

OTHER NATIONS

*Rethinking the
"Inevitable"*

"West European Communism" by Hadley Arkes, in *Commentary* (May 1976), 165 E. 56th St., New York, N.Y. 10022.

Opening the governments of Italy and France to indigenous Communist participation would seem to be an idea "whose time has come." Yet what is the commitment of those parties to the principles of parliamentary democracy? Arkes, a professor of political science at Amherst, says the evidence indicates that their commitment is "rooted in nothing more substantial than a reading of the current alignment of political forces." Were the French and Italian Communists truly committed, logic "should lead them to condemn the nature of the Soviet regime and break off their connection with the . . . Soviet party." Moreover, Arkes finds that little assessment has been made by those who advocate sharing power with the Communists of the proposals put forth by the two leading West European Communist parties. He suggests, for example, that even the relatively limited nationalization schemes of the French party would retard Common Market integration and encourage links with the statist economies of Eastern Europe.

Should Washington accept the inevitable and open a dialogue with the Western Communist parties so as to weaken their dependence on Moscow? Arkes says no: "In the coldest calculus of realism," U.S. interests might be better served if the French and Italian parties were to become more dependent on Moscow because nothing would be more likely to restore the cohesion of the non-Communist parties in the West.

*Changing Elites
And Policy Shifts*

"Elite Succession, Petrification, and Policy Innovation in Communist Systems: An Empirical Assessment" by Valerie Bunce, in *Comparative Political Studies* (Apr. 1976), 275 S. Beverly Dr., Beverly Hills, Calif. 90212.

Do major changes in government policy occur when newcomers take power? Some theoretical studies of Communist systems indicate succession causes policy change; others say it does not. Concerning democratic systems, however, academics generally agree that election results rarely disturb the slow movement of policy shifts. Valerie Bunce, a political science doctoral candidate at the University of Michigan, compared budgetary allocations for specific fields (primarily health, education, and welfare) in 16 Communist and non-Communist countries before and after each changing of the guard between 1950 and 1972. Her conclusions: "Elite turnover" seems to be a major cause of rapid budgetary shifts, especially in Communist countries where there are strong intra-party competition and frequent changes in leadership. Policy stagnation occurs in both Communist and non-Communist countries where one leader *and* one party have long dominated the government—as in India, West Germany, Hungary, and Bulgaria.