

CPSU PCI RELATIONS.

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1. Relations between the Italian Communist Party (PCI) and the Soviet Party (CPSU) have come under severe strain in recent years as the PCI has taken up 'Eurocommunist' positions on a number of important issues, dropped the term 'Leninism' from its statutes and cast serious doubt on the achievements of the Soviet Union and the validity of the Communist political system operating there and in Eastern Europe (called 'real' or 'existing' socialism by the Russians). The PCI has publicly espoused the concept of political pluralism. It has moreover adopted a critical position on important foreign policy issues affecting the Soviet Union - latterly on Afghanistan and on the questions of medium-range missiles in Europe, and Poland. The PCI have realised from the outset that their response to events in Poland would need careful articulation. The PCI leadership are faced with the problem of retaining the support of the Marxists at the Party base many of whom (some 30%) are thought to regard the USSR as the best form of society yet achieved and instinctively support it. At the same time the leadership must show enough independence of the Soviet Union to convince the uncommitted electorate that the PCI is not the tool of Moscow.

2. Friction between the PCI and Moscow over Poland was inevitable following PCI support for the early moves of Solidarity. This surfaced, for example, in a prickly Soviet comment in New Times in June 1981, over an article in the PCI journal, Rinascita, which had spoken of a threat to Poland and interference in her internal affairs, exemplified in the 5 June Soviet letter to the Polish leadership. The imposition of martial law on 13 December, while not as disastrous as a Soviet-led invasion would have been, posed the same basic dilemma for the PCI as Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968 and to a lesser extent Afghanistan in 1980. However, given the record of the PCI under the reformists, condemnation of martial law came as no surprise. A PCI Direzione statement on 13 December condemned the emergency measures, called for civil and trade union rights to be respected, and spoke of the need to avoid external pressure. The statement made no explicit reference to Soviet interference or responsibility. After a period of political manouevring in which the PCI leadership's /condemnation

condemnation of martial law hardened, the PCI Secretariat issued a statement on 30 December. This described Jaruzelski's emergency measures as incompatible with PCI ideals of socialism

and democracy, and set out in detail the PCI's views on socialism in Eastern Europe, which went further than before in condemning 'real socialism'. The statement questioned the 'monolithic conception of power, the lack of institutions to represent effectively the various elements of society, and the closed hierarchical way of conceiving relations within the 'socialist camp'. This phase of socialist development,' it went on, 'beginning with the October revolution, has lost its propulsive force.' The document pointed to the lack of democratic life in Poland and for the need to transform Polish socialism in a 'democratic and pluralist direction', and charged the USSR and Warsaw Pact countries with exerting 'heavy pressure', of unjust interference and an 'insistent political campaign against the forces of renewal'. It went on to make the grave charge that the adoption of the Soviet model in Eastern Europe had caused economic and political damage: 'For Poland as for Hungary it was a grave mistake to duplicate the Soviet system'. It also reiterated the PCI's opposition to the concept of two blocs - there had to be a third way.

3. The CPSU responded at the end of January with a double-barrelled blast in Pravda and Kommunist (the Party theoretical journal). Using particularly rough language Pravda, in a 5 column editorial on 24 January, accused the PCI's December statement and the January Central Committee resolution of using language similar to that employed by the US Secretary of State, and of denigrating the 'great historical and victorious path and experience of the Soviet people and the CPSU'; of declaring revolutionary doctrine bankrupt all the experience of the struggle for socialism as 'obsolete and invalid'; and of a 'truly sacrilegious attempt' to prove that the foreign policy of the USSR and the Warsaw Pact was no different from that of the USA and NATO. It criticised the PCI for speaking of the Soviet Union's 'hegemonistic ambitions'. Pravda threw in the charge that the PCI leaders were trying to appease NATO. In a vigorous defence of Soviet achievements it asked

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what capitalism had achieved in its first 65 years of existence, and criticised the Italian government's record in coping with the after affects of the earthquakes. On Poland it said that the PCI leadership's sympathy for the right wing extremists in Solidarity had shown that for them democracy was not the participation of workers in running a socialist society, but freedom for those who were trying to undermine the socialist system.

4. Similar charges were levelled in a lengthy critique of PCI policy in an article in Kommunist (No 2 1982) given wider currency by Tass and reprinted in New Times of 29 January. This accused the top leaders of the PCI (Berlinguer, Napolitano, Ingrao and Macaluso) of making crude attacks on the USSR and of talking about the 'degeneration of the countries of the socialist community, and even of casting doubt on the existence of socialism in the USSR. Kommunist accused the PCI of falling in with Western propaganda, and made the serious charge that the 'PCI documents contain a most dangerous statement that borders on a rejection of the most fundamental principles for Communists - that the measures taken by a government cannot be justified even by the need to save the socialist system in the country' in effect giving up the defence of socialist gains. On 26 January in an uncontrite reply to Pravda, the PCI newspaper l'Unita made the points that it was not the PCI that was working against the interests of socialism but those who were responsible for a socio-economic policy which had caused the people to reject an authoritarian system of government; it regretted that the hopes aroused by the 26th CPSU Congress in 1956 had not been fulfilled and rejected the rigid division of the world into two blocs and the Soviet assertion that 'who is not with us is against us'.

5. In the present context the Soviet leaders clearly regard the attitude of the PCI as particularly unwelcome, and as tantamount to giving aid and comfort to the enemy. Criticism of the Soviet Union cannot be seen in Moscow as honest, but as inevitably motivated by a desire to see Soviet and socialist power undermined. Italian criticism is all the more intolerable coming from those who ought in Soviet eyes, to be standing by their comrades at a critical time. The Russians, keen to ensure discipline and a closing of ranks not only in Eastern Europe but

in the Communist movement as a whole, evidently take the view that the PCI attitude could not be allowed to go unchallenged. The French Communist Party Congress due in early February, may have been a not insignificant factor in the timing of the Soviet riposte.

6. While the present rift is the most serious to date between the two parties, there is no evident disposition on either side to regard it as 'excommunication' of the PCI, although its latest utterances put it beyond the pale as far as Moscow is concerned. The PCI for its part cannot now afford to back down and abandon its position under Soviet pressure. This does not mean however that PCI/CPSU relations will have been damaged beyond repair. In time the invective could be reduced and a healing formula devised designed to satisfy the amour propre of both sides. Whether and how soon this happens will depend on where the Russians and the PCI think their interests lie. The course of events in Poland will evidently be a major factor.

East European and Soviet Department
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cc : Mr Osborne, WED.