Communist Parties in Europe are speaking more openly than ever on a number of issues which for years now have been the subject of contention in the marxist movement.

The new stage in the struggle for socialism in Europe, the greater degree of co-operation among the parties there, and differences with the Communist Party of the Soviet Union over the preparation of the proposed European Communist Conference, appear to have prompted this latest development.

The selection of statements below (only a fraction of those available) reject:

- the 1905 and 1917 Bolshevik models of revolution and the Soviet model of socialism as applicable in the Europe of the 1970s
- a state sponsored ideology
- administrative measures against repression of those holding different opinions, including use of labor camps and psychiatric institutions
- the idea of a “global strategy” common to all countries, and specifically of an identity of policy between the Communist Parties of the European capitalist countries and the State parties of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe
- the practice of laying down “Marxist-Leninist principles” and the “old internationalism” which implicitly or explicitly assume acceptance of such rejected propositions.

The statements affirm the goal of a pluralistic socialism as opposed to a one party state. They recognise:

- that the Soviet Union, after 58 years, presents a deformed socialism
- that Czechoslovakia since 1968 is a negation of fundamental principles of socialism
- that the independence of Communist Parties and non-interference in their affairs is not of marginal, but crucial importance.
- that it is essential to speak up on such issues.

Material in which these views are incorporated include the following:

“In today’s conditions we are of the opinion that the acceptance of pluralism has taken on a new and special meaning .... and this should lead us to think over the negative weight that the mistakes over pluralism had in the past ..... 

“Today the communists can only strive for a hegemonic position, to be recognised as the vanguard, if they show they understand the reasons why in this long historical period conditions have not led to the formation of one party of the working class and which in this situation have brought into existence other formations of the people and the workers ....

“In the past the Communist Party (was proclaimed) as a party that guided the State and on which the other parties depended. So
one showed that one regarded other parties ... as remnants of the past that must be absorbed. The other parties would be fundamentally denied the right to put forward an alternative or to act as a real opposition ....

"Bourgeois democracy ... will not be eliminated, but completed and a democracy developed which will abolish privilege ....

".... to be a real revolutionary (one must) go forward on the road to socialism, make it possible to realise every ideal of freedom, equality and fraternity, which in bourgeois society are mutilated, betrayed and trampled underfoot, and which only in socialist society can be truly developed ...."


"It is unrealistic today to see in the fight of the workforce the strategy and tactics of the great Russian Revolution of 1917 or even of 1905. This is not only because that was decades ago, but because it is unthinkable that socialism in the West can be achieved in the same way as in the Soviet Union and other East-European and Asiatic countries."

Berlinguer, l'Unita, October 31, 1975.

"Both parties have their sights not only on the immediate problems but also on programmatic concepts. They agree completely on the need for a democratic way to socialism. In the present epoch and in this part of the world in which we live, in view of the sharpening crisis of capitalism we underline the need for socialism - a pluralistic socialism which is concerned with respect for democracy, religious and cultural freedoms, a socialism with many parties and with political alternatives."

From the statement of the CP of Spain and the CP of Greece (Interior), Mundo Obrero, December 9, 1975.

"There can be no common line between Communist Parties of capitalist countries and the State parties of East Europe. There cannot be a global strategy. If there were one it would be a violation of the principle of co-existence, which the non-interference in the affairs of others presupposes. We wouldn't give another CP, especially another country, the possibility to interfere in our affairs and to determine our strategy ....

"We shall not worry about admitting that in Europe in the year 1975, with the whole international experience we have accumulated and with all the changes in society in which we live, communism presents many new elements. We cannot invoke the communism which succeeded in Russia in extraordinary historical conditions ....

"I believe that the old internationalism is a historical relic that is certain to disappear."

Santiago Carrillo, in an interview with the paper Stampa, December 1975.

".... in the documents of different parties and also in the bilateral declarations such as those of our Party with the CPI (June, 1975), and the CPF (November, 1975) clear outlines of common ideas on the democratic way to socialism stand out. They contain a common concept of the content of socialism in a society such as ours: respect for and extension of personal, political and cultural freedoms, pluralism, no State ideology."

".... there must be excluded from the preparation of a document for the (proposed European Communist Parties') Conference any proposition for an "ideological text" whereby general formulations are set out and 'lay down Marxist-Leninist positions' respecting European problems ....

"We have often been accused of being excessively concerned about the independence of Communist Parties. But the facts show that independence today is decisive in order to play the leading role in every country and simultaneously make a contribution to the anti-imperialist struggle in the European or world scene ....

"We support a number of foreign policy positions of the USSR and appreciate its importance in elimination of the threat of an atomic war. We appreciate also the help given by the Soviet Union to peoples who have been victims of aggression. But at the same time we adhere to our own independent foreign policy line which in some respects do not agree with Soviet policies ....

"We firmly reject features such as, in the Soviet Union for example, trials and punishment of persons for 'crimes' of dissident opinion from the government. A TV film on the Soviet labor camps has uncovered scandalous conditions, even if applied only to ordinary convicts. Czechoslovakia since 1968 has been
a negation of fundamental principles of socialism.

“We do not accept the ideological concept that in a society without antagonistic classes dissenting opinions are not permissible. Theoretically it is an undialectical concept. Politically it is not only wrong but dangerous because it leads to the assumption that everyone with a dissenting opinion is abnormal or a criminal. It also means that in a society which has been socialistic for more than 58 years, phenomena exist which present a deformed picture of our ideal of the freeing of humanity.”

Manuel Azcarate, Mundo Obrero, December 31, 1975.

Pravda, December 19, 1975 in an article attacking a French TV film about labor camps in Lithuania said it was “gross anti-Soviet falsehood”. It also criticised the French CP which, it said “instead of replying properly to anti-communism and anti-Sovietism, has taken up these provocations and thereby, wittingly or unwittingly, supported this new anti-Soviet action.”

Le Monde, December 20, 1975.

Replies from the CPF included the following:

“We are not unconditional advocates and for us there doesn’t exist a socialist model that we have to copy mechanically, especially when mistakes are made. For us socialism means before anything else freedom for the totality of citizens. We cannot endorse measures which rob a person of freedom just because he doesn’t share our opinions.

“This for us is not simply tactical, as some people think, that we adopt it in order to increase our credibility. We are concerned with questions of principle. In our view freedom is at the same time a goal and a means. Nothing will be gained without them, for people cannot be made happy against their will.”

Rene Andrieu, l’Humanite editor-in-chief, in a leading article in the issue of December 22, 1975.

“We fight ideas with ideas, not with repression. We combat lies with facts, slander with evidence, not with administrative measures .... It is the basis of our concept of relations between citizen and State. It is our conviction not only through certain circumstances. When the Political Bureau of our Party declared it was inadmissible for a socialist country to have political prisoners confined in labor camps, this expressed the logic of our whole thought.”


“Not only countries with different social systems should co-exist, but also countries with similar systems. This means that the principle of co-existence should be applied to the socialist countries. This is not a bad thing either for socialism or for the international workers’ movement ....

“Differences between socialist countries should not lead to conflict if these differences are known, recognised, respected and analysed, instead of an abstract ‘unity’, and are not wrapped up in a false ‘internationalism’ ....

The article, in the Zagreb paper Vjesnik quotes Jure Bilic, member of the Executive Committee of the Central Committee of the Communist League of Yugoslavia as saying that while Yugoslavia admitted unemployment, other socialist countries camouflaged it. He said that while Yugoslavia was denigrated as having certain ‘liberalistic’ symptoms, in other countries there were real shortages, bad sales organisation, poor quality of goods and a low productivity. The article goes on:

“All this must be openly reported on. Why should our media not give a full picture of living conditions in other socialist countries, their positive aspects but also their shortcomings. About cheap rents, but also about the prohibition of moving into the territory of big cities?”

“Japan and Italy, in which there are respectively different conditions, now face political, economic, social and cultural-moral crises. The depth of these crises is not simply due to the periodic crises of the capitalist economy, but to the structural crisis of the world capitalist economy following the
Second World War, to the aggravation of the contradictions in every field, accumulated over a long period in the two countries and to the bankruptcy of the basic policy of the ruling circles of both countries in this situation.

"To break away from such crises in developed capitalist countries it is necessary to defend, expand and strengthen democracy in all fields of national life - political, economic and social. This is the way to advance the unity and struggle of broad sections of forces on the basis of national consensus. At the same time both sides reaffirmed that they will fully guarantee - in the future socialist society envisaged by both parties - pluralism, freedom of speech, thought, religion including freedom of its propagation, and freedom of cultural and artistic expression."

Communique of Italian and Japanese Communist Parties, September, 1975.

"French and Italian Communists stand for the plurality of political parties - including the right of existence and activity of opposition parties. They stand for the freedom to form and the possibility of democratic alternation of majorities and minorities, for the secular character and democratic functioning of the State, for the independence of justice. They stand equally for the free activity and independence of trade unions. They attach great importance to the development of democracy in enterprises so that workers can participate with real rights in management and can dispose of extended powers of decision. The democratic decentralisation of the State must give a more and more important role to regions and local collectives who must have a broad autonomy for the exercise of their functions."


Efforts are no doubt being made to give the totality of these views a satisfactory theoretical expression which would also adequately take into account theory and practical experiences concerning the State.

Such a further step, when mature, would greatly assist the development of marxism by incorporation of the multitude of experiences of the revolutionary movement this century. This would enormously increase the attractive power of marxism and help overcome, on a new basis, the fragmentation which has so afflicted the movement.

E.A.