declared that a Socialist-Communist victory at the March 1978

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59. MemCon, Brzezinski, Gaja, March 31, 1977, NSA MemCons, box 33, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library (hereafter CL); letter from Urban to Brzezinski, March 19, 1977, White House Central Files, box CO-36, CL. See also letter from Senator Pell to Carter, March 15, 1977 and letter from Representative Annunzio to Carter, March 21, 1977, White House Central Files, box CO-36, CL.

60. Memorandum Brzezinski to Carter, December 2, 1977, Brzezinski Material, Subject Files, box 41, CL; Memorandum Hunter to Brzezinski, “Italy”, December 20, 1977, NSA Country Files – Italy, box 38, CL; CIA, National Intelligence Daily Cable, “Italy: Reaction to PCI Moves,” December 24, 1977, CIA Record Search Tool (hereafter CREST), USNA; Gardner, *Mission Italy*, 113–53; Antonio Tatò, *Caro Berlinguer. Note e appunti riservati di Antonio Tatò a Enrico Berlinguer* (Turin, 2003), 55.

61. Quoted in Gardner, *Mission Italy*, 150–51.

62. Memorandum Brzezinski to Carter, February 9, 1978, Brzezinski Material, Subject Files, box 41, CL.

63. MAE, Note de l’adjoint au chef du CAP, “Compte rendu de mission aux États-Unis,” August 21, 1978, 5AG3/985, AN. On Gardner’s role as ambassador, see Heurtebize, *Péril rouge*, 295–301.

parliamentary elections “wouldn’t change anything” in French-U.S. relations.<sup>64</sup> But that approach irritated President Giscard d’Estaing who expected American support in his political battle against the Union of the Left. In a meeting with Vance on April 2, 1977, he voiced his concern that the administration was “not sufficiently sensitive to the damage which Communists in the French government would cause to Western interests.”<sup>65</sup> Giscard drove the point across again during his first meeting with Jimmy Carter one month later. “Eurocommunism should be taken seriously,” he told his counterpart. “France is a key country. If Communists enter the government in France, Italy will follow a few months later, and then Spain . . . [W]hat keeps people from voting for the Socialist-Communist coalition is the fear of the consequences. So anything that tends to allay that fear actually results in supporting the coalition. It is normal for you to have relations with the opposition, but the French shouldn’t be given the impression that, fundamentally, there is no problem and that they needn’t worry.”<sup>66</sup>

Giscard was resentful that the U.S. administration had written off the possibility of a victory for his majority in the 1978 parliamentary election. Besides, Giscard perceived some Democratic sympathy towards the Socialist Party. In his memoirs, Richard Gardner rightly refers to a “French Connection” within the State Department that had a “special interest in France and in the French Socialist Party.”<sup>67</sup> Under Ford, as press secretary at the French embassy, Renaud Vignal, a member of the Socialist Party, had spared no effort to introduce promising socialist figures to Washington’s press and political circles. The deputy assistant secretary of state for European affairs between 1974 and 1977, James Lowenstein, recalls: “He entertained all the time. He knew everybody. At the working level in the State Department, below the secretary, we were always in his house. You can’t underestimate his role in smoothing the way.”<sup>68</sup> After Carter’s victory, Vignal enjoyed friendly relations with Vance’s executive secretary Peter Tarnoff, a Francophile who had studied at the elite *École nationale d’administration* (ENA) in the early 1970s. Tarnoff assured Vignal that the administration had “decided to ‘open to the left’ once and for all” and that “no one, not even Giscard” could reverse that change.<sup>69</sup>

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64. “Vance Is Said to Assure French Left on Policy,” *International Herald Tribune*, March 21, 1977.

65. MemCon, Giscard d’Estaing-Vance, April 2, 1977, 5AG3/984, AN. See also memorandum Robin to Giscard d’Estaing, “L’Europe,” April 1, 1977; and memorandum Lévitte to Giscard d’Estaing, “L’administration démocrate et l’éventuelle arrivée de la gauche au pouvoir en France,” March 24, 1977, 5AG3/984, AN.

66. MemCon, Giscard d’Estaing-Carter, May 9, 1977, “conférence de Londres, dossier du président,” 5AG 3/888, AN.

67. Gardner, *Mission Italy*, 48–49, 66–68.

68. James Lowenstein, telephone interview with author, June 19, 2013.

69. Memorandum Vignal to Pontillon, “Entretien avec Peter Tarnoff, directeur de cabinet de M. Vance. Les États-Unis et la gauche,” April 18, 1977, 8FP7/128, Centre d’archives socialistes (hereafter CAS), Fondation Jean-Jaurès, Paris (hereafter FJJ). See also Memorandum Vignal to Pontillon, “Relations bilatérales franco-américaines potentielles en cas de succès électoral de l’Union de la gauche,” April 6, 1977; Memorandum Vignal to Pontillon, April 10, 1977; Memorandum Vignal to Pontillon, “Visite de François Mitterrand,” June 7, 1977, 8FP7/128, CAS, FJJ.



Yet, the State Department shifted to a more traditional approach in the summer of 1977. At the European Bureau, the possibility of a Socialist-Communist victory in the March 1978 legislative election “made everybody nervous.” As French Desk head James Dobbins recalls, “Euro-Communism was the State Department’s main European preoccupation.” After much “tussling back and forth,” the European Bureau’s view prevailed against Tarnoff who was “pushing in the other direction.”<sup>70</sup> The French embassy was pleased. The administration “was intent on breaking away from Kissinger’s Manichean and catastrophist vision,” the *chargé d’affaires* wrote. “But the experience of power, a deeper knowledge of realities and advice from experts—notably from the State Department—have rectified that approach.” In short, as for Italy, the likely consequences of a left victory on U.S. domestic and foreign policy convinced the administration to show coolness towards Mitterrand.<sup>71</sup>

The Carter administration probably overestimated the Eurocommunists’ capacity to separate from Moscow and build an authentic “middle way.” Though the Carter administration’s initial appreciation of Eurocommunism substantially differed from its predecessors’ concerning risks and opportunities, it drew closer to Kissinger’s view that considered moderate communists as “more dangerous” than Leninist ones. “What we would have preferred, was a breakup of the Communist Party in Italy or France with genuine progressive elements coming to fore, or dominating it, with real reforms of its essential character,” Brzezinski’s deputy at the NSC David Aaron claims. “Short of that, it was easier to deal with those who were more subservient to Moscow.”<sup>72</sup>

Like the American executive, at least under Nixon and Ford, Soviet leaders contemplated détente as a superpower agreement not to be disturbed by internal European factors, least of all by their Italian and French comrades. Moscow thus felt no sympathy for the PCF and PCI’s claims to independent forms of communism. Thanks to the distinction between party and state, the Soviet Union was able to advance its foreign policy interests through two different channels: one at the inter-party level through the CPSU’s International Department, and another at the inter-governmental level through the foreign ministry (MID).<sup>73</sup> That division of labor resulted in an ingenious dual diplomacy: on the one hand, Moscow maintained close relations with its brother parties in order to control the political and ideological unity of the movement; on the other, the Soviets put a premium on stability and predictability, which they deemed were better secured by “bourgeois” parties—if needed, they could poke those governments through the other channel

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70. James Dobbins, interview by Charles Stuart Kennedy, July 21, 2003, interview transcript, Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, Library of Congress.

71. Memorandum Boyer to Foreign Minister Guiringaud, “Opinions américaines sur l’Union de la gauche,” August 17, 1977, 5AG3/984, AN.

72. David Aaron, telephone interview with author, November 5, 2008.

73. Marie-Pierre Rey, “Le département international du Comité central du PCUS, le MID et la politique extérieure soviétique de 1953 à 1991,” *Communisme*, no. 74–75 (2003): 179–215.

anyway, notably through the communist labor unions. With Western governments, *raison d'état* was paramount. Marxist-Leninist proselytizing never came into play: "Ideology is for internal consumption only," Brezhnev told his aides.<sup>74</sup>

Moscow resented Eurocommunism for a number of reasons. From an ideological standpoint, their views amounted to revisionism or downright heresy. Moscow considered abandoning the dictatorship of the proletariat the worst attack on the fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism.<sup>75</sup> The union with the Socialists in France and the historic compromise project with the Christian Democrats in Italy were also highly unorthodox. Those issues were mainly addressed by the CPSU's International Department who greeted the PCI's successes with cold silence. In Moscow and in East-Berlin, "no one has come to congratulate us for our electoral victory," Giancarlo Pajetta complained. The regional elections of June 1975, in which the PCI received 33.5 percent of the votes, "have made no one happy because they prove that another policy pays off."<sup>76</sup> In 1978, as Georges Marchais's chief aide, Charles Fiterman was berated by the International Department's ideologue Boris Ponomarev for the PCF's strategy.<sup>77</sup> Even the more progressive members within the International Department, such as Anatoly Chernayev, disparaged the Eurocommunists. On a conceptual level, they held, their approach was "weak" and "ridiculous" since it offered little more than a rehash of Karl Kautsky and Eduard Bernstein's ideas.<sup>78</sup>

From a security point of view, as Brzezinski rightly assumed, the Kremlin dreaded that Eurocommunism might appeal to some Eastern European leaders, and to the dissidents whose condition was becoming a major issue in the West, especially after the Helsinki Final Act. Such a development might in the long run erode Moscow's ideological hold on the ICM and threaten the cohesion of the Warsaw Pact. "That is because of Khrushchev that the so-called Eurocommunism emerged," the politburo lamented in 1984. By denouncing Stalin's crimes, Andrei Gromyko asserted, the former secretary general had paved the way for revisionism.<sup>79</sup> Though partly true, Gromyko's remark grossly fails to admit that the challenges to the unity of the ICM owed much to his and Brezhnev's policies during

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74. Quoted in "Anatoly Chernayev Diary, 1972," ed. Svetlana Savranskaya, trans. A. Melyakova, National Security Archives Electronic Book no. 379, DNSA, accessed July 9, 2014, <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB379/1972%20as%20of%20May%2024,%202012%20FINAL.pdf>.

75. Laura Fasanaro, "Eurocommunism: An East German Perspective" in *The Crisis of Détente in Europe: From Helsinki to Gorbachev, 1975-1985*, ed. Leopoldo Nuti (London, 2009), 244-55.

76. Giancarlo Pajetta, *direzione* meeting, July 24, 1975, *direzione*, mf. 207, 87, APCI, FIG.

77. Charles Fiterman, interview with author, Paris, February 16, 2009.

78. Sophie Momzikoff, "Voir en plus clair notre 'avenir radieux'. La Nouvelle Pensée gorbatchévienne, origines et influences, hommes et réseaux (1956-1992)" (PhD diss., Université Panthéon-Sorbonne, 2015), 224-28; Andrei Gratchev, interview with author, Paris, November 17, 2015. See also Gratchev's memoirs, *Le passé de la Russie est imprévisible*, trans. Galia Ackerman and Pierre Lorrain (Paris, 2014), 133-42, 156-57, 186-89.

79. CPSU Central Committee Archives, TsKhSD, F. 89, o.36, D. 15, LI. 25, Zasedaniye Politbyro TsK KPSS, July 12, 1984, 25. Courtesy of Raymond L. Garthoff.

the 1970s. Both comprehended the contradictions of détente and the adverse effects it might produce. Eastern European leaders complained about the dangers détente presented to the unity of the socialist bloc and to the stability of their own rule at home. "Toward East European countries, Moscow must reassure the ideologues that it understands the potential risks of ideological contamination," one French diplomatic report noted. "But at the same time it must show the allies and clients of the socialist camp that it does not sacrifice their interests for the benefit of the USSR."<sup>80</sup> Overall, the Soviets considered they could handle the potentially negative consequences of détente and that there was more to gain than to lose in pursuing it.

Finally, the Kremlin considered that the relaxation of tensions served its strategic interests. Thanks to détente, the USSR had gained superpower status, strategic parity, settlement of European borders, as well as economic advantages. Therefore, the Kremlin believed that any development likely to undermine détente should be opposed. According to the CIA, the Soviets were worried that communist participation in the Italian or French government could ignite "local anti-Communist reactions . . . harden attitudes toward the USSR elsewhere in Western Europe, and complicate relations with the U.S."<sup>81</sup> The French embassy in Moscow agreed: the Soviets' cautious response to the PCI's showing in the 1975 election was evidence that they were "worried about anything that may jeopardize détente."<sup>82</sup> During a "Group of Four" ministerial meeting, Kissinger himself acknowledged that Eurocommunism proved troublesome for the Soviets. "They may realize that if one gets in, the right wing parties in the U.S. and Europe will use it against détente," he told his counterparts.<sup>83</sup> That is why Moscow felt no remorse when undercutting its comrades, as in France's 1974 presidential election. A few days before the runoff between François Mitterrand and Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, the Soviet ambassador paid a visit to the latter.<sup>84</sup> The message was clear: Moscow did not want Mitterrand, the United Left candidate, to win.

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80. MAE, direction des affaires politiques, Europe, "L'URSS et le mouvement communiste international," November 13, 1974, 448PO/B/419, Centre d'archives diplomatiques, Nantes (hereafter CADN).

81. National Intelligence Analytical Memorandum, "Soviet Policy Toward Selected Countries of Southern Europe," February 4, 1975, CIA FOIA Electronic Reading Room (hereafter CIA FOIA). See also "Perspective for Intelligence, 1976-1981," October 1975, CIA, DCI, CREST, USNA.

82. Communiqué from Moscow to MAE, "Elections italiennes," June 23, 1975, 448PO/B/917, CADN.

83. MemCon, Kissinger, Callaghan, Sauvagnargues, Genscher, December 12, 1975, doc. 01849, DNSA. On the "Group of Four," see N. Piers Ludlow, "The Real Years of Europe? U.S.-West European Relations during the Ford Administration," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 15, no. 3 (2013): 136-61.

84. Telegram 11319 from Paris to the Department of State, "French Communist Party Irritation over Soviet Ambassador's Call on Giscard," May 9, 1974, AAD, USNA.

#### WHY EUROCOMMUNISM THRIVED ON DÉTENTE

Eurocommunism flourished alongside détente for two major reasons. First, the relaxation of tensions between the two superpowers resulted, to some degree, in the de-demonization of communism—if Nixon and Ford could talk to Brezhnev, then how could Western European communists be so evil? American diplomats soon noticed that contradiction. There are “inherent problems in reconciling an active détente policy and close Alliance relations,” the American embassy in Paris remarked. Indeed, the success of détente “tends to erode Alliance solidarity by moderating the perceived threat it was designed to oppose.” Foggy Bottom concurred. “It is clear that détente has increased the respectability and voting strength of the Italian and French CPs,” one Policy Planning Staff memorandum noted.<sup>85</sup>

Secondly, Eurocommunism bloomed during that period because Western European communist parties enjoyed more leeway and independence *vis-à-vis* Moscow, a situation they had experienced during the Popular Front in the late 1930s, at least where the PCF was concerned, and during the Grand Alliance period, which ended in 1947. Then, Palmiro Togliatti and Maurice Thorez had forced their parties to minimize their strong ties to Moscow and to downplay their anti-American stance.<sup>86</sup> While comparing the Grand Alliance to détente would represent a stretch of historical reality, it appears that both historical phases at least share a common feature: Western European communist parties enjoyed more freedom and success during those periods because U.S.-Soviet relations were less tense and did not compel them to aggressively take sides. In the 1970s, for example, détente made it possible for the Eurocommunists to profess their commitment to both socialism and NATO, an expedient position in that it lessened the fears of voters who were willing to support left-wing economic policies but otherwise averse to close alignment with Moscow.

The situation became particularly irksome for the Ford administration as the Christian Democratic leaders used détente to justify the PCI's rising fortunes at the polls. “We favor détente and appreciate the American role in achieving it,” President Leone told Ford and Kissinger in September 1974, “but there is a price, which is a slackening of democratic ideals and an increase in attacks on those ideals. When all the U.S.-Soviet meetings go on it is hard for us and others to say the Reds are the enemies of democracy.”<sup>87</sup> In fact, Leone insinuated, Washington was partly to blame if the Italian communists performed so well. Such arguments were repeated several times by Italian politicians and forced the president and

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85. Telegram 30644 from Paris to the Department of State, “The French View of U.S.-Soviet Détente,” November 29, 1973, AAD, USNA; Briefing Memorandum Lord to Kissinger, “Beyond Détente: East-West Relations in Europe After Helsinki,” December 10, 1975, Policy Planning Staff, Director's Files (Winston Lord) 1969–1977 (hereafter WLP), box 359, RG 59, USNA.

86. Brogi, *Confronting America*, 39, 325.

87. MemCon, Ford, Kissinger, Leone, Moro, 25 September 1974, NSA MemCons 1973–77, box 6, FL.

the secretary of state to clarify the meaning of détente.<sup>88</sup> On August 1, 1975, on the margin of the Helsinki Conference, Prime Minister Aldo Moro told Ford and Kissinger that the relaxation of tensions “trickles down on people [who] ask why do we keep these rigid barriers when you can see that the American president is talking to Soviet leaders.” “But that is not the meaning of détente,” Ford replied. “We have to stand against Communism in all our countries in order to achieve détente. The fact that I shake hands with Brezhnev does not mean that I wish to have him as my Vice President.”<sup>89</sup>

Ford’s reply reflected Washington’s view of détente as a superpower arrangement that the Europeans should not emulate. But it was a conception that Western European leaders challenged, precisely since it was they who had initiated it to alter the Cold War status quo. Besides, the explanation was hardly satisfactory. As Ford and Kissinger realized, Moro’s remark painfully pointed to an unfortunate consequence of the policy they had been conducting. “Détente is a way of regulating competition—not a way of disarming the West,” Kissinger said.<sup>90</sup> Yet, how détente could both ease tensions and pursue the struggle with the Eastern Bloc was difficult to fathom. Eurocommunism—itsself a hazy concept—flourished in that ambiguous context.

With the presidential election in sight, Gerald Ford needed foreign policy successes in 1976. Alas, the international outlook presented “more pitfalls than opportunities,” the State Department predicted. As far as Western Europe was concerned, the problem of communism is “the trickiest of all, and developments in Italy may force the issue this year.”<sup>91</sup> In the June 1976 general election, the PCI garnered 34.4 percent of the vote, thereby gaining increased bargaining power: without a degree of communist support, either direct or indirect, no cabinet could be formed. While the communists temporarily agreed to stay away from cabinet positions, they were able to grant their “non-opposition” (*non sfiducia*) to Giulio Andreotti’s government in exchange for key posts. With Christian Democratic support, communist Pietro Ingrao was elected speaker of the Chamber of Deputies and communists were accorded the chairmanship of seven parliamentary committees. The times of “national solidarity” (*solidarietà nazionale*) were beginning. From then on until January 1979, the PCI took a growing role in policy-making at the national level, first by abstaining in Parliament, allowing the Christian Democratic government to pass its legislation, and later by joining the parliamentary majority.<sup>92</sup> Technically, however, there was no communist minister in the Italian

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88. MemCon, Ford, Kissinger, Volpe, Leone, Moro, Rumor, Ortona, “President’s Meeting with President Leone,” June 3, 1975, NSA MemCons 1973–77, box 12, FL; MemCon, Sonnenfeldt, Bassetti, November 18, 1975, HSP, box 9, RG 59, USNA.

89. MemCon, Ford, Kissinger, Moro, August 1, 1975, DNSA.

90. Ibid.

91. Memorandum Lowenstein to Lord, “U.S. Policy in Europe in 1976,” January 23, 1976, WLP, box 357, RG 59, USNA.

92. Roberto Gualtieri, *L’Italia dal 1943 al 1992. DC e PCI nella storia della Repubblica* (Rome, 2006), 188–203.

government. The Ford administration could therefore claim that it had not “lost” Italy, an important subtlety as the president was running for election.

For Eurocommunism mattered domestically too. In the mid-1970s, to be sure, other problems ranked higher. Public opinion was focused on domestic issues such as inflation, purchasing power, gas lines, and energy costs while the nation’s economists were wrestling with “stagflation.”<sup>93</sup> Yet, the cover of *Time* magazine’s March 15, 1976 issue featured a photo of Berlinguer and ran the title “Red Star Over Europe?” “Thinking the Unthinkable,” the *New York Times* wrote on March 21.<sup>94</sup> A few weeks before, during a Q&A session, President Ford had been asked to clarify what actions his administration would take if communists received cabinet positions in the Italian government. What would become of NATO?<sup>95</sup> Opinion polls reveal the pervasive impression that U.S. power was waning while the Soviet Union was on the rise; Eurocommunism, though not the key factor, seemed to bring further evidence of American decline.<sup>96</sup> Supposedly détente’s noblest achievement, arms control came under fire for purportedly disarming the West. For AFL-CIO leader George Meany, the Ford-Kissinger foreign policy was an “absolute fraud” and “appeasement, pure and simple.”<sup>97</sup> Ronald Reagan made clever use of that impression: “The evidence mounts that we are Number Two in a world where it’s dangerous, if not fatal, to be second best,” he asserted in a campaign ad.<sup>98</sup> By then, the former governor of California had become Ford’s closest challenger in the Republican primaries and a leading spokesman of the fledgling neoconservative movement. Democratic Cold War veterans, hawkish national security experts, anticommunist conservatives, human rights activists, old left labor, and advocates of Jewish emigration (Democratic Senator Henry “Scoop” Jackson foremost among them) coalesced around their common rejection of détente, which Foggy Bottom itself admitted was partly responsible for the emergence of Eurocommunism.<sup>99</sup>

Surely, détente was an unstable construction. As the East-West confrontation continued, a policy that went against the nature of the Cold War was probably doomed from the first. Contemplated as a U.S.-Soviet compromise, its success rested on tight control: at home, it needed a docile Congress and public opinion; abroad, it required that allies not seek their own arrangements with the East and that Moscow honor its commitments—namely that it abide by the “linkage” rule in

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93. Yanek Mieczkowski, *Gerald Ford and the Challenges of the 1970s* (Lexington, KY, 2005), 95–196; Sargent, *Superpower Transformed*, 100–61.

94. Burton Pines, “Red Star over Europe: Threat or Chimera?” *Time*, March 15, 1976; C. L. Sulzberger, “Thinking the Unthinkable,” *New York Times*, March 21, 1976, 17.

95. “Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session,” Keene, NH, February 19, 1976, *The American Presidency Project*, accessed December 14, 2015, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=5596>.

96. *Gallup Opinion Index*, no. 104 (February 1974): 8–10; *Gallup Opinion Index*, no. 154 (May 1978): 4–5.

97. Anne H. Cahn, *Killing Détente: The Right Attacks the CIA* (University Park, PA, 1998).

98. Julian Zelizer, “Détente and Domestic Politics,” *Diplomatic History* 33, no. 4 (2009): 653–70; Mieczkowski, *Gerald Ford*, 304–24.

99. Cahn, *Killing Détente*. See also Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism*, esp. ch. 3–6.

Vietnam and that it not try to expand its sphere of influence beyond its existing boundaries. Things went awry. In the United States, Nixon's disgrace spurred Congress to regain the powers it had relinquished to the presidency in the previous years, sparing no effort to thwart the executive's foreign policy. Though Brezhnev was emotionally attached to détente, he lacked restraint, especially after he saw his deals with Kissinger and Ford shattered on Capitol Hill; besides, Moscow could not resist the temptation to assist marxist groups in Africa.<sup>100</sup> Eurocommunism added grains of sand to the already fragile machinery of détente.

As an unwanted offspring of a policy that was increasingly becoming a political liability, Eurocommunism was a constant and painful reminder to the Ford administration of its difficulties not only on the international stage, but also domestically. Appearing too "soft on communism" was no option for the executive. That is why, aside from genuine concerns about Western security and cohesion, the Ford administration—and later Jimmy Carter too, though to a lesser degree—was adamant to keep the communists out of cabinets in Rome and Paris. Eurocommunism proved all the more nagging as it developed in the context of repeated communist victories around the world, or so was it perceived then. In Asia, besides Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia had turned red. In Africa, marxism was making headway through proxy wars: by 1975, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, and Angola, all former Portuguese colonies, had communist-dominated governments.<sup>101</sup> In Europe, Washington viewed the Mediterranean flank as a "sea of confusion" potentially conducive to Soviet interests: in Portugal, the 1974 Revolution of Carnations and its aftermath fell short of installing a communist regime; in Spain, Franco's death and the subsequent democratic transition ushered in a period of uncertainty; in Greece, the fall of the Colonels' regime might pave the way for a communist takeover, Kissinger feared. Besides, the Cypriot conflict was damaging Turkish-American relations and threatening to create a "Mediterranean Cuba."<sup>102</sup>

Eurocommunism was the last straw since it would likely lead communists into the governments of two large Western European democracies. Italy was a source of permanent concern. Between 1974 and 1977, the fate of Rome was discussed at

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100. Olav Njølstad, "The Collapse of Superpower Détente, 1975–1980," in *Cambridge History*, vol. 3, 135–55; Robert David Johnson, *Congress and the Cold War* (New York, 2006), 190–241; Zubok, *Failed Empire*, 227–64; Del Pero, *Eccentric Realist*, 110–44.

101. Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (New York, 2005); Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The World Was Going Our Way: The KGB and the Battle for the Third World* (New York, 2005).

102. Effie Pedaliu, "'A Sea of confusion': The Mediterranean and Détente, 1969–1974," *Diplomatic History* 33, no. 4 (2009): 735–50; Mario Del Pero et al., eds., *Democrazie. L'Europa meridionale e la fine delle dittature* (Florence, 2010); Mario Del Pero, "'Which Chile, Allende?' Henry Kissinger and the Portuguese revolution," *Cold War History* 11, no. 4 (2011): 625–57. For primary sources, see NSC, NSSM 222, "U.S. and Allied Security Policy in Southern Europe," April 22, 1975, National Security Decision Memoranda and Study Memoranda, box 2, FL; Memorandum Lord to Kissinger, "Paper for the British on Southern Europe," August 23, 1975, WLP, box 354, RG 59, USNA.

almost every “Group of Four” meeting, gathering the American, British, French, and German foreign ministers about once a month—much to the Italians’ irritation.<sup>103</sup> France was considered a more stable and resilient—though difficult—ally. Even when the communists did participate in the French government, between 1981 and 1984, Washington dreaded the precedent it would set in Italy.<sup>104</sup> In retrospect, the threat of Eurocommunism was exaggerated. Ever the pessimist, Kissinger underestimated the capacities of democratic leaders and civil societies—in Italy, France, and even in Portugal, Spain, and Greece—to resist the communist push.

The collapse of détente was gradual. Though the Helsinki Final Act marked its apex, it also set its decline in motion. Growing criticism at home made détente increasingly difficult to support for the White House. From then on, détente hobbled forth on the momentum previously gathered; its propulsive force had been spent. Détente was an unstable concept from the first because the Europeans, on the one hand, and the superpowers, on the other, had different visions and expectations: the former contemplated it as a dynamic process that could allow them to partially overcome the rigid barriers of Cold War Europe; the latter regarded it in more static terms. Moscow, in particular, wanted control over its sphere of influence and its superpower status confirmed. Even as a superpower arrangement, however, misunderstanding about the meaning and implications of détente was ubiquitous. As recent scholarship has counter-intuitively but convincingly shown, the rise and successes of détente owed much to misunderstandings or mutual “false intersubjective beliefs.” Confusion over the meaning of parity was a case in point: U.S. leaders made a distinction between strategic parity and political parity; the Soviets considered them as intrinsically linked. While Washington accepted that the Soviet Union was on par with the United States in terms of nuclear firepower, it denied Moscow equal political status—a status the Soviets believed they enjoyed. As a result, the latter saw no inconsistency between détente and support to marxist groups in the Third World, which played a strong part in discrediting détente in the United States.<sup>105</sup> As Washington and Moscow realized how the adverse party interpreted détente, it began to unravel. After long years of negotiating, President Carter and Secretary General Brezhnev signed the SALT II

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103. MemCon, Ford, Kissinger, Moro, August 1, 1975, DNSA. On the “Group of Four” (the United States, UK, France, and Germany) maneuverings, see Antonio Varsori, “Puerto Rico (1976): le potenze occidentali e il problema comunista in Italia,” *Ventesimo secolo* 7, no. 16 (2008): 89–120; Frédéric Heurtebize, “L’attitude du président Giscard d’Estaing face à l’eurocommunisme,” *Revue d’histoire diplomatique* 1 (2013): 69–84.

104. MemCon, Mitterrand, Kissinger, November 25, 1975, 5AG3/182, AN; H. Allen Holmes (U.S. embassy in Paris, 1970–1974; deputy chief of mission in Rome, 1977–1979; deputy assistant secretary of state, 1979–1982), telephone interview with author, November 24, 2009.

105. Eric Grynvasiki, *Constructive Illusions: Misperceiving the Origins of International Cooperation* (Ithaca, NY, 2014), 48–118.



treaty in June 1979. Détente, it seemed, was ailing but not dead yet. It collapsed when Soviet troops invaded Afghanistan in December 1979.

Much like détente, the erosion of Eurocommunism was gradual and caused by domestic and international factors. In France, Moscow put pressure on the PCF to force a shift to more orthodox positions. In March 1977, the leadership received a letter from the CPSU rebuking the party's Eurocommunist turn and personally threatening members of the *direction*. The politburo had condemned it as an attempt to "intimidate" and "split" the party leadership.<sup>106</sup> Yet, Moscow's tactics proved successful: the pro-Soviet old guard won the upper hand and the party returned to the fold. There were also strictly domestic political considerations at play. By 1977, it was obvious that the Communist Party's alliance with the socialists had favored the latter at the communists' expense. For the first time in decades, the PS had become the stronger force of the French Left. By breaking the alliance, Marchais hoped to steal back votes from the socialists. The communists provoked the breakup of the Union of the Left by asking for an update of the political platform that blatantly leaned towards the communist's demands.<sup>107</sup> In March 1978, the center-right won the parliamentary elections that analysts had long predicted the left would win. That turnaround reveals that the party's commitment to Eurocommunism was fragile and predicated on success at home; its interest in reaching out to the PCI was based on short-term tactics rather than on a long-term vision. Apart from Kanapa and a handful of *renovateurs*, the party had remained largely unreformed and disinclined to durably challenge Moscow. At its twenty-third party congress in 1979, the PCF shifted back to orthodox positions.<sup>108</sup>

In Italy, despite notable successes for the PCI, Eurocommunism failed to deliver. Though Berlinguer's party had gained power and influence in policymaking, no communist was ever granted a cabinet portfolio. The communists and Christian Democrats considered their accords "as a way to buy time for additional maneuvering and to provide a measure of government stability," a CIA report aptly noted in October 1977. By drawing the communists closer to decision-making positions, the Christian Democrats intended to force them "to confront their internal contradictions as a revolutionary party with a social democratic platform."<sup>109</sup> In its quest for legitimacy within the parliamentary majority, the PCI exhausted its political capital by supporting policies that the grassroots repudiated. On January 26, 1979, noting that the PCI made no further progress, Berlinguer

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106. Réunion du Bureau politique, March 30, 1977, 261J4/34, APCF, AD93; Streiff, *Jean Kanapa*, vol. 2, 80–91.

107. For insiders' accounts, see Pierre Juquin, *De battre mon cœur n'a jamais cessé. Mémoires* (Paris, 2006), 375–458; "Table ronde: rupture du programme commun," in *L'union sans l'unité. Le programme commun de la gauche, 1963–1978*, ed. Danielle Tartakowski and Alain Bergounioux (Rennes, 2012), 273–98.

108. Courtois and Lazar, *Histoire*, 374–79, 399–410; Bracke, *Which Socialism?*, 351–53.

109. Memorandum, "The Italian Political Situation," October 11, 1977, CIA FOIA.

decided to leave the parliamentary majority.<sup>110</sup> Anticipated general elections were held in June and, for the first time after three decades of steady progress, the PCI's score dipped—30.4 percent, down from 34.4 three years before.<sup>111</sup>

Already in poor shape, Eurocommunism as a transnational phenomenon was dealt the *coup de grâce* when Soviet troops invaded Afghanistan. For the first time since 1968, the military intervention forced both parties to take sides. While PCF General Secretary Marchais supported the Soviet intervention on TV live from Moscow, his Italian counterpart condemned it. The 1981 events in Poland further drove the PCF and PCI apart. Thenceforward, the PCI would go alone carrying the torch of Eurocommunism “in one country” despite Moscow's hostility. However, Enrico Berlinguer proved unable to solve the party's identity dilemma and did not completely sever the party's ties with the ICM.<sup>112</sup> Much like *détente*, which its Western European initiators contemplated as an opportunity to gain more autonomy in the context of the Cold War, Eurocommunism was an attempt to overcome Cold War logics. It failed.

Ironically, although it emerged and flourished during *détente*, Eurocommunism contributed to undermining one of the conditions that made *détente* sustainable. An illegitimate child of *détente*, Eurocommunism helped damage the environment that had begotten it. It did not do so by actually threatening the West, but rather by confirming the impression in the United States that American power was declining. In the 1970s, it seemed, Washington did not only prove increasingly incapable of checking the advance of communism on the periphery of the Cold War, as in Asia or Africa; it was also unable to control communism in Western Europe, the United States' most important security partner. Surely Eurocommunism was less instrumental than the Soviet interventions in the Third World, the growing and multifaceted U.S. domestic opposition, or the perception of American decline in undermining *détente*. If only marginally, however, it played a part in the latter by providing further illustration that *détente* was a losing game that commanded a return to confrontation.

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110. National Intelligence Assessment Center, Memorandum, “The Italian Government Crisis: A Tentative Prognosis,” February 2, 1979, CIA FOIA; Giorgio Napolitano, *Dal Pci al socialismo europeo: un'autobiografia politica* (Rome, 2005), 161–63.

111. Paul Ginsborg, *History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics, 1943–1988* (Houndmills, 2003), 401–2.

112. Pons, *Berlinguer*, 162–246. See also Silvio Pons, “Meetings between the Italian Communist Party and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Moscow and Rome, 1978–80,” *Cold War History* 3, no. 1 (2002): 157–66.