

EUROPE

Madrid meeting of Eurocommunists

By Bernard H. Moss

At the conference held in Madrid on March 3 and 4 the leaders of the Communist Parties of France, Italy and Spain gave their official blessing to Eurocommunism, the term commonly employed to describe their new bureaucratic approach to socialism.

Certainly, the new direction of their parties, which seek to construct socialism in liberty and democracy, had been announced before in several bilateral encounters. But in Madrid for the first time the heads of the leading Communist Parties in Western Europe joined together to describe the precise contours of Eurocommunism, which differs as much from the socialism of the Second International as from that of the Third. Through their final declaration and its major omission—it contained no reference to repression in socialist countries—they also made known their refusal to use the notion of Eurocommunism as a weapon against the Soviet Union.

The main purpose of the conference was to support the Spanish Communists in their fight for democracy and effort to achieve full legalization. Similar fraternal meetings have already been held between Spanish Socialists and Christian Democrats and their European counterparts, but unlike the other parties, who are able to hold large public assemblies, the Communists were restricted to the privacy of their hotel rooms.

Only at the last moment did the government authorize a public news conference with the three leaders. Nevertheless, the first meeting of Spanish Communists with their Italian and French comrades on Spanish soil in 40 years had a tremendous impact on the Spanish press and public opinion.

►Detente a precondition for socialism.

In their declaration the leaders expressed their intention to achieve socialism in democracy and liberty "with a plurality of political and social forces while respecting and enlarging all collective and individual liberties." In addition, they stressed their commitment to detente, to achieving arms reduction, overcoming the military division of Europe and securing full compliance with the terms of the Helsinki Accords. Later, in the news conference they made it plain that they consider the pursuit and strengthening of detente as an absolute precondition for the construction of socialism in liberty.

The statement omitted reference to the repression of dissidents in socialist countries. All three parties have deplored the absence of liberties and condemned the recent repression there, but they did not want their meeting to be interpreted as a counter to the Soviet Union. More seriously, they fear that the recent campaign on behalf of the dissidents will be used to scuttle detente, fuel the arms race and fan the embers of the Cold War.

Several Western leaders—Carter apparently is not one—share this concern. For this reason French President Giscard d'Estaing, whose government has a large investment in Franco-Soviet cooperation, refused to see the Soviet dissident Andrei Amarik, who was hauled away from the Elysee Palace by French police. Outflanking the French president in his zeal for liberty, Communist leader George Marchais agreed to talk with Amarik on the radio. He was thus able to point out that while he shared Amarik's concern about liberty in the Soviet Union, the dissident did not seem to share his concern about detente and the defense of liberty in France.

►Solidarity with USSR.

The Spanish at Madrid would have liked an explicit reference to the absence of liberties in the East. Faced with a rival Communist faction supported by the Soviets since 1970, they have been the most virulent critics of the Soviet Union among the Euro-Communists. An explicit condemnation would have doubtless strengthened



Enrico Berlinguer, Santiago Carrillo & George Marchais meet in Madrid — Jim Hume for the New York Times 1977

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their legal case before the Spanish tribunal assigned to judge whether they are "a totalitarian party attached to a foreign power."

The French and Italians, however, had no desire to worsen their relations with the Soviets, who have reacted with great violence to Carter's intervention on behalf of the dissidents and who at that very moment were conferring in Sofia with the ideological chiefs of the Eastern European Communist parties to formulate a response.

In the press conference that followed the three Western party leaders attempted to delineate the parameters of Eurocommunism, distinguishing it sharply from Social Democracy. Contrary to common belief, none of the parties has abandoned Leninist orthodoxy regarding the revolutionary role of the industrial working class, the vanguard role of the party and the organizational imperative of democratic centralism. The Italian leader Enrico Berlinguer, whose party is often thought to be the most democratic of the three, was quite strong in his condemnation of factions within the party.

Nor has any of the parties renounced its solidarity with the Soviet Union as the first socialist country and anti-imperialist force in the world. When questioned about his criticism of the Soviets, Santiago Carrillo, the Spanish leader, denied that there was a new ruling class in power and recognized their social, economic and anti-imperialist achievements as those of socialism.

►A liberal critique.

Like Carrillo, the Eurocommunists gen-

erally restrict their criticisms to the Soviet political system, to its "bureaucratic deformations," the insufficiencies of socialist democracy and limitations on fundamental liberties. In foreign affairs, they reproach the Soviets for putting their state interests ahead of those of the world revolution or of simply identifying the two, but they recognize the role the Soviet Union plays in struggles for national liberation in limiting the possibilities of imperialist intervention and thus in making a democratic socialism in Western Europe possible.

The Eurocommunist critique of the Soviet Union is essentially a liberal, political one that differs sharply from Maoist and Trotskyist attempts to find a new ruling class. It seeks to understand its contradictory development as a socialist country without capitalist exploitation but with bureaucratic deformations inherited from the Tsarist past that were intensified during the struggle for survival in a capitalist universe, and crystallized by the personal despotism of Stalin.

Much of their divergence with the Soviets stems from what they see as a resurgence of Stalinism since the downfall of Khrushchev in 1964. They are not ready to exonerate Lenin from some of the blame either. The historical analysis by the French Communist historian Jean Ellenstein, *The Stalinist Phenomenon*, recently published by Lawrence and Wishart, is significant in this regard.

►Soviet criticism cautious.

The Soviets have been cautious in reacting to Eurocommunism. Never very en-

thusiastic about it, they did not begin their public criticism of the Western European parties until they began their bilateral talks in 1975. This winter the Soviet monthly *New Times* singled out the writings of Ellenstein for criticism. Henry Winston of the American party chose Carrillo as his target.

During the Madrid gathering *Pravda* published its most explicit disavowal of Eurocommunism: "Experience has shown that it is impossible to realize socialism within the framework of the bourgeois state and bourgeois democracy.... Peaceful violence is inevitable in the process of transition from capitalism to socialism." Such orthodoxy had not been heard since the time of Stalin.

The Soviets are obviously apprehensive about a socialist movement that may threaten the stability of Europe and its division into two blocs. They are fearful that a democratic socialism established outside their orbit and without their help will constitute an irresistible attraction for reformist elements in Eastern Europe.

Yet, as much as they may fear its success, they cannot afford its defeat, for the Eurocommunists are the historic carriers of their revolutionary project and their only real friends in Western Europe. Erich Honecker, head of the East German party—not to be suspected of anti-Sovietism—appears to have understood the stakes involved when he recently expressed the wish that the French and Italians will "be able to create socialism in the colors of France and Italy."

►Italian revolution not for tomorrow.

Because the barriers to be overcome are considerable, the Eurocommunists, who will need all the help they can get, cannot afford a break with the Soviets. Of the three parties, the Italians have maintained the best relations with Moscow in the past two years. Their dissidence is the oldest and their gradualist strategy of "historic compromise" the least threatening to the established order. So long as the compromise pertains to immediate democratic tasks, the Soviets cannot have any theoretical objection since they have always favored the creation of large popular fronts for national and democratic purposes.

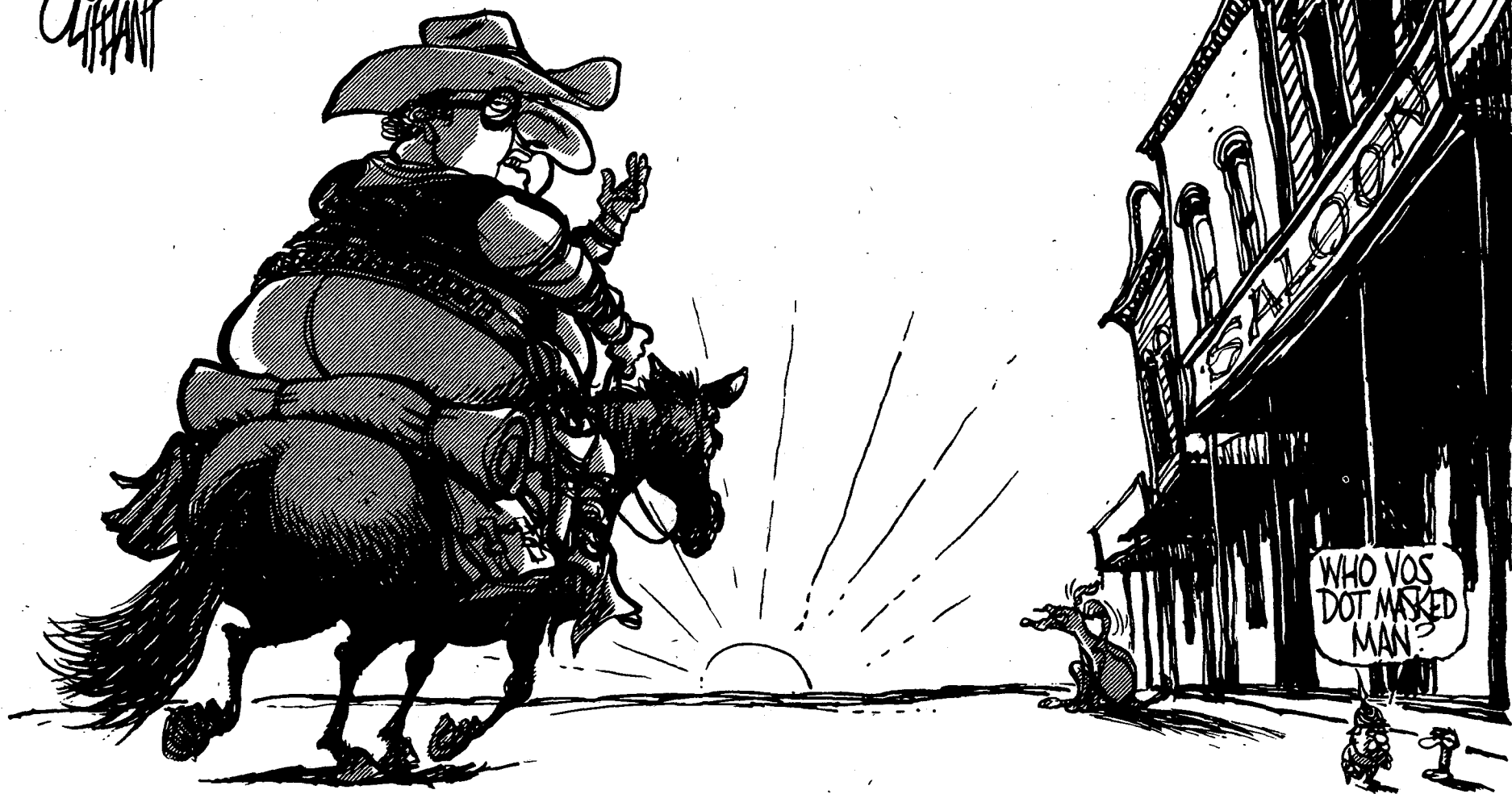
Unlike that of the French and Spanish parties, who have clearly announced their strategic perspectives, the direction of the Italian party—and the meaning of the historic compromise—remains highly ambiguous. For the moment it would seem that because of the extreme dependence of their economy on trade with Western Europe, the Italians have given up hopes of achieving socialism in one country and are working on the longer-range project of transforming Western Europe.

The success of the Common Program in France might speed up the process and alter this perspective. But obviously, if the socialization of the Italian economy must wait upon the overthrow of capitalism in West Germany, the Italian revolution is not for tomorrow.

Meanwhile, the practical implementation of the historic compromise marks time. So far the Christian Democrats have been able to resist pressures for such a compromise. Premier Giulio Andreotti seems determined to keep the Communists out of the government and in the shadows of his power until the next elections, which he hopes will register their decline. The party's policy of critical support—Andreotti is kept in office through Communist abstentions—has yielded some concessions, but no real dividends for the working class or the faltering Italian economy.

It has begun to cause disaffection in the ranks of trade unionists and party supporters. The revolt of Italian students against the established parties, dramatized in the physical assault on the Communist trade union leader Lama, reveals the dangers of a one-sided historical compromise with Christian Democracy. ■

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From the Lone Ranger to Mr. Peanut . . .

Is American foreign policy changing under Carter?
Four prominent American historians offer their opinions.

The questions

In his election campaign, Jimmy Carter tried to distinguish his foreign policy from that of the "lone ranger" Henry Kissinger. The statements of President Carter and his secretary of State Cyrus Vance on human rights and Third World commodity relations and their emphasis on reaffirming the trilateral alliance among industrial capitalist countries have made it appear that Carter is setting out on a new foreign policy course. But do these appearances denote real changes or are they merely designed to create a different image behind which the same overall policies will be pursued?

IN THESE TIMES decided to ask four prominent American historians to evaluate the Kissinger policies and to assess any differences with the Carter administration's approach. We asked them to respond, either consecutively or as a whole, to three questions about American foreign policy:

1. How did Henry Kissinger's policies change American foreign policy?
2. What do you expect the differences, if any, to be between Kissinger's policies and those of the Carter administration?
3. What do you expect to be the impact of the Carter administration policies on the world and on American society?

William A Williams

The central issue has always been—and remains—how to make tactical adaptations that do not subvert the strategic essence of empire.

Allow me to suggest that it is a mistake to concentrate on Kissinger (or any other individual) in discussing the changes in contemporary American foreign policy. Specific people do become important, perhaps even vital, at various points in history: think only of Hoover in the 1920s and Churchill in the 1940s. In that sense, Kissinger is worth a page or two in a future textbook. But what is important involves the domestic and social forces that became obvious during the Kennedy administration: those social forces caused the changes—adaptation is a more accurate term—that have occurred during the last decade.

A good many earlier policy makers recognized the necessity for such adaptation: one can make a strong argument, for example that Eisenhower and Kennan sensed the essentials of the new reality during the 1950s. Even Nixon previewed his China policy during the 1960s.

For all those people, however, the central issue has always been—and remains—how to make tactical adaptations that do not subvert the strategic essence of empire. Nixon and Kissinger dragged that issue

out into the open and dramatized the need to devise a coherent foreign policy for late corporate capitalism. None of them, alas, have Churchill's gutsy honesty: to wit, we, Nixon and Kissinger, are not appointed to the job of presiding over the liquidation of the American empire.

But that is, of course, the very definition of the job.

So we come down on the issue. The weaknesses of those efforts to resolve the dilemma of empire can be subsumed under the ramifications of one proposition: the alienation inherent in capitalism has produced a fundamental misconception of power.

1. Kennan, an unusually intelligent and knowledgeable man without much insight, had a belated vision of that heart of darkness. (Ed. note: George Kennan was an American diplomat and foreign policy theorist.) He complained (or perhaps whined is a more accurate term) bitterly that American leaders had read his call for the containment of the USSR (read Revolution) in narrowly military terms. But the essence of late corporate capitalism is the take-over bid: Kennan defined the issues in terms of wind-up toys and middle-class walls (a classically capitalistic metaphor), and hence his claim to having been misunderstood tells us more about the pervasiveness of the capitalistic outlook than about the misconceptions of Kennan's superiors (in his view, his inferiors).

2. Kennedy inhaled increasingly strong whiffs of the true nature of power at the Bay of Pigs, in Vienna, and during the Cuban missile crisis. He was in truth a slow learner, but he told us in his own way (the American University speech) that the strategy of the take-over bid was obsolete.

The stockholders, as it were, were no longer voting by proxy.

3. The policy making institutions (Rockefeller, Brookings, MIT, Rand, etc.) were by that time far on down the road. They knew how to read the handwriting on the wall. Look at it this way: Nixon never had the nerve to be a leader. If he had, Watergate would have been a teenage pimple in the course of our maturation into a sophisticated multinational tyranny. Kissinger understood all that, and did his mundane (he is mundane, whatever his personal flair) best to create a new empire.

As for Carter, I am ambivalent. Is he the reincarnation of Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, and Franklin D. Roosevelt? Or perhaps a bionic combination of Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Jackson, and James Polk? It is too soon to say. But I do have a feeling that the corporate peanut farmer has a feel for economic realities that we had better watch with care. He is, after all, the master of the take-over.

Carter and his friends will do their best, and it may prove to be a most sophisticated best, to preserve the empire.

In that sense, and it is vital, all the rhetoric about Kissinger and Carter is beside the point. We need strategically different visions of America—and what it means to be an American.

Now if Carter and Z-Big had any sense of History, which most obviously they do not, they would take a page from the strategy of Charles Evans Hughes, who was Secretary of State in the 1920s. They would convene a conference on disarmament and say this:

We propose to scrap half of our nuclear weapons and concentrate on making a revolution.

Hughes was mistaken in thinking that