

The Left and Europe

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A Narrative of the Communist Left and Europe:

Essay on a complicated relationship, focussing on the Italian and French communist parties

The so-called radical left in Europe has traditionally had an ambivalent relationship to European integration. Even today, positions range from strict opposition through Euro-scepticism to a variety of reformist proposals. The differences within the radical left in regard to European integration are so deep that a coherent and structured cooperative effort – e.g. within the Left's European Parliamentary Group GUE/NGL – is rather difficult.¹

Cornelia Hildebrandt has identified four main differences in the positions of radical left parties in Europe: “The controversial positions of left parties range from a nearly uncritical acceptance of the European project, through critical reformist positions concerning the institutions and their neo-liberal policies, to euro-sceptical positions with fairly fundamental criticism and even complete rejection of the European project.”²

Are the differences of position taken on Europe by the German Left Party (Linke), which precisely reflect the four different approaches Hildebrandt lists, due to the fact that this party has arrived at the European level relatively late? Do those Western European communist – and, today, post-communist – parties which faced the process of European integration throughout the post-war period, and which, as mass-parties, held a degree of at least oppositional political power in their countries, hold more coherent positions?

My general question on history is: Did the communist left in Europe ever try to help shape European integration, beyond criticism of the European Union as a neo-liberal capitalist project, by putting forward specific strategies for change?

I will attempt in this chapter to address these questions using the example of the two largest western European communist parties during the post-war era: the French PCF and the Italian PCI (the latter dissolved itself in 1991 and morphed into a center-left party). What were their positions initially, and how did they change over time? And also: what were the specific framework conditions for the French and Italian communist left?

An excellent work on the subject was published by Luciana Castellina, the Grand Old Lady of the Italian left, in 2007³. In it, she not only is describing the genesis of European integration after 1945 from an Italian point of view, but also gave an overview on the positions of the communist, socialist and social-democratic left. Another distinguished witness is Daniel Cirera, from the left Gabriel Péri Foundation in Paris. I had the opportunity to interview both on the history of PCI and PCF and their relation with Europe. I hope to contribute with this text to a better understanding of the history of the western European left.

If I were to start with the Communist Manifesto and “A spectre is stalking Europe...”, and go on to the first international workers' associations and the First International, concentrating on the internationalism of the socialist and communist left and their predecessors, I probably would come to the conclusion that the European and international connection between the socialist movements before World War I was much more developed than it is today. I would then also reflect on Rosa Luxemburg's positions on nationalism and on the consequences of World War I, of the Russian Revolution, of Spain in 1936, and of World War II and the role of the USSR – and, neither last nor least, of the communist resistance against Nazi terror in Europe. However, all this would require more thorough research work. Instead, I will start at the end of World War II, when the idea of European political integration was placed on the political agenda more than it ever had been before.

¹ This text is part of a more thorough-going reflexion on the history of European integration. An introductory text was published on the website www.europa-links.com and in the supplement on Europe of the newspaper *Neues Deutschland* in Nov. 2011. Other papers will address the relevance of the Helsinki Process of the CSCE for European integration, the European dimension of social movements during the past 60 years, and the trade unions' approaches to Europe.

² Cornelia Hildebrandt, Positions on European Politics by the European left parties in: Birgit Daiber, Cornelia Hildebrandt and Anna Striethorst (eds.) *Look Left – von Revolution bis Koalition, Linke Parteien in Europa*, Berlin 2010

³ Luciana Castellina, *Cinquant'anni d'Europa*, UTET Libreria, Turin, 2007

From the clandestine circles of the anti-fascist resistance to the foundation of the European Economic Community.

Exemplary for this period is the Manifesto of Ventotene of 1941, in which Altiero Spinelli⁴, Ernesto Rossi and Eugenio Colomi, at that time still prisoners of the fascists, drafted a grand design for the explanation of a politically united post-war Europe. It was to become a matrix for all later designs for a European constitution, and remains to this day a utopian point of reference.

At the end of the war, many such initiatives – by communists, socialists, liberals and even conservatives – arose. The nation-states of the ravaged continent had shown their incapacity to guarantee the fundamental right of their citizens to be protected against Nazism. For a unique historical moment, the creation of a new world order without war and systemic conflicts seemed possible; hence, the political unification of Europe, too, seemed possible.

But the United States very quickly decided to follow a different path, and to create a western block, including the former enemies Italy and, later, West Germany. Let me, with a very short and incomplete overview of the political conditions leading up to the outbreak of the Korean War, recall the power struggle of those times: in 1947, the USA proclaimed its “containment” policy against the USSR, and at the same time proposed the foundation of a united Europe. In July of the same year, the European Recovery Program, or “Marshall Plan”, was introduced. The answer of the USSR to these activities was the foundation of the “Cominform”, the organization of all European communist parties (from which Yugoslavia was expelled in 1948) and of the CMEC (or “COMECON”, in western Cold War parlance), the economic cooperation organization of the socialist countries. In 1949, there followed the foundation of NATO and of the two German states, completing the partition of Europe.

The communist parties enjoyed great support due to their strong participation in the resistance movements, especially in France and Italy. In Yugoslavia and Greece, communist partisans had even been able to expel the Nazis on their own. The two biggest western European parties, the Italian PCI and the French PCF, played a key role in the reconstruction of their countries.

In the first post-war elections in Italy, the combined communist and socialist list “Unity of Action Pact” won 40% of the vote. The PCI at the time had about 1.7 million members; the French PCF had a million, and won 28% of the vote in the first national elections after liberation.

In both countries, the communists participated in the first post-war governments. In 1947, they were excluded from power in both countries – due to the conditions stipulated by the USA for participation in the Marshall Plan. In Italy, one of the conditions was even the exclusion of communists from jobs; as late as the ‘50s, communists were being fired, and young communists couldn’t find jobs. At FIAT, a special and separate department was created for workers with PCI membership.

These conditions changed only at the end of the ‘50s, as the Italian economy expanded and industry modernized. Nonetheless, the Italian Christian Democrats continued to exclude the PCI from participation in government.

In short, European integration was, at its beginnings in 1945, shaped by the Marshall Plan and the US strategy of confrontation with the Soviet block – it was by no means the political project which Altiero Spinelli and others had designed as the foundation of a United States of Europe. That political project was one of the first victims of the Cold War.

The decision to pursue a path of Western European integration against the USSR and including West Germany sparked considerable resistance within the social-democratic and communist parties, since peaceful neighbourliness alongside the Soviet bloc no longer seemed possible, and the danger of a new war – this time with nuclear weapons – loomed on the horizon. The German Social Democratic Party (SPD), too, was very critical of unilateral integration into the West, and still hoped for the re-unification of Germany, a position it maintained until the passage of the Bad Godesberg Programme in 1958; by contrast, in spite of rhetoric to the contrary, reunification was no longer an option for Chancellor Conrad Adenauer and his Christian Democrats (CDU). At the same time, West Germany’s troublesome communists (the KPD) were banned by a decision of the Constitutional Court.

⁴ Spinelli was a communist who, in the ‘50s, was expelled from the PCI for deviation from the rules, but was in 1979 nominated by the PCI for the first direct elections to the European Parliament. He initiated the Institutional Committee of the EP and put the political construction of Europe on the agenda.

The situation at the end of the '40s no longer allowed for any overall political strategy. Jean Monnet, the “transatlanticist” of early European integration, thus developed a functionalist strategy. Its first part, known as the “Schuman Plan”, concentrated on a common coal and steel policy. The six founding nations of the European Economic Community began in 1952 by founding the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). This reflected the specific interests of France, which hoped to gain control of the German coal and steel industry.⁵ With this treaty, a supra-national institution, the “High Authority”, was for the first time created. The Treaty also included some general conditions for workers: no wage dumping was to be possible, and in the case of rationalization and restructuring, the workers were not to suffer. In Germany, these general conditions were concretized by a national law with guarantees of proportional codetermination, a provision which was at that time far more than what workers enjoyed in other sectors of industry. This law was one reason why European integration was widely accepted by German trade unions at an early date. Nonetheless, this strategy also side-tracked the political project of European integration for a very long time.

From the outset, the functionalist strategy of integration introduced by Monnet and Schuman stood for the integration of the most powerful common economic interests, while all controversial issues were put on hold, the key one being that of the fundamental democratic legitimization of the structure of a political union, and, as part of it, social policy. The founding fathers and mothers of European integration nevertheless hoped, with this functionalist strategy, to reach a point of integration which would make the political union of Europe inevitable.

With the exception of the French Socialists, the left in Western Europe saw this strategy of integration primarily as a US imposition – closely connected with NATO’s military strategy of creating a strong western alliance against the USSR.

The European federalist movement adopted a different approach. The Union of European Federalists (UEF) was founded in 1947, on the foundation of rather strong civil movements in Italy, France and the Netherlands. At the first Congress in Montreux in 1947, 16 European countries were represented. The German section, “Europa-Union”, held its first congress in Eutin, Schleswig-Holstein, with 200 delegates from 50 regional and local groups.⁶ Gerhard Brunn reports in his history of European integration of the slowly growing dominance of the UEF by those who wanted integration only on the basis of intergovernmental cooperation, a strategy which was to lead to the foundation of the Council of Europe. Thus it is not surprising that the federalist movement split when the Treaties of Rome were adopted in 1957. One faction argued that only a strong Europe in which even the smaller countries would have a say would be able to resist the power of the USA. Given the reality of Cold War, the integration of at least one part of Europe seemed to them to be the only practicable way forward. The other faction did not see the Treaties of Rome as a point of departure for the political unification of Europe.

The federalists fought hard for a political structure of European integration. Altiero Spinelli proposed an Article 38 to the Treaties of Rome which would have allowed the development of a political structure, but his attempt failed. The federalist movement became ever weaker, and – as Luciana Castellina reports⁷ – ended up being able to do no more than throw some leaflets from the balcony of the theatre in Rome were the Italian government celebrated the implementation of the Treaties.

The positions of the social-democratic and socialist parties in the period of the foundation of the European Economic Community diverged considerably, and the Socialist International was unable to arrive at any common positions, either on the ESCS or on the EEC, for the socialists remained strongly committed to their respective national interests. Why was it impossible to find common European positions? Luciana Castellina’s answer is: “Because they were not able to see themselves as a possible supra-national power – while their terrain was increasingly de-nationalized. This was another defeat of internationalism, and its effects have continued to this day in the European Union – on governments as well as on opposition forces. The social-democratic forces are even today unable to come together and develop common positions.”⁸

Nevertheless, the period from 1945 until the implementation of the Treaties of Rome in 1957 was highly politicized, in that extensive debates took place, and in that the federal movement emerged, despite its ultimate failure. In Italy, these debates in 1957 also involved the issue of the compatibility of the Treaties of Rome with the Italian Constitution.

⁵ Likewise, the Community of Defence was blocked by the French National Assembly in 1954.

⁶ Source: Otto Schmuck (ed.), *Die Menschen für Europa gewinnen – Für ein Europa der Bürger*, In memoriam Claus Schöndube, Bad-Marienburg 2008, pp. 93-114

⁷ Castellina, op. cit., p. 110

⁸ *ibid*, p. 116

In Germany, we often hear stories of Helmut Kohl as a young student rattling along the motorway between France and Germany – but the real history of European integration tells much more about the failure of the political movement for a politically united Europe.

A glimpse at the first phase of European integration clearly shows the very close connection between the functionalist strategy and the Cold War, both domestically and internationally: The communists, key societal and political forces in Italy and France, were categorically excluded. In eliminating this opposition, the process of European integration lost the possibility of becoming part of the societal discourse in Italy and France. We should not forget that the left Trade Unions in Spain and France were kept out of the European Trade Unions Confederation (ETUC) until the '90s; that shows how deeply anti-communism determined the European Project.

Let us then examine the political positions which the Italian and French communist parties adopted toward the EEC and European integration.

The path of the Italian Communist Party (PCI)

At the end of the '40s, the PCI was cooperating with the smaller Italian Socialist Party (PSI); both criticized the Marshall Plan, NATO and the ESCS. But when it came to the conference of Messina and the Treaties of Rome, there was no longer any strong opposition from PCI. In Parliament, the Socialists voted in favour of the Euratom Treaty and abstained on the other component treaties, while the PCI voted against all parts of the Treaties of Rome. Fairly soon, however, voices were raised which said, "We too are Pro-Europeans, we too support the initiatives for new relationships between the peoples and states in Europe." Thus began a process of debates on the EEC, and slowly the rejectionist position began to change. There were calls for analysing the problems arising within the EEC, for revising the negative position on it, and even for abandoning that position altogether. Palmiro Togliatti, the legendary post-war secretary general of the PCI, said that the economic integration of Europe was unavoidable, but that Italy, as the weakest of the six original partners, would have to pay the highest price for it. Above all, the Italian left feared the deepening of the division between the industrialized northern part of the country and the neglected South.

Until 1966, the PCI was excluded from all delegations and institutional bodies in Europe. The PSI, which had begun participating in the national government in those times, worked to lift that ban, and the PCI members of the national Parliament could at least participate in the Italian delegation to the European Parliament and the newly founded European Social and Economic Committee.

The debates during the '60s and '70s within the left in Italy concentrated on issues of modernization and the acceleration of development. In this context, European economic integration was seen as a irreversible process, in which the left would have to formulate its own positions. During the second half of the '60s, the EEC became the guideline for the PCI in the development of a European political and economic autonomy in relation to the United States. "In other words, the PCI not only saw European autonomy as an instrument for overcoming the politics of the Cold War, it also linked the idea of economic integration with a socialist perspective. Within the framework of a political and social transformation of Europe, the PCI was oriented toward overcoming the division of the European workers' movement into socialist and communist tendencies, which had persisted since the late '20s. At the institutional level, the PCI aimed for a strengthening and democratization of the EEC institutions, and supported the project of a reform of the European Parliament for free and general elections; it thus seized upon one of the fundamental points of the old federal programme."⁹

Luciana Castellina adds another aspect and ⁹describes this period: "Endless articles and gatherings took place to discuss automation in industry, the new forms of labour, and the 'human relations' in the modernized enterprises between capital and labour, which declutched the traditional structures of the trade unions. At the same time the grand theme of alienation was rediscovered and the texts of young Karl Marx were re-read, so as to come to a more complex analysis of exploitation. All in all, Italy abandoned its provinciality, and new relations developed with sociologists north of the Alps, and with the New Left in Great Britain. Europe began to move."¹⁰

The PCI developed its strategy of Euro-communism, to which for a short period during the '70s, the PCF, too, was connected. Euro-communism meant the acceptance of the diversity of left movements and thus the acceptance of social-democratic parties as well.

⁹ Giuseppe G. Mammarella, *Il Partito Comunista Italiano 1945/1975, Dalla Liberazione al Compromesso Storico*, SV Saggi Vallecchi, Firenze, 1976, p. 222

¹⁰ Castellina, *op cit*, p. 165

But these general steps toward European integration were not shared by all Left in Italy. In his history of the PCI, *The Tailor of Ulm*, Lucio Magri¹¹ barely refers to European integration, but sees Italy's development from 1945 until the end of the PCI in 1991 as under the direct influence of the USA. In his excellent programmatic text of 1987, "A new Communist Identity", he refers only once to European integration:

"The progressive unification of markets and technologies is not in itself a novelty. What is new is the enormous acceleration of this tendency, and the power mechanisms that govern and sustain it. I am thinking above all of the headlong growth of international centres of political and economic management, endowed with normative as well as market powers: the European Economic Community, the International Monetary Fund, the association of central banks, or the effectively unified international system of scientific research. These structures, which are occupying the most strategic areas of political power, elude any form of democratic control or influence: not only because, like the IMF, they reject it in principle, or because the institutions which should guarantee it, such as the European Parliament, have no real power, but because it would in any case become a formal control or a power base itself, one that lacked a political subject minimally capable of self-organization, understanding and involvement. What is developing is a kind of federal state 'by conquest', where the king, a narrow economic and technocratic oligarchy, faces a 'people' divided by national histories and local corporate interests, and capable of mounting only sectoral resistance – consider European agricultural policy, or the Babel of trade union organizations, or the social state. Universal suffrage, the much-vaunted lynchpin of modern democracy, plays little or no role in the really important choices."¹²

This analysis of European and international power relations is certainly anything but obsolete, even today – particularly in the permanent search for a European civil society. However, it did not prevent the PCI, as it adopted its Euro-communist positions, from accepting the EEC, and later the EC and the EU, as a reality and as a framework within which to develop political positions. A major consideration was without doubt the fact that since the '60s, Brussels provided the only avenue for the party's participation at the institutional level. In Europe, they had to be accepted as a political force to be reckoned with – unlike the situation at home. This meant nothing less than the opening up of new horizons and the emergence of new possibilities for cooperation. Until its self-liquidation in 1991 and its transformation into a center-left party (Partito Democratico - PD) – the Italian left understood European integration in its ambivalence: on the one hand, it was a project of the power elites, on the other, a political opportunity and a reality that had to be changed.

There is one distinctive difference today from the situation in those days: the PCI and the CGIL, the leftist trade union, always proceeded from the assumption that European integration should be based on the integration of the working classes and of the entire European people. At least this Euro-communist idea is still relevant. On the contribution of the PCI to European integration, Luciana Castellina concludes: "The greatest merit of PCI at the European level is perhaps to have nominated Altiero Spinelli, their proud opponent of the past, for the European Parliament. The stubborn Spinelli was convinced that only a politically structured Europe could bridge the democratic deficit gap and correct the hyper-liberal character of the European Community. He enabled a vote of the European Parliament on a proposal for a federal constitution.¹³ This vote had no effect, since no one – certainly not the European Parliament – had the decision-making power for such a project. In fact, a federal Europe is now much further away than ever. But Spinelli's initiative had the merit of separating the waters, and it testifies to the deep will for a different Europe than that which is being realized today and in the future."

It should moreover be mentioned that after the self-dissolution of PCI in 1991, a split occurred; around a third of the membership refused to go along with the transformation into a center-left party. The "Communist Re-Foundation Party" (PRC), which they founded, was initially still able to attract some 10% of the national vote. After a period of participation in the national government, with fairly pitiful results, the PRC failed to enter parliament in the national elections of 2008 – a blow from which it never recovered. Somewhat more successful is the group "Left Ecology Freedom" (SEL), which split from the PRC after that defeat, and has teamed up with the PD, pursuing a centre-left-perspective.

The path of French Communist Party (PCF)

Like the Italian communists, the French communists, too, participated in the first national post-war government, together with the socialists, until 1947, when they withdrew after an extensive series of strikes. The French

¹¹ Lucio Magri, *Il Sarto di Ulm – Una possibile storia del PCI*, Milan 2011

¹² *ibid*, pp. 432-433.

¹³ Castellina, *op cit.*, p. 173

Socialists (then the French section within the socialist International SFIO) were probably the only ones in Europe to press ahead for European integration in the first phase after the Second World War.

After the war, there was general agreement among all political forces in France to concentrate first on the reconstruction of the country, and the PCF participated enthusiastically in this process. France was one of the victorious Allied nations, and initiatives on the part of the USA to subordinate the country were strongly rejected by all French parties – first and foremost by President Charles de Gaulle. An American order to exclude the PCF from governmental participation could be imposed on defeated Italy, but would never have been accepted in France.

After 1947, the PCF participated in national governments again on two occasions, once in support of François Mitterrand's first Socialist-led government in 1981-1983, and again in 1997-2002, as part of Socialist Lionel Jospin's "Plural Left" government, which also included the Greens. During these periods of governmental participation, the PCF accepted all European policies and integration steps – although as a party, it held a generally critical position.

In France, perhaps more than in any other European country, a debate emerged over the issue of how far European integration could be allowed to go in building a third, autonomous block during the Cold War. Leo Blum, the great elder statesman said as early as 1947 that Europe should contribute to keeping the two big blocks apart, that in Europe, many countries and many personalities rejected participation in either of them, and that it was the task of France to build a third international force. This position was shared by many political actors, which explains why France even after the beginning of the Cold War held fast to European integration and became the motor of the functionalist integration project promoted by Jean Monnet.

A second important dimension of the French position on European integration was without doubt the question of how to re-integrate Germany. It was in the interests of France to win control of the potential economic and political power of Germany – and the ESCS was the direct expression of that interest: Coal and steel were in those times still the major "factor" for industrial wealth, not least for the development of a war industry. Re-integration and control of Germany was one of the driving motivations in France – but this is at the same time the reason for a deep ambivalence that arose repeatedly in the ensuing period.

One example of this ambivalence was the project for a common European defence community. Under this project, the re-arming of West Germany was to be incorporated into a common European structure. It was approved in 1952 by the ESCS governments, but still had to be ratified by their parliaments. When, in 1954, the French National Assembly rejected the project, it was dead.

During the first phase of the Mitterrand government, in 1981-1983, when it became obvious that France would either have to design an autonomous development perspective or realize a process of neo-liberal reforms if it were to remain competitive within the EC, the cohesion of the Socialist-Communist coalition was put to the test. The decision to adjust to the EC rules meant an end to the socialist reforms which had been promised to the people before the 1981 elections, and the PCF withdrew from the government. French economist Alain Lipietz believes that there could have been an alternative to this adjustment to the neo-liberal rules of EC, had France pushed for a Keynesian policy of regulation, but that would have required a political union, which was not in the offing at that time. French Finance Minister Jacques Delors, who was responsible for the adjustment, later, as European Commission President, had the opportunity to move the project of a political union ahead. Instead, he implemented the Single Market, garnished by a few social components.

The PCF was the outset very critical of the European integration process as a project directly opposing the USSR, a position it maintained until the '70s. At that time, it began to move toward the Euro-communist positions of the Italian PCI – and thus accepted the EEC as a reality to be changed. Georges Marchais said in 1977, "It is not our intention to liberate the country from the chains of the Atlantic block so as to bring it under the influence of the Warsaw Pact." And in its plan for Europe of 1978, the PCF called for a Europe of social progress, with overall implementation of the highest existing social standards.

But at the end of the '70s, the PCF revised its position on Europe once again, and a strategy of socialism "à la française" was developed. The refusal of the EC's neo-liberal project also had strategic implications, such as the question of how European integration might jeopardize the political influence of the PCF in France. By contrast, the leftist French Trade Union CGT continued to cooperate with the Italian CGIL, to keep open a European space for social struggles.

The PCF also rejected the project of the Single Market, launched in 1986 and culminating in the Maastricht Treaty of 1992, due to its neo-liberal design. But after the end of Cold War and especially after German unification, there was an opening up of these positions: Now, the PCF criticized the monetaristic project of the “euro” as project for a “single currency” (*monnaie unique*) rather than a “common currency” (*monnaie commune*). An important participant in the left discussions of those times in France was Philippe Herzog, who called for a re-definition of the positions of the French left,¹⁴ and for a strategy of constructive criticism. In the Manifesto for a European Democracy of 1999, he called for a participatory democracy and a new foundation of a social European Union based on solidarity. Herzog was a PCF MEP from 1989 to 1999, and an independent MEP from 2000 to 2004, and served as the general rapporteur of the European Parliament on the Green Book on “Services of General Interest”. In that capacity, he undertook many initiatives and public hearings in which he contributed to the development of resistance against the privatization of public and common goods and services.

During the “Plural Left” government of 1997-2002, the PCF accepted existing European policy, but the party’s positions on Europe were still very critical. Even the military intervention in Kosovo, which it strongly opposed, was unable to rupture the government coalition – on the contrary, it sparked a debate within the left on a possible common European defence policy.

In the context of the project for a European Constitution coordinated by the former French President Valéry Giscard d’Estaing, the PCF initiated a public debate on a referendum in 2004. This time, the PCF also tried to convince those political forces from the left which had voted in favour of the Maastricht Treaty, and won the support of parts of the Socialist Party. The referendum of 2005 was successful – the “non”-votes won.

After 2005, the PCF participated in a process of cooperation with other left political groups within the “Left Front”, especially with the Left Party, founded by Jean-Luc Mélançon, the Front’s presidential candidate in 2012, who received quite a respectable result.

Despite all its defeats, the PCF even today has some 130,000 party members, more than any other French party, and despite its performance at the national and European levels, it is still strong at the local and regional levels.

Compared with the Italian PCI, the path taken by the PCF is on the one hand straighter, and on the other, more crooked. It is straighter in that the PCF has never really given up its strict opposition to the functionalist and neo-liberal integration of the EEC/EC/EU, not even during the more open period of the ‘90s; it is more crooked in that during periods of governmental participation, the party has accepted the European treaties, and has taken no relevant initiatives to change European policy.

The impetus of the two great western European Communist Parties

The history of both large western European communist parties includes all positions on Europe that are present today within the German Left Party (Linke): The position of strict refusal, the call for a re-foundation, and a constructive-critical position designed to place social policy and strict regulation of financial capital at the centre of policy. However, the Italian euro-communist approach was weighted differently than the rather abstract proclamations which have come from the Linke. The PCI had developed societal strategies based on the theories of Antonio Gramsci, among other things oriented toward the development of counter-hegemony and of an autonomous culture and morality, and the view that fundamental changes had to be developed in the middle of society. Translated to the European level, such strategies would today demand a radically new orientation of the left forces in Europe.

Nonetheless, both in France and in Italy, there has at times been a rather strange kind of absenteeism. Practical alternative strategies have rarely been developed by either the PCI or the PCF. The initiatives of such outstanding personalities as Altiero Spinelli after 1979, or of Philippe Herzog between 1989 and 2004 for a new democratic and social foundation of the EU were never really adopted by their respective parties. Remarkable, too, is how strongly the left in France and Italy held fast to the existing European treaties and policies when they participated in national governments. One could draw the conclusion that their resistance against the American-dominated European integration project during the late ‘40s had survived as a reflex, while the leaders of the parties more or less ignored European political reality once they had obtained influential positions in government, or else that they represented the traditional national interests of their countries in European policy.

¹⁴ See: Philippe Herzog, *Réconstruire un pouvoir politique – gouverner en partenaires*, La Découverte, 1997, and: *Manifeste pour une démocratie Européenne*, Les Editions de l’atelier, 1999

Finally, there is another notable point that should not be missing from this very brief reflection on the history of the Italian and French communist parties: The integration of West Germany into the European process as well as the marginalization of communist parties and communist-oriented trade unions has to be understood in the context of the Cold War. This marginalization in countries where the communists were a relevant force in society, a process which continued into the '90s in some cases, meant the exclusion of a significant segment of the European citizenry from the European integration process.

But the history of the European Federalist Movement, too, is part of a development that excluded ever more political activists, even in the immediate post-war period. Thus, one might argue that it is no accident that European integration – and the European Union – have become an isolated project of the power elites. The question as to why all subsequent attempts to change this have not been successful is a pressing one, and will require thorough reflection – which goes beyond the scope of this paper.

But there was and is an ongoing process of common European cooperation and common European culture – beyond the realm of institutional European policy: From the campaigns against nuclear death in the '50s, through the student-led movements of the '60s and the peace movement of the '80s, to and the anti-globalization movements of the '90s, the Social Forum movements of the 2000s and current protests against European austerity policies, Europe's cross-border movements have all had in common the fact that they have had no immediate relevance to the European institutional process. Historically, there have been only two exceptions: The women's movement and some aspects and the ecology movement have been able to gain a share of influence on European institutional policy.

I would like to conclude this short reflexion with one remark: For most of its history, the European integration project was dominated by the Cold War, and for a very short time at the beginning of the '90s, a new orientation based on the experience of CSCE seemed possible – but this opportunity was not realized. One might ask whether the EU and the European Left even today retain a sort of post-Cold-War position.

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