THE **POLITICS** SOCIALISM IN TRANS

Edited by Carl Boggs & David Plotke

THE POLITICS OF EUROCOMMUNISM

SOCIALISM IN TRANSITION

EDITED BY CARL BOGGS AND DAVID PLOTKE

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PREFACE

We began work on this book in the fall of 1977, when discussions and debates about the meaning of Eurocommunism were in full swing. Both of us, out of a longstanding interest in issues of Marxist theory, European politics, and socialist strategy, took part in these exchanges in the pages of Socialist Review and elsewhere. We felt that, while the discussions raised many important questions and suggested certain directions for analysis, they lacked depth and systematic elaboration. Too many issues were ignored or sidestepped; a priori assumptions, generally stemming from doctrinaire political viewpoints, often substituted for serious theoretical inquiry and historical analysis. It was out of a desire to move beyond such an impasse that this volume was conceived.

As we started thinking about the direction of our project, we were quickly forced to make a basic decision: was Eurocommunism a passing phenomenon, likely to disappear within the space of a few years, or might it represent some kind of fundamental break within the Marxist and Communist traditions? We concluded that it does mark a significant departure in both the history of the left on an international scale and in the development of European politics.

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Moving from this premise, we approached the large number of problems suggested by the emergence of strong Eurocommunist parties in France, Italy, and Spain. We wanted the contributors to write essays that would go beyond the narrow boundaries of academic disciplines, and would address the range of political questions that preoccupy socialists of whatever orientation. On the one hand, we were committed to an anthology that would not be merely a topical discourse on Eurocommunism; we wanted to generate theoretical perspectives and insights that would have a more or less lasting value. On the other hand, we did not want to obscure the concretely political dimension of the subject matter; to this end, we encouraged analysis of a variety of specific topics and problems related to Eurocommunism—but not too many, we hope, to overwhelm the central themes that hold the volume together.

In carrying out a project of this type, where all of the essays were written originally for inclusion in this anthology, the editors find that they are indebted to an unusually large number of people for their assistance and support. Such help greatly facilitated the editorial process, improved the quality of the final text, and provided us with a rare learning experience.

First of all, we wish to thank the contributors to *The Politics of Eurocommunism*. In every case we encountered nothing but cooperation and a comradely spirit of helpfulness—in the willingness to listen to our suggestions and criticisms that sometimes spanned several drafts of manuscripts, in the patience shown throughout the long editing enterprise, in the sensitivity toward our perpetual (and sometimes capricious) deadlines, and in the great care taken in the preparation of final manuscripts. If the editors often imposed difficult demands upon the authors, complaints were surprisingly rare. Given our effort to integrate the widely-varying contributions so as to provide an overall unity to the volume, the many authors are certainly entitled to blame any remaining defects in their essays on the failures of their editors.

Secondly, we would like to express our gratitude to the many people who read and commented on one or more of the essays. Their criticisms and suggestions were invaluable, even if they often disagreed—sometimes strongly—with the perspectives and arguments that worked their way into the final text. These readers include: Michael Albert, Doug Appel, Sandra Chelnov, Harry Chotiner, Barbara Easton, Andrew Feenberg, Allen Hunter, Paul Joseph, Denis Lacorne, Billy Pope, and members of the Socialist Review collective.

We also owe much thanks to South End Press, which has given us the opportunity to work with a publisher that shares our political goals. The comradely relationship that developed over a year and a half meant that we did not have to drain our energies over the sorts of intellectual and political struggles that often occur at commercial and academic houses. More than that, the South End collective has succeeded in creating a process that brings authors into virtually all aspects of both editorial and production decision-making. The result is an end product that, for better or worse, is very much the expression of our own designs, preferences, and aesthetic tastes.

Finally, we wish to thank those who have given their time to assist us in producing this volume, including preparation of manuscripts, research, and translation. Among these are Sandra Chelnov, Temma Kaplan, Michele Prichard, Jose Rodriguez-Ibañez, Flo Westoby, and members of the Peoples Translation Service.

And there are others—far too numerous to mention here—who contributed in countless ways toward the realization of this project.

[—]Los Angeles, California

[—]Berkeley, California May, 1979

INTRODUCTION

THIS VOLUME WAS assembled with the intent of exploring the overall development of Eurocommunism, defining and analyzing its main features, and assessing its long-term relevance for socialist polities—not only in Western Europe, but in the United States and elsewhere. Our point of departure is the increasingly powerful role of the Communist parties in France, Italy, and Spain, and the way that role has evolved in relation to changing domestic and international conditions. The geographical focus is dictated in part by the strength of the common traditions and problems in Southern Europe; the emphasis on a single region is intended to provide a clear frame of reference within which a specific range of problems can be identified and studied.

We should enter the normal disclaimer at the outset: whatever the importance of developments in France, Italy, and Spain, "Eurocommunism" is something more far-reaching in its political and geographical scope than any particular set of events which may occur in those countries. And whatever the ultimate historical significance of Eurocommunism, it is evident that a process of major proportions is underway. This process is in many respects quite new—the term itself only appeared in the vocabulary of contemporary politics in the mid-1970s. For this reason, the anthology is not premised on arriving at any final conclusions; it is thus deliberately varied both in its theoretical and political orientations and in its styles of presentation.

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While all of the authors approach the topic as socialists, sharp differences nonetheless exist. Some of the essays reflect a straightforward sympathy for the Eurocommunist parties; others, while supportive of their general direction, make sharp criticisms of particular aspects of party strategy, tactics, leadership, or organization; still others question whether these parties can ever play a major role in the transition to socialism. In every case, however, the contributors share the view that the politics of Eurocommunism may well dramatically alter the European social and political landscape. There is fundamental agreement that fresh approaches are needed to confront questions too often evaded or ignored by a left tradition long inhibited by Stalinism and (in a different way) by the mystique of Lenin and the Bolshevik Revolution. And there is further agreement that some of the objectives advanced by the Eurocommunist parties are crucial for socialists, whether or not those values are actually realized in the practice of those parties. In this spirit, we have tried to put together a collection of essays that would have an enduring value beyond any narrow partisanship.

THE MEDITERRANEAN COMMUNIST parties have been profoundly shaped by a series of global events during the past two decades. Among such events have been, in the first place, a number of schisms that have unsettled the world Communist movement, beginning with the Sino-Soviet split and reflected today in the increasing erosion of Soviet hegemony over the left in both Eastern and Western Europe. Perhaps never before has such a complex and fragmentary situation confronted the left on a world scale. In crucial respects, the appearance of large and relatively popular Eurocommunist parties both expresses and deepens this conflict, threatening to open a rupture between Western Communist parties and the Soviet Union that could be irreversible.

At the same time, Eurocommunism has evolved in a period when the massive power of the United States has been in crisis. The economic, political, and military strength of the U.S. is still sufficient to permit it to influence events in the Mediterranean countries; it can still hope to dictate, openly or covertly, the terms of left-wing participation in such governments. But its power is more fragile than at any time since the immediate postwar years, and the options available to U.S. foreign policy appear to be more and more restricted in the aftermath of the Vietnam defeat and the weakening of American economic domination in Western Europe and other regions. While this fragility clearly does not rule out the exercise of power, or preclude major intervention in moments of desperation (as in Chile), it does impose new limits on the American capacity to impede change in Western Europe.

Finally, Eurocommunism has strengthened its presence at the very time of rapidly-advancing economic and political integration within Western Europe. This process has been skillfully engineered by international monopoly capital, presided over by the multi-national corporations, the EEC, and such institutions as the International Monetary Fund. Even as the traditional language of proletarian internationalism within the world Communist movement is discarded, the difficulties of charting a strategy confined to the boundaries of a single nation-state have sharpened. The pressures toward European integration form a novel terrain for the unfolding of social and political struggles in the coming years.

It is this historical setting in which the left opposition—especially in the advanced capitalist countries—must begin to redefine its overall purposes and rethink its strategic orientation. Today, the left in general and Marxism in particular appear to suffer from a profound lack of ability to sketch a convincing alternative to liberal capitalism in North America, Western Europe, and elsewhere. Old approaches have become obsolete or have been soundly defeated, but new ones—at least politically effective ones—seem to be agonizingly slow in taking shape.

Eurocommunism—insofar as it has arrived at a coherent sense of identity—presents itself as a political formation that, in the midst of evolving crisis, can fill this void and transcend the failures and limitations of the past. In its groping for a socialist way out of the present impasse, it embraces a range of ideological and strategic themes that would appear to set it apart from both classical Leninism and the various forms of social democracy: rejection of traditional insurrectionary politics, the vanguard party, and the myth of the "dictatorship of the proletariat"; attachment to the idea of constructing a "social bloc" of forces, based upon a multi-class transition to socialism rather than a strict proletarian focus; involvement in political struggles that take place within existing representative institutions; commitment to building a mass party that would continuously press anew the goal of socialism; and a principled support of social and political pluralism—not only for the present, but in any future socialist order.

None of these themes is entirely new; all can be traced back to various sources and periods in the history of the left. Their novelty stems from the way the entire range of concerns and priorities has been integrated into a unified strategic, if not programmatic, format rooted in the peculiar situation of Mediterranean (and European) capitalism in the 1970s, in the serious thrust toward democratization and autonomy of parties within the world Communist movement, and in the first really comprehensive and overt departures from the Soviet model of bureaucratic centralism. It is a novelty that defies simplistic theoretical or

historical parallels with earlier movements and tendencies. It is a novelty, moreover, that is rooted in the specific political conjuncture of forces at work in European history in the wake of a long sequence of events and processes: the Sino-Soviet split, the emergence of the new left in the 1960s, the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia, the overthrow of Allende in Chile, and the secular decline of right-wing hegemony in Southern Europe (the end of the Salazar regime in Portugal, the erosion of Francoism in Spain, the eclipse of Gaullism in France, and the disarray of Christian Democracy in Italy).

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN socialism and democracy, which has presented a major problem for the left since the time of Marx and Engels, is a motif that permeates most of the essays in this book. Here the Eurocommunist parties—like other Communist parties with origins in the Third International—share a common history: initial rejection of social democracy and adoption of Leninist vanguardism; a period of left sectarianism in the late 1920s; the Popular Front politics of the 1930s; clandestine struggle against fascism during the late 1930s and 1940s (or, as in the case of the Spanish party, until very recently); and, finally, growing postwar involvement in the structures and norms of parliamentary democracy.

This history, of course, was until very recently shaped by the overwhelming power of the Soviet Union. The cold war years in particular were characterized by a rather strict subordination of the Western parties to the global interests of the USSR; the degree to which the various national Communist parties could adapt to changing indigenous conditions was therefore severely restricted, impeding any real attempt to combine the goals of socialist transformation with even the limited forms of parliamentary democracy. As early as 1956, however, this subordination began to erode. Following the twentieth CPSU Congress and the first stirrings of de-Stalinization in the USSR, the events in Hungary and other Eastern European countries, and PCI leader Palmiro Togliatti's call for "polycentrism" within international Communism, the outlines of a new strategy grounded in Western European experience started to appear. Along with the concept of "peaceful coexistence," the Soviet leadership encouraged the development of "national paths" and the "peaceful road" to socialism. The PCI, under the innovative guidance of Togliatti, seized upon this opportunity to develop—cautiously at first—its version of "advanced democracy" through a strategy of structural reforms. What the PCI envisaged was an organic process of change that abandoned civil insurrection in favor of a gradual internal democratization of the existing state apparatus. Implicit in this vaguely-defined model was a turning away from Leninism as the basis of Western political strategy and a challenging of Soviet hegemony over the world Communist movement—central elements in what would later be called "Eurocommunism." Already by the late 1950s, therefore, the PCI was groping its way toward a critique of the single-party state (as embodied in the historical reality of the USSR and Eastern Europe) for its negation of any semblance of democracy.

Once this process was set in motion, it did not take long for other parties to begin exploring new terrain. For Communist parties in Western Europe and elsewhere, the 1960s became a period of internal crisis and searching: old methods, strategies, and political alliances were questioned, new ones entertained and debated. It was a time of theoretical (not to mention political) doubt and self-reflection, not only among the party leaderships but among the rank-and-file. What emerged was a renewed concern for the role of distinctly national forces and traditions, and—by extension—a commitment to merging the objectives of democracy and socialism.

But the Western parties, for the most part, lacked any coherent or long-range strategy that could make sense of their new predicament and new opportunities; they were essentially limited to tactical, day-to-day responses. In part still confined to Leninist orthodoxy, the parties in fact undertook little in the way of new theoretical departures. This impasse was perhaps most profoundly revealed by the appearance of a large and dynamic new left in countries like Italy and France. Not only did the new left directly challenge the revolutionary pretensions of the Communist parties, it raised vital issues (for example, those of workers' control and feminism) that had been obscured within the Communist tradition. Most significantly, it suggested a vision of socialism that involves an extension of democracy into all spheres of social, economic, and political life.

Yet the crises and disruptions that appeared to immobilize the Western parties in the 1960s produced not degeneration but rather a new cycle of adaptation and rejuvenation. By the 1970s, memberships and popular support were increasing; the Mediterranean parties (notably the PCI) were expanding their political presence within the electoral arena, the trade unions, local government, and even the popular movements such as feminism. Inevitably, such rejuvenation—coinciding with the mounting long-term structural crisis of European capitalism—generated more elaborate theoretical and strategic formulations. The conflicts and tensions of the interregnum ultimately seem to have been resolved in favor of what we can now loosely refer to as "Eurocommunism." What this has meant since the mid-1970s is an even more explicit rejection of Leninism and the Soviet pattern of development; a more positive assessment of pluralist democracy; a reaching out to diverse social forces beyond the traditional proletariat (including Catholicism and the "new

middle strata" of technical workers, civil servants, professionals, and intellectuals); and relaxation of internal party discipline associated with "democratic centralism." And it has meant, probably more than anything else, firm emphasis on the viability of elections and parliamentary forms in the transition to socialism.

Whether this strategic orientation actually constitutes an alternative to the limitations of past Marxist approaches remains to be seen. The new adaptation to changing social reality by the Eurocommunist parties promises a more effective socialist presence in the respective countries; at the same time, such adaptation can easily lead to a narrowing of political vision and a moderating of mass involvement that could in the long run have integrative rather than revolutionary consequences. The test of Eurocommunist strategy, of its efforts to intensify the contradictions between democracy and capitalism—assuming that it will sooner or later bring such parties to power—may not arrive for some time. And while the production and legitimation crises of Mediterranean capitalism are almost certain to produce further leftward shifts in France, Italy, and Spain, the long-range impact and fate of the Communist parties within these growing formations is surely difficult to predict.

While the various crises of Mediterranean capitalism persist, it is not certain that they will automatically generate further shifts to the left in France, Italy, and Spain. Nor, even if such shifts occur, are the long-range impact and fate of the Communist parties within a growing left easy to predict. In the few years since the emergence of Eurocommunism as a recognizable tendency, it has become clear that the simple adoption of Eurocommunist positions is no guarantee of political success in even the most narrow electoral terms. In several countries, such as Japan and Mexico, Communist parties that have been identified with such perspectives have played an increasingly important political role, though neither party is close to national power. In France, Italy, and Spain the emergence of Eurocommunism has encouraged electoral advances, but nothing resembling a dramatic victory. Nor are such victories likely to occur in the near future. It may be argued that had these parties not adopted a Eurocommunist strategy they might have suffered major political defeats and entered into processes of rapid decline. Whatever the case, it is clear that formal adoption of Eurocommunist positions is not enough to prevent sectarianism (for example, the PCF's behavior in the 1978 elections), or resolve the dilemmas of participation in regional and local government in the absence of a national power leverage (the PCI).

The test of Eurocommunist strategy, of its efforts to deepen the tensions between democracy and capitalism, may not arrive for some time. Its meaning, consequently, cannot be determined only by watching the short-term electoral results that it yields; a much more comprehensive

approach, one which situates such outcomes within the framework of the general direction of the Eurocommunist parties and evaluates other potential strategic approaches, is necessary.

ALTHOUGH EVERY CONTRIBUTOR to this volume agrees that the most visible Eurocommunist initiatives are historically significant, there are major disagreements around the strategic meaning of such initiatives. There is above all the question of whether (and to what extent) the changes we are now observing anticipate some new form or model of revolutionary transformation in the advanced capitalist countries. Many of the essays, with varying emphases, suggest that the Eurocommunist break with past orthodoxy does in fact open the way to a new kind of transition to socialism. Other essays, while skeptical of the strategic and/or tactical choices of particular party leaderships, still entertain hopes for a renewal of party life and theoretical vision commensurate with the needs of revolutionary mobilization. And some of the essays argue that the abandonment of traditional models is likely to lead not to a new and more effective socialist opposition but to an unleashing of the most conservative tendencies within the parties—tendencies that might well transform them into agencies of bureaucratic rationalization or (conditions permitting) social-democratization along the lines of the Northern European systems.

Despite such differences, every treatment rests on the assumption that Eurocommunism is apt to remain a powerful force on the left in the Mediterranean for a considerable period, and that a judgment of its meaning cannot be rendered on the basis of old doctrinal formulas.

The following essays fall into roughly four categories. The first category encompasses those contributions which focus primarily on the strategic direction of the parties, within the framework posed by the general problem of the transition to socialism. These include the pieces by George Ross, Joanne Barkan, and Jose Rodriguez-Ibañez. The second type of essay stresses the relationship between the Communist parties and other social and political forces—for example, the women's and ecology movements, elements of the new left, Socialist Parties, national or regional movements, and terrorist organizations. This is the emphasis of the essays by Temma Kaplan, Suzanne Cowan, Andrew Feenberg, Annarita Buttafuoco, and Louise Bealieu and Jonathan Cloud. In the third group are contributions that examine the development of Eurocommunism within the international context (the global crisis of capitalism, the response of American policy-makers to the left challenge, the fragmentation of the world Communist movement, and European integration). The treatments of Fred Block, Paul Joseph, Louis Menashe, and Diana Johnstone fit into this category. Finally, there are