

“Eurocommunism is Anti-Communism”: The Attitude of the Party of Labour of Albania about Western Communism in the Early 1980s

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Abstract: Following the rift with China, Albania found itself on a lonely road towards pretending to protect the purity of the Marxism-Leninism in Europe. Although diplomatic relations with the West were restricted only to trade, the Albanian Communist leader, Enver Hoxha, was interested in recent developments inside Western Communist parties. Through Eurocommunist theorizations, the parties in Italy, France and Spain abandoned revolutionary aims, incorporated democracy in their ideology and tried to build electoral coalitions with socialist parties and other left-wing forces. By contrast, the Albanian Enver Hoxha considered that Communist revolution was still possible in the world, and the Communist parties still acted as Leninist revolutionary vanguards. From this perspective, he denounced Eurocommunism as a continuation of “revisionism”. This paper will present the attitude of the Party of Labour of Albania about Western Communism by placing it in its historical context and framing it in light of broader debates inside the European Communist movement.

Keywords: Eurocommunism, Communist parties, revisionism, Albania, Enver Hoxha

Introduction

The Communist leader of Albania, Enver Hoxha, authored numerous works of theoretical pretensions that were immediately translated into various foreign languages, but his most famous work abroad was probably his treatise, *Eurocommunism is Anti-Communism* (1981). In this book, Hoxha engaged in

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criticism of the Eurocommunism trend among several Communist parties in Western Europe, which was an innovative political development in the international Communist movement, originating in the Western parties, not the Soviet Union, China or Cuba. Partly for this reason, Eurocommunism was observed with much interest and criticism by Communist parties and movements in both West and East. In the 1970s, at a time when Eurocommunism was embraced by Spanish, Italian and French Communist parties, Albania broke up its relations with its last big ally, China, and entered a period of self-isolation from the outside world. Hoxha himself died in 1985, but the Communist dictatorship lasted till December 1990, when the Party of Labour of Albania (PLA) was pressured by popular protests to declare the end of the one-party rule.

Hoxha's book was a significant reminder that, ideologically, the PLA continued to view itself as part of the European and worldwide Communist movement. He stressed that Albania's progression towards socialism was not an idiosyncratic development, but proof that Marxism-Leninism is a universal principle still viable in the late 20th century. Despite the independent course followed by the PLA, Hoxha never ceased to proclaim that Albanian Communism was the vanguard of world Communism and international revolution, at a time when the tides of imperialism and revisionism were rising in Europe. In this respect, he thought that the Eurocommunist project of the Western parties was nothing more than the newest manifestation of the old "revisionism" that had plagued most Communist parties in the world, including the Soviet and Chinese parties, in other words, an open betrayal of Marxism-Leninism. In spite of the dogmatic perspective from which Hoxha launched his denunciation of Eurocommunism, some of his arguments hit the mark. The Eurocommunist leaders of Italian, Spanish and French parties were abandoning the rigid dogma of Marxism-Leninism, in the name of continuing, or inventing, the Communist project in their international and domestic contexts.

This article summarizes Hoxha's criticism of Eurocommunism and examines the way he imagined PLA not only as part of but somehow a leader of the European and worldwide Marxist-Leninist movement. In order to accomplish this task, the following section will resume the brief history of Eurocommunism from its emergence in the 1970s to its fading away in the early 1980s. The history of Eurocommunism represents the manoeuvring of three Communist parties in Western Europe, the Italian party, the French party and the Spanish party, therefore attention will be paid to specific national political conjunctions that prompted these parties to search for a "European" Communist way. The next section will focus on Hoxha's criticism. In addition to *Eurocommunism is Anti-Communism*, a previous work by Hoxha, *Imperialism and Revolution* (1979), will be commented upon. The latter echoes Lenin's famous works, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* and *The State and Revolution*, and it contains Hoxha's prognosis on the international relations of

his time and also reveals his ambition to be a leader in the international Communist movement. In *Imperialism and Revolution*, Enver Hoxha laid the groundwork for his critique of Eurocommunism, later expanded in *Eurocommunism is Anti-Communism*. In the last section of this article we provide a summary of our argument and draw the logical conclusions.

The Rise and Fall of Eurocommunism

The term “Eurocommunism” was invented by journalists in the early 1970s, before it was adopted as a self-designation by three major parties in Western Europe – the French Communist Party (PCF), the Italian Communist Party (PCI) and the Spanish Communist Party (PCE) – in order to distinguish themselves from the Communist movements in Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, Latin America or East Asia. In 1975 and 1976, in a series of meetings, the PCI, PCF and PCE established the Eurocommunism concept. The term is mentioned in *Eurocommunism and the State* by Santiago Carillo, the leader of the Spanish Communists, and it was adopted by the three parties at the Madrid Congress in March 1977². Eurocommunism was an alliance rather than a movement with a specific program. It was a convenient term denoting these Western Communist parties’ tendency to maximise their electoral constituency in their respective countries by adopting the Western concept of pluralism and distancing themselves from the Soviet tutelage. The Eurocommunist parties had several principles in common, such as acknowledging the freedom of each Communist party to apply the principles of Marxism-Leninism in its own way; renunciation of violent revolution and dictatorship of the proletariat as a necessary means of creating a Communist society; commitment to democratic values and pluralism; giving higher priority to finding common ground with internal “progressive” parties and social forces than to the preservation of common ground with the Soviet Union³. The term itself could be taken as an implicit critique of the Soviet socialist experience. By emphasizing the “Euro” component of Eurocommunism, the Soviet version of Communism was considered not applicable to the advanced Western societies, and its brute characteristics could be attributed to historic Russian backwardness and not to Marxism in general⁴.

With the advent of the Cold War a *cordon sanitaire* was enforced around Communist parties in Western Europe. Because of their subordination to the Soviet Union and the revolutionary doctrine, the Communist parties could not be tolerated as political partners, not to mention being included in national governments. The PCF was *le premier parti de France* in 1945, with 26

² Aspaturian 1980: 6.

³ Aspaturian 1980: 11.

⁴ Willetts 1981: 5.

per cent of the vote, but saw its support and membership decline throughout the 1950s⁵. Similarly, in post-war years, the PCI had a membership of more than two millions, but from 1954 to 1968 it dropped by thirty per cent and, what was more important than the decline in numbers, the party was caught off-guard by the militancy of the workers and various youth autonomous movements in 1960s, which compromised the image of the PCI as the most vanguard and progressive force in Italian society⁶. Looking forward to the acceptance of the PCE as a legal party in the post-Franco democratic Spain, its émigré leadership in 1960s was more than ready to abandon the Soviet tutelage. Realizing that revolution in the West was not feasible, Western European Communist parties concentrated their efforts on democratic means of achieving power. As a consequence, they had to adapt their programs and electoral strategies to the outlooks and interests of their prospective voters and not just to the working class alone. To the affluent societies of the 1960s, the Soviet model of socialism was not attractive and feasible. Leftist intellectuals preferred a socialist order without the burden of bureaucratic control, material deprivation, and loss of personal freedoms, as experienced by people living under established socialist regimes. For a while, many of them entertained hope in the Maoist Cultural Revolution and the Cuban revolution, but soon it became apparent that these could not offer a better political future to be emulated. The rebellious youth culture launched by the events of 1968 throughout Western Europe and in the USA rejected the “totalitarianism” of industrial societies, both capitalist and Communist. The Western Communist parties’ search for legitimacy was a nearly impossible task: for they had to prove their sincere commitment to democracy, respect for law and national sovereignty to their electorate, and, at the same time, defending their revolutionary credentials and maintaining the myth of the international solidarity with the “socialist camp” and the worldwide Communist movement⁷.

Upon understanding that they could not win electoral majorities on their own, the Eurocommunist parties decided to build coalitions with socialist and other democratic parties. This development was different from the strategy of “popular fronts” of the mid-1930s. At that time, the Western Communist parties cooperated with socialist and liberal parties and even participated in governing coalitions. But these were considered mere tactics of countering the rise of fascism. The Western Communist parties did not change their Marxist-Leninist revolutionary ideology, the goal of establishing a socialist society modelled after the Soviet Union, and the leadership role of the CPSU in the international Communist movement⁸. On the other hand, the Eurocommunist reformation aimed at a deeper transformation, as, in order to be accepted

⁵ Ross 1980: 16-17.

⁶ Barkan 1980: 57-59.

⁷ Pons 2014: 256-257, 272.

⁸ Menashe 1980: 296.

as coalition partners, the Communists had to prove that they were not following directives from the Soviet Union and that they put national interests before working class internationalism. As a matter of fact, since the de-Stalinization process launched by Khrushchev, the three parties had experimented with the principle of independent national avenues towards socialism and distanced themselves to a certain extent from Soviet Communism. The Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 were a breakthrough in these parties' relations with the Soviet Communist Party (CPSU). Upon being elected as First Secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, Alexander Dubcek started to implement democratization reforms such as the decentralization of power, which aimed at a gradual, legalistic and tolerant transformation of society, something that was called “socialism with a human face”. Dubcek's line of action was watched with interest by the reformist circles inside Western European Communist parties. Representatives of the PCI, PCF and PCE repeatedly expressed their approval and praised Dubcek's reformist path. The Prague Spring and Eurocommunism shared similar ideas, such as the freedom to apply Marxist principles as one sees fit, renunciation of violent revolution, and commitment to Western values such as humanism and pluralism. The Prague Spring can be considered the forerunner of Eurocommunism, because it was an attempt to create a model of socialism which was different from that of the Soviet Union. The three Eurocommunist parties and other Communist parties in Western Europe mobilized to prevent the Warsaw Pact's invasion of Czechoslovakia and openly criticized the invasion afterwards⁹.

After the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, the PCF – with Georges Marchais as its Secretary-General – started to develop its own national Communism program, with an eye to forming an alliance with the French socialists. It even refused to attend the Twenty-fifth Congress of the CPSU because of “profound differences” between the two parties. PCE was the most vocal of the three Eurocommunist parties in defying Moscow and castigating the Soviet Union for its invasion of Czechoslovakia. In 1976 Carrillo made it clear that the PCE was determined to follow a divergent path from the one dictated by Moscow: “For years, Moscow was our Rome. We spoke of the great October Socialist Revolution as it were *our* Christmas. That was our infancy. Today we are grownups”¹⁰. As for the PCI, its independence from Moscow had a firm ideological pedigree in the Palmiro Togliatti's Yalta Memorandum, published shortly after his death in 1964. Ideologically, the parting of ways with Moscow meant the rejection of Leninism as the preeminent ideological guidance. Leninism was “downgraded” to a tactical significance in the case of the Russian revolution. While honouring Lenin as a Marxist revolutionary and the founder of the Soviet Union, the Eurocommunist

⁹ Valenta 1980: 170-171.

¹⁰ Cited in Godson and Haseler 1978: 99.

leaders emphasised that the different reality of Western Europe made it necessary to refer to other sources of ideas. For instance Berlinguer maintained that the Italian party's ideology was influenced by not only Marx, Engels and Lenin, but also by Machiavelli, Vico, Cavour and Labriola. Moreover, in the reevaluation of the Communist tradition, the Eurocommunist parties, the PCI in particular, went much further than Khrushchev's de-Stalinization process. The latter condemned Stalin's "excesses" but stopped short of rehabilitating Trotsky and Bukharin. Interestingly enough, the Eurocommunist parties joined in international appeals for the rehabilitation of Bukharin, as well as in various initiatives on behalf of Soviet dissidents and political prisoners. The Eurocommunist parties acknowledged the human rights abuses in the Soviet Union and in the other European socialist countries. These steps were taken as a result of their distancing from Moscow and in the process of inventing new identities for themselves¹¹.

Eurocommunist parties abandoned the Leninist cadre policy and opened up membership to broader social strata, including professionals, white-collar workers, women and young people. In their programs, they also included various issues that could not be subsumed under the class-struggle perspective, like gender, ethnicity, religion, and ecology¹². All these changes were made at the expense of their identities as revolutionary working-class parties, and made the Western Communist parties resemble more and more their socialist cousins. Nevertheless the Eurocommunists wished to preserve their ideological differences when compared to social-democrats, while, at the same time, looking forward to cooperating with socialists and "progressive" democratic Christians. For example, Carrillo emphasized that what Eurocommunists wanted was to *transform* capitalist society and not to *administer* it as the social-democrats would do when in power. But the Eurocommunists' commitment to democracy and free elections begged the question whether it would be possible to return to the "old" capitalist ways once the Communists were elected and then voted out. Once in power, would they consider the opposition as legitimate or as counter-revolutionary? The mantle of "Eurocommunism" could not convince the critics, who pointed out that the substitution of "dictatorship of the proletariat" with "hegemony" did not change the underpinning class philosophy of Western Communist parties, according to which capitalism is just a stage in the historical progress towards socialism. Such a dynamic conception of social evolution/revolution did not fit well with their static conception of bourgeois democracy¹³.

In the international context of the Cold War, the Eurocommunist parties had to readjust their ideology in order to accommodate some hard political realities, such as NATO, the European Communities and the Common

¹¹ Menashe 1980: 301-307.

¹² Eley 2002: 416.

¹³ Godson and Haseler 1978: 84.

Market. Abandoning their previous open opposition to NATO, they started to argue that the presence of NATO in Western Europe was a necessary counterbalance to the Warsaw Treaty in Eastern Europe and made the continuation of *détente* possible. The PCI's leader, Berlinguer, gave assurances that Communists' being included in the government would not endanger Italy's NATO membership. In a June 1976 interview, when asked whether NATO could be a useful shield when building free socialism, Berlinguer admitted that his party's independence from Moscow was facilitated by Italy's inclusion in NATO:

I don't want Italy to withdraw from the Atlantic Pact 'also' for this reason, and not only because our withdrawal would upset the international equilibrium. I feel safer over here... Over there, in the East, they would perhaps like us to build socialism as they like it. But over here, in the West, some people don't even want to let us start building it, even if we do so by respecting freedom. I realize that it is a little risky on our part to pursue a path that is not always appreciated either over here or over there¹⁴.

Around this time, while the PCF proposed a French withdrawal from NATO during negotiations with French socialists on a common program, they accepted a final version that was ambiguous when it came to this point. Later on, the PCF suggested they were ready to take part in a coalition government that supported France's NATO membership. The PCE did not object to having American military bases in Spain as long as Soviet troops remained in Czechoslovakia. The PCE connected the issue of the military bases in Spain to the fight against the two international military blocs: the bases would be closed once both military blocs dissolved. As a matter of principle, the PCE opposed Spain's joining NATO, arguing that such a step would reinforce tensions between European military blocs. However, by honouring democratic rules, it stated that it would not object to Spain's entry into NATO if the parliament approved such a decision. Thus, the three Eurocommunist parties dropped their previous categorical rejection of NATO, while at the same time maintaining the contradictory position that the United States were aggressive and imperialist, and the Warsaw Pact was a defence treaty¹⁵.

In the past, the Eurocommunist parties had deferred to the judgment of the Soviet leadership when it came to the European Common Market. They regarded the latter as the tool of Western imperialism and did not participate in its trade. However, starting with the second half of the 1960s, the French and Italian Communist parties changed their attitude. Although they still argued that the Common Market in its present shape served the interests of big capital, they did not demand its dissolution but its "democratization" through the empowerment of the European Parliament and through the participation

¹⁴ Cited in Sassoon 2010: 582.

¹⁵ Godson and Haseler 1978: 105-109; Rodriguez-Ibanez 1980: 84; Willetts 1981: 18.

of working class representatives in its institutions. Nevertheless, a common Eurocommunist strategy concerning the Common Market and European integration did not materialize. The PCF, defending the interests of French wine-growers against Spanish competition, was against Greece, Spain and Portugal joining the European Economic Community and in favour of retaining the powers of the Minister Council against the European Parliament. The PCI was in favour of making the European supra-national institutions subject to democratic decision-making through the European Parliament, and the PCE saw its country's entry into European communities as the best safeguard for the new Spanish democracy¹⁶.

In the European Communist Congress that took place in East Berlin in 1976, which the Albanian party boycotted, the final document reflected the new atmosphere created by the Eurocommunist debates. "Proletarian internationalism" was dropped from texts and replaced with "voluntary cooperation and solidarity" based on "principles of equality and sovereign independence for each party", as well as "respect for free choice in the struggle for progressive social change and for socialism"¹⁷. The supremacy of the Soviet Communist Party, as well as the Soviet socialist model were challenged by the Eurocommunist parties. In view of geographical proximity and historical ties with the Eastern Europe parties, and as a result of good diplomatic relations with "dissident" Yugoslavia and Romania, the Western Eurocommunist parties were perceived by the Soviet Union as a threat. Their emphasis on national independence and individual paths towards socialism could not be allowed to "contaminate" Eastern European Communist countries¹⁸. In 1977, after the three Eurocommunist parties held a meeting, the CPSU considered Carrillo's book, *Eurocommunism and the State*, to be a revisionist manifesto. Brezhnev accused the PCI of giving in to NATO's aggressive plans by supporting Italy's Christian-Democrat government. The Soviet leaders considered the Eurocommunists' criticism of human rights neglect in the socialist camp as unacceptable at a time when tensions between the two blocs were on the rise¹⁹. Though, in general, the Soviet attacks against Eurocommunism were moderate, as the Soviet leaders wanted to avoid an open schism with Western Communist parties. Moreover, in the years of détente, the Soviet Union did not want to keep a close relationship with Western Communist parties, which might inhibit or damage their relationship with Western governments. They were satisfied with the general support of the Western Communist parties for their international policy²⁰.

¹⁶ Johnstone 1980: 381-383; Seton-Watson 1981: 150.

¹⁷ Triska 1980: 74.

¹⁸ Triska 1980: 88-89.

¹⁹ Pons 2014: 289-290.

²⁰ Willetts 1981: 2-3.

As a national strategy for winning voters' confidence and joining the government, the Eurocommunist approach seemed to work for a while, even though, starting with the 1980s, Western Communist parties knew they would not be included in any government and the socialists would benefit the most from their alliances and coalitions with the Eurocommunist parties. In Italy, Berlinguer, recalling Allende's failure in Chile, focused on protecting the republic and in reviving the Italian democracy against the threat of the far right. This would be achieved by not only rallying the socialists but also by extending a hand to the Catholics, in what Berlinguer called, in 1973, a “historic compromise”. The Christian Democrats could not rule all alone and neither could the left take power through elections. Splitting the nation in two would play into the hand of the antidemocratic forces and the violence would either lead to a military putsch like it happened in Chile or it would make NATO intervene and restore “order”, a scenario similar to the intervention of the Warsaw pact in Czechoslovakia. Thus, in the mid-1970s, the PCI called for a broader alliance of the working class and “progressive capitalists” in order to prevent a take-over by rightist extremist forces, to regulate economy, eliminate parasitism and modernize society²¹. In the June 1976 elections the PCI won 34.6 per cent of the popular vote, the highest result ever. Berlinguer decided to support the minority government led by the Christian-Democrat Party (DC), without participating in the government. But the PCI did not use its influence in Parliament to insist that the DC government approve economic and social reforms for the benefit of the workers, and it even supported the austerity measures taken to control inflation caused by the rise in oil prices. By 1980, the historic compromise was running out of steam, with no prospect of advancing towards political power, and no prospect left for socialist transformation of society²². By strongly aligning with the DC, the PCI damaged its links to the left and its share of the national vote began declining. Berlinguer responded by replacing the phrase “historical bloc” with “democratic alternative” to court the PSI and the left in general²³. The collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe impelled the PCI to change its name to the Party of Democratic Unity in 1990.

In 1972, the PCF, the socialists and the radical left adopted the *Programme commun*, which proposed higher wages, extension of social welfare and public housing, equal rights for women, expropriation of banks and other key industries, increased taxation, and political reform in order to limit the presidential powers and increase parliamentary power. The program made clear that the PCF had rejected the concept of workers' revolution. In 1976, the PCF explicitly rejected any reference to proletarian dictatorship, and supported the presidential candidacy of the socialist François Mitterand. This union was

²¹ Barkan 1980: 63-64.

²² Kowalski 2006: 166.

²³ Eley 2002: 412-413.

beneficiary for the socialists, who overtook the Communists in the 1978 elections. As a response, in 1979 the PCF abandoned Eurocommunism, rejected the union with the socialists and returned to its traditional role as representatives of the working class. By breaking with the socialists, the French Communists increased the former's electoral appeal: Mitterrand could thus prove that he was running the show and the PS was not a stalking horse for the Communists. The PCF obtained 16.1 per cent in the 1981 national elections - its smallest share of the vote since 1945 – while the PS gained 37 per cent²⁴.

Spanish Communists had sought to unite the left in the 1950s, long before the French and the Italian parties. A united left and national reconciliation were seen as a strategy for gaining popular support and overthrowing Franco's dictatorship. In the 1960s, the Spanish Communist leader, Santiago Carrillo, openly questioned the legitimacy of the one-party state and welcomed the Prague Spring. In 1972 the PCE formally dropped the proletarian dictatorship from its program and emphasized that the Soviet socialist model could not be the only valid one. During the transition toward democracy, in order to get the party legalized and to be accepted in the post-Franco democratic order, Carrillo made several concessions, from accepting monarchy, supporting the constituent assembly, abandoning radicalism and Marxism-Leninism, agreeing to an austerity program that restricted wages, to encouraging broad political coalitions. The moderation shown by PCE did not pay off as most prospective voters chose the socialists as the surest way to a gradual path to democracy. In the October 1982 elections the PCE polled less than four per cent. Although the Communists were the main resistance force during the Francoist dictatorship, during the democratic regime they were consigned to the periphery of Spanish politics²⁵. At the Tenth Congress of the PCE, in July 1981, Carrillo expelled a number of Eurocommunist supporters from the party to somehow appease the pro-Soviet wing. A year later he resigned his post and, in 1985, was expelled from the executive committee of the party.

In retrospect, the Eurocommunist episode played an important part in consolidating Western democracies. By abandoning the revolutionary road and by trying to get inside the system, the Communists strengthened democratic forces and helped defeat extremist forces. Broad popular coalitions supported by the Communists thwarted military interventions in Spain and Italy, also diminishing the political impact of both extreme right and extreme left terrorist groups. Eurocommunist parties failed in reforming Communism and making it attractive to Western voters. Through distancing themselves from the Soviet Union, divesting themselves from Marxist-Leninism heritage and substituting “democracy” for “socialism” they blurred their differences from the mainstream socialist parties. The latter, being more entrenched in the liberal-democratic system, proved to be the real winners in their temporary

²⁴ Kowalski 2006: 167; Sassoon 2010: 541-542.

²⁵ Eley 2002: 413; Kowalski 2006: 168-170.

alliances with Communist parties. The Eurocommunist parties failed to formulate an alternative Communist vision for the West at a time when “real socialism” was heading towards its collapse in the East. Taken together, Eurocommunism and *perestroika* were the European Communism’s swan song.

The PLA’s Stand against Eurocommunism

Albania declined to follow the de-Stalinization course inaugurated by Khrushchev at the 20th Congress of the CPSU. Although, for a while, the Albanian Communist leadership applauded the thesis of a “peaceful coexistence” between the capitalist camp and the socialist camp, they were suspicious of the Soviet Union’s rapprochement with “revisionist” Yugoslavia. The leader of the Party of Labour of Albania (PLA), Enver Hoxha, worried that Moscow (and Belgrade) would demand that he, as an open Stalinist, step down from his post as First Secretary of the Party. For Hoxha, that would have meant committing political and, possibly, physical suicide, therefore, skilfully exploiting the rift between Soviet Union and China, he sided with the latter. In 1960, Hoxha launched a full attack against the “revisionist” leadership of the CPSU, which, according to him, had betrayed Marxism-Leninism, the peoples of the Soviet Union and the revolutionary cause. After the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, Albania formally withdrew from the Warsaw Pact. China supported Albania as this little country in Europe provided a means to form a pro-Chinese bloc inside the international Communist movement. Using Albania as a propaganda base, China hoped to attract other East European countries in its sphere of influence. For Albania, China provided vital aid and investments that could partially fill the void created by the withdrawal of Soviet and East European investment in the country²⁶.

The alliance with Albania lasted until China ended its isolationist foreign policy and sought to approach the USA, considering the leader of the capitalist camp as less dangerous than the “revisionist” Soviet Union, with which China shared one of the longest land borders in the world. Hoxha did not comply with the new Chinese ideological line and decided that China had turned “revisionist”, following in the footsteps of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. With no other significant international supporter in sight, Albania chose to follow its Marxist-Leninist path all alone. Hoxha did not reconsider rapprochement with the West, ideologically going against the the two super-powers’ détente. Albania opposed the European détente out of a dogmatic belief in the continuation and primacy of class struggle and revolution in world politics. In *Imperialism and Revolution* he wrote:

²⁶ O’Donnell 1999: 67-68.

Proceeding from the Leninist theory of the revolution, the Party of Labour of Albania draws the conclusion that the situation in the world today is revolutionary in general, that this situation has matured, or is rapidly maturing, in many countries, while in other countries this process is developing... In general, the situation today is like an erupting volcano, a scorching fire, a fire which will burn precisely the oppressing and the exploiting ruling upper classes²⁷.

Albania expressed the conviction that the socialism would triumph over imperialism and revisionism in the end, and it considered itself the only real “socialist” country in the world, facing “imperialist-revisionist” blockades on all sides, and the only nation in Europe still holding the revolutionary torch, in its struggle against American and Soviet dominance over the continent²⁸.

In its period of isolation, Albania promoted Enver Hoxha’s cult to international proportions. The party propaganda hailed him as a great international Marxist-Leninist and intellectual. His self-proclaimed expertise as a Marxist theoretician was mainly based on two treatises, *Imperialism and Revolution*, which echoed Lenin’s book, *State and Revolution*, and *Eurocommunism is Anti-Communism*, a response to the Eurocommunist trend dominating several Western Communist parties in the 1970s²⁹. In *Imperialism and Revolution*, Hoxha divided the world between the forces of imperialism and revisionism on the one hand, and the revolutionary forces on the other. According to his interpretation of the world in the 1970s, the potential for revolution existed in most regions of the world because of a general capitalist crisis and the decolonization process. Modern revisionism tried to block the rising of the proletariat and the people, masking its common interests with the capitalist classes under the veil of Communism. After Tito’s betrayal in Yugoslavia, “the emergence of Khrushchev’s revisionist group was the greatest political and ideological victory for imperialism and its strategies after the Second World War”³⁰. Under revisionism, Soviet international politics turned into social-imperialism, whereas the Warsaw Treaty resembled NATO, and Soviet economic relations with Comecon countries were a “typically neo-colonialist policy”³¹. Then came the Chinese revisionism, guided by the idea of turning China into another superpower and catching up with the USA and the Soviet Union. In order to achieve this, China needed the USA as an ally and an assistant, which could be achieved only by abandoning the Communist cause³². In Western Europe, the Eurocommunist strategy of the “revisionist” parties of Italy, France and Spain aimed towards a “new society”, socialist in name only, through structural reforms enforced by following parliamentary policy and

²⁷ Hoxha 1979: 10.

²⁸ Prifti 1999: 194-195; Vickers 1999: 202-203.

²⁹ Sretenovic and Puto 2004: 217-218.

³⁰ Hoxha 1979: 17-18.

³¹ Hoxha 1979: 35-36.

³² Hoxha 1979: 341-342.

“historic compromises” with the Social-Democrats and other bourgeoisie parties. Hoxha denounced Eurocommunism as another anti-Communist plot against the proletariat and the masses:

“Eurocommunism” is a new pseudo-Communist trend opposing and, in the same time, not opposing the Soviet revisionist bloc [...] The “Eurocommunists” can unite with absolutely anybody except those who fight for the triumph of the revolution and the purity of the Marxist-Leninist ideology. All the revisionist, opportunist and social-democratic trends are doing their best to assist the superpowers in their diabolical activities suppressing the revolution and the people... They aim to confuse and split the proletariat and its allies, because they know that, divided and split by factional struggles, the latter will not be unable to create, either at home or on an international level, that ideological, political and militant unity, which is essential to coping with the attacks of international capitalism in decay³³.

Nowhere in his book did Hoxha explain the social or political causes of modern revisionism and its huge success in socialist countries and Communist parties. His analysis seems to blame the “opportunistic” and power-hungry behaviour of their leaders, who mislead people. That would be the subjective factor as, according to Hoxha’s reading of the international political scene, the objective structural factors favoured the revolutionary forces and the continuing relevance of the Leninist thesis on imperialism³⁴. Therefore, the true Communist task was to create new Marxist-Leninist parties to counter revisionism, and to lead and prepare the masses for revolution in each country. Revolutions will first happen in those countries which formed the weakest link in the capitalist chain³⁵. In other words, Hoxha was proposing a repetition of the Bolshevik strategy before the October Revolution. The only new element added to the theory of revolution was its extension to socialist countries, where revolutions were to happen anew: “The law of the revolution operates there [in revisionist countries] the same as in every other bourgeois country”³⁶.

Imperialism and Revolution laid the groundwork for Hoxha’s more detailed criticism of Eurocommunism in his treatise, *Eurocommunism is Anti-Communism*. On the first pages of his later work, Hoxha repeated the mantra that the world was set for revolution, therefore the overthrow of socialism in the Soviet Union did not prove Marxism-Leninism was defeated³⁷. Precisely for this reason, he argues, some revisionist parties in Western Europe tried to attack Marxism-Leninism. Khrushchev did not dare to attack Leninism openly and tried to mask his real intentions through his attacks against Stalin. The

³³ Hoxha 1979: 62-63.

³⁴ Hoxha 1979: 138, 149-153.

³⁵ Hoxha 1979: 66-68, 138, 143-148, 211.

³⁶ Hoxha 1979: 155.

³⁷ Hoxha 1980: 4-5.

Eurocommunists aimed their critiques against Leninism, because they, like Khrushchev before them, “want[ed] to attack the theory and practice of the proletariat revolution”³⁸. According to Hoxha, the Eurocommunists argued that the time was not ripe for revolution in Europe, and peaceful means should be employed for taking over the state and for creating the socialist society. In reality, Hoxha writes, it is the Soviet’s *détente* when dealing with capitalism that which brought dire consequences for Communists and revolutionaries around the world. Communists and the people of Indonesia, Chile etc. suffered terribly from this “peaceful coexistence” promoted by Soviet revisionists, in order to divide up the world and rule it jointly with the American imperialists³⁹.

On the other hand, in his book Hoxha admits that internal conditions in Western European countries created favourable conditions for the spread of the revisionist ideas. The bourgeois democracy established in these countries after defeating fascism created the illusion that a peaceful path towards socialism was possible:

These leaders considered the inclusion of two or three Communist ministers in the post-war governments of France and Italy not as the greatest formal concession the bourgeoisie would ever make, but as the beginning of a process leading to the creation of a Communist cabinet⁴⁰.

Another cause of revisionism was the fast economic recovery of Western Europe through the Marshall Plan, which brought the bourgeoisie super-profits and allowed it to make concessions to the working masses. The full employment and improvement of the standards of living created the illusion that a capitalist system without class conflict is possible. Especially the labour aristocracy was instrumental in the spread of opportunism. As a result, the programs of Communist parties in Western Europe reduced their programs to reformist ideas while revolution and socialism were downplayed. Revisionists’ victory in the Soviet Union, the motherland of socialism, legitimized the shift of Western Communist parties towards open revisionism⁴¹.

This analysis shows that, for Hoxha, the Western Communist parties had turned into revisionist parties years before some of them adopted the label of “Eurocommunism”. The appropriation of “Eurocommunism” by the French, Italian and the Spanish parties meant refuting Lenin’s theories in their programs, and incorporating theories and ideas which Marx and Lenin had rejected in their works⁴². Hoxha argued that Eurocommunist was not just the

³⁸ Hoxha 1980: 11.

³⁹ Hoxha 1980: 57-59.

⁴⁰ Hoxha 1980: 81-82.

⁴¹ Hoxha 1980: 83-84.

⁴² Hoxha 1980: 109.

formal transition of the revisionists to European social-democracy. It meant more than that:

The abandonment of any reference to Marxism-Leninism by the revisionist parties, which up till now have used it as a disguise in order to deceive the working class, shows they have commenced openly fighting against it from the position of bourgeois anti-Communism. The fact is, on an ideological level, it is precisely the Eurocommunists who are carrying the banner in the fight against Marxism-Leninism, socialism and the revolution today⁴³.

After deciding that Eurocommunism was a form of revisionism, in other words, another anti-Communist tendency of Western Europe, Hoxha moved on to refute what he considered to be the theses of Eurocommunist parties. The first of these is, as Hoxha put it, the “dying out of the class struggle”, because of structural transformations of capitalism in the West. Because of that, the project of a socialist society could attract broader masses in the West, including most of the bourgeoisie; therefore the Communist party should appeal to this electorate by not restricting its strategy to the working class alone. Hoxha responded to this argument by invoking Lenin’s theory of the hegemony of the proletariat, which is essential not only for the socialist revolution but also for the democratic revolution. Hoxha offered Albania as an example – the small working class did not hinder it from uniting the people around itself in its struggle for national liberation⁴⁴. The second Eurocommunist thesis criticized by Hoxha prescribed the role of the Communist party. In his interpretation, Eurocommunist parties had been transformed into mass parties, similar to liberal and social-democratic parties, which changed their policies according to political circumstances. Hoxha defended the Leninist thesis of the party of cadres, which are the vanguard of the revolution⁴⁵. The third thesis prescribed the role of the state. In Hoxha’s words, Eurocommunists dreamt that, in “democratic socialism”, a hybrid capitalist-socialist society, the state and the government would include “everybody”. But “a state for ‘everybody’ has never existed and will never exist”⁴⁶, for even after the socialist revolution the state is a means to the dictatorship of the proletariat. The fourth thesis concerned the “democratic road to socialism” espoused by the Eurocommunist parties. Hoxha cited Eurocommunist positions expressed on the matter in 1979: “Political democracy presents itself as the highest institutional form of state, even of the socialist state”⁴⁷; “Democracy is both the aim and the means of transformation”⁴⁸; “socio-political democracy is not a third

⁴³ Hoxha 1980: 110.

⁴⁴ Hoxha 1980: 122-126.

⁴⁵ Hoxha 1980: 126-128.

⁴⁶ Hoxha 1980: 149.

⁴⁷ PCI, Hoxha 1980: 154.

⁴⁸ Marchais, leader of the PCF, *ibidem*: 155.

road, either capitalist or socialist, but a transitional stage between capitalism and socialism⁴⁹. Hoxha considered these declarations as open support for the bourgeois democracy, in which the exploitation of the working classes persists. He concluded that Eurocommunists offered nothing new in their programs, because, like Eduard Bernstein, they were simply repeating the first revisionist thesis, already refuted by Lenin⁵⁰.

Next, Hoxha accuses the Eurocommunist parties of supporting imperialism. They support their countries' participation in NATO and they also support the Soviet Union's aggressions in Africa and Afghanistan. In his analysis, NATO was not just a self-defence organization to contain Soviet aggression in Europe, it was also a tool of the European high bourgeoisie, American imperialism and neo-colonialism. Therefore, he wrote, "the Eurocommunists' attempts at stressing only the anti-Soviet function of NATO and forgetting its mission of suppressing revolution in Western Europe aim to deceive the workers and prevent them from seeing reality"⁵¹. In other words, accepting the need for imperialistic blocs in Europe in the name of preserving the peace was not just a paradox for Hoxha, but something worse, as it meant accepting the hegemony of superpowers against the national interests which the Eurocommunist parties were claiming to protect. On the other hand, Hoxha accused the Eurocommunist parties of applauding the social-imperialist ventures of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, under the banner of "international solidarity"⁵². Albania's foreign isolationist policy offered the PLA and its leader a convenient position of moral high ground. Hoxha accused both military blocs of pursuing imperialistic policies on the European continent and of subduing the sovereignty of European nation-states. The Eurocommunist parties were riddled within contradictions. They knew that they were able to pursue a different ideological course from that of Moscow because they operated in democratic countries not dominated by the Soviet Union. Berlinguer had to accept that NATO contributed to the security of Western political freedoms, unlike the heavy-handed response of the Warsaw Pact to the Spring of Prague.

Hoxha could claim the moral high ground when it came to the Eurocommunist position towards the European Common Market. Abandoning their previous scepticism, the Eurocommunist parties accepted the European Common Market as a "reality" and put emphasis on its democratic transformation through the Communist parties' inclusion in the European Parliament. Hoxha, on his part, is firmly rooted in this initial "euro-sceptic" position on the matter:

To accept this "reality" [European Common Market] means to accept the elimination of sovereignty, the cultural and spiritual traditions of each

⁴⁹ PCE, *ibidem*.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*: 156-157.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*: 173.

⁵² *Ibidem*: 186-187.

individual country of Europe in favour of big monopolies’ interests, to accept the erasure of individuality when it comes to each European nation, transformed as it is into a undifferentiated mass, oppressed by multinational companies dominated by American big capital⁵³.

Enver Hoxha’s (and the PLA’s) position is understandable if one recalls that, at the time, the Albanian Constitution had enshrined the principle of constructing socialism with one’s own forces and forbidding any loans from foreign countries. After the rift with the Soviet Union and China, Albania had unilaterally cancelled its debts to these countries. It is interesting that, in Hoxha’s terms when examining the Common Market, one can detect the argument that the European integration meant the erasure of all nations and the Americanization of Europe, arguments that are still presented by some current Euro-sceptics as valid reasons for the dismantle of the EU.

When Hoxha’s treatise on Eurocommunism was translated into major European languages, various Marxist-Leninists groups in Western Europe might have been welcomed it. It is difficult now to assess its impact on Western Communists’ internal debates. It is known that the book was not taken lightly by the Italian state. At a time when bilateral relations between Italy and Albania were improving, *Eurocommunism is Anti-Communism* took the Italian diplomats and political establishment by surprise. The reason was that, in certain passages, Hoxha had expressed negative judgments not only about the PCI, but also about Italian post-war politics in general. For instance, he wrote the following:

After the war, Italy turned into chaos, but also into a circus, in which the role of the acrobats and clowns was played by the new hierarchs, decked out in the robes of re-constituted parties, with “brilliant” titles such as socialist, social-democrat, Christian Democrat, liberal, Communist, etc. [...] If American capital had got one foot in the door in different European countries, it has both feet firmly planted in Italy. This occurred because the bourgeoisie in that country is more degenerate, more cosmopolitan, more unpatriotic, and more inclined to all-round corruption⁵⁴.

The protest of the Italian Ambassador in Tirana was followed by that of the Italian President, Sandro Pertini, delivered to the Albanian Ambassador in Rome. The Italian side considered the “hostility and anger towards Italy” unacceptable and asked Hoxha to explain his assertion that the Italian government had not made any effort to improve diplomatic relations with Albania. The Albanian diplomats responded that the book was based on the ideological principles of the PLA, criticizing the actions of some political party leaders in Italy, without insulting the Italian people. The Albanian Foreign Minister,

⁵³ *Ibidem*: 177-178.

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*: 198-199.

Nesti Nase, told the Italian Ambassador that Albania would like to see a socialist Italy in the future, but this was for the Italian people to decide, and such a thing could be achieved only when a true Communist party would exist on the Italian political scene. All Albania could do was offer revolutionaries all over the world its own experience of socialist revolution. He reminded the Ambassador that, in Albania's point of view, the principles of good neighbourly, peaceful coexistence upon which the bilateral relations were based did not refer to ideological coexistence⁵⁵. Such strained diplomatic exchanges over Hoxha's book did not lead to a break in bilateral relations. Albania was interested in trading with Italy and Italy was interested in maintaining good bilateral relations with Albania, within the framework of its Mediterranean foreign policy.

Conclusion

The phenomenon of Eurocommunism was a continuation of the unraveling of Stalinism in the Soviet Union. The ideological acceptance by the CPSU of separate national paths towards socialism and renouncing of Stalin's abusive personality cult opened up the perspective of autonomous Western Communist parties, cut from Moscow's directives. The Eurocommunist parties moved further than Moscow expected because they abandoned Leninism, considering it a singular strategy of socialist revolution in the Russian context, holding little value and being superseded by the realities of developed capitalist countries of Western Europe. During the 1970s, the Communist parties in Italy, France and Spain discarded much of the Marxist-Leninist dogma and embraced democracy, political pluralism, peaceful revolution and even accepted their respective countries' NATO and European Community membership as part of their strategy for gaining power through elections. They did not seek to create popular fronts, but became minor partners in broad coalitions with "bourgeois" leftist as well as rightist parties, in order to convince their constituencies that they value national interests over the internationalism of the Communist doctrine. These strategies temporarily reunited under the Eurocommunist umbrella provided these parties with respectability, votes and even with a share in national and local governments, but did not bring the political results they expected or the structural, social and economic reforms they promised. As part of majority coalitions in Italy and France, the Communist parties were forced to approve measures meant to revitalize the economy that went against the interests of the working classes. In the early 1980s, Eurocommunism faded away and shortly afterwards Communism collapsed in Eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union.

⁵⁵ Dhoga 2012: 192-199.

Compared to other deviations from the Soviet ideological line, Eurocommunism was truly revisionist, even though the Eurocommunists did not like this title. A previous schism in the socialist camp, between China and Albania, was established in the name of preserving Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy. Both Mao's China and Hoxha's Albania kept the single-party system, working class hegemony and centralized economy as the central tenets of the doctrine. Contrary to them and similarly to “socialism with a human face” in Czechoslovakia, the Eurocommunist parties explored venues that were not foreseen by the ideology and practice of the Eastern Europe Communist parties. The Eurocommunist experimentation, on the other hand, blurred the lines between Communists and other socialist parties, making it difficult to maintain their Communist identity.

Thus, the central criticism that Hoxha levelled against Eurocommunism was right. Eurocommunism could be called a revisionist trend that showed similarities with the original revisionism denounced by Lenin. With his characteristic triumphalism and self-importance, Hoxha even designated Eurocommunism to be part of the anti-Communist front that included previous “revisionists”, the Communist parties of Yugoslavia, Soviet Union and China. He believed that the ultimate victory belonged to the socialist revolution – in spite of the *détente* established at the time between international superpowers – and that the PLA was alone in implementing the Marxist-Leninist ideology. But what he missed when considering the international picture was that the Communist revolution had run out of steam. The Communist parties that took the power had installed dictatorships everywhere, and, despite the official “popular democracy” term, in effect were not supported by their people and working class, as the Hungary Revolution of 1956 and the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia showed. The Albanian version of “singular socialism” was not so feasible either. The PLA only managed to provide for the population's basic necessities, with the cost of keeping it isolated from the outside world and in a state of terror. As the leader of the last Stalinist regime in Europe, Hoxha could not concede that Eurocommunism might be a sincere attempt to make the project of Communism attractive to modern, developed countries. If Eurocommunism ended in failure, the same can be said about the general failure of Communism in Europe.

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