

By Diana Johnstone

THE SPANISH COMMUNIST PARTY (PCE) HAS been revived on its deathbed by a large dose of sex appeal, otherwise known as charisma. In the early hours of February 22, the PCE emerged from its old bureaucratic chrysalis as a radical butterfly with a glamorous new leader whose daring proposals include the restoration of a Spanish Republic.

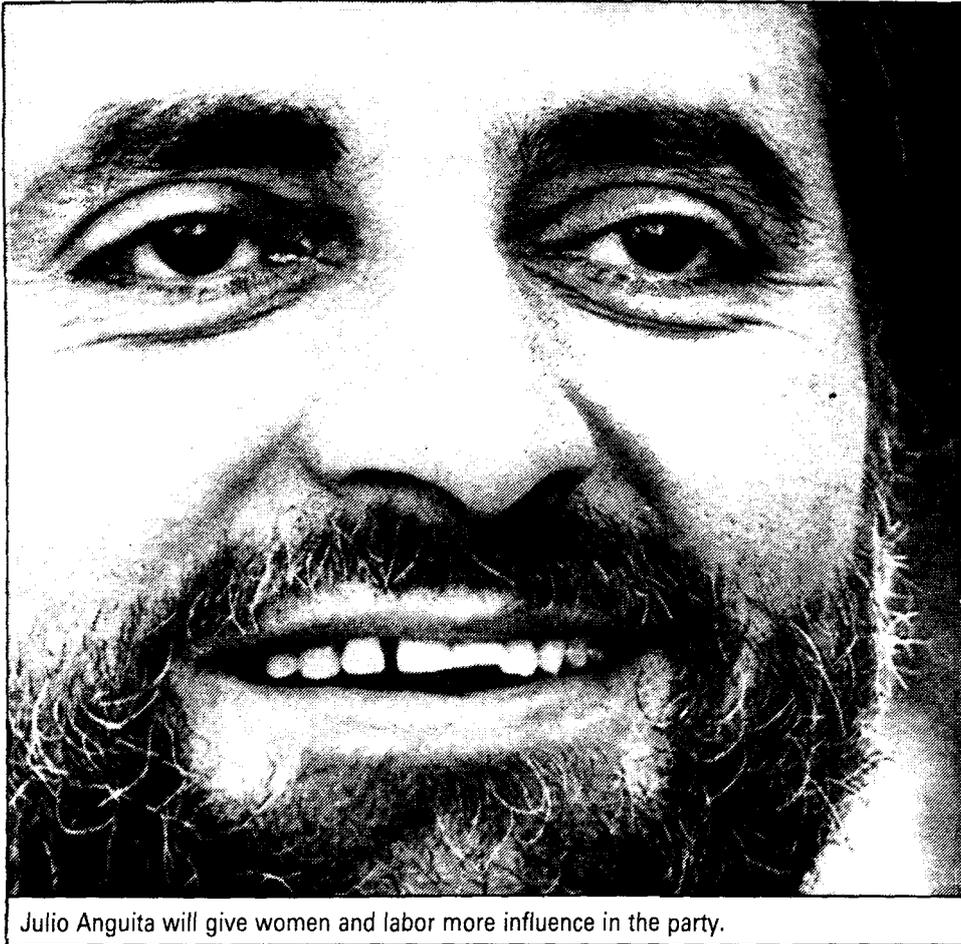
The new general secretary is 45-year-old Julio Anguita, former mayor of Cordoba and currently the PCE's best, if not only, vote-getter. A former schoolteacher, he was elected mayor in 1979 of his native Cordoba, with support from Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez' Spanish Socialist Workers Party (PSOE). Anguita's flamboyant leadership and outspoken views won him the nickname of the "red calif" and the animosity of the PSOE, which opposed his re-election in 1983. Even so, Anguita won by a larger margin than in 1979, capturing about 37 percent of the vote at a time when elsewhere the PCE was under the 10 percent mark and shrinking.

Anguita resigned as mayor of Cordoba in 1986 to lead the *Izquierda Unida* (United Left) coalition in the regional parliament in Seville, with hopes of winning the presidency of the region of Andalusia in elections later that year.

In his first speech as general secretary, shortly before the sun came up after a wild night of bargaining, the Andalusian made it clear that he would not abandon his regionalism when he moved to Madrid to lead the party. Anguita's PCE will advocate a decentralized Spanish state, with the objective of eventually creating a federal republic. This reversal of former PCE general secretary Santiago Carrillo's historic compromise accepting the restoration of the monarchy after the 1975 death of Francisco Franco is unlikely to topple King Juan Carlos. But it may appeal to a younger generation no longer silenced into compromises on principle by fear of a military coup.

The foreign policy "threat": The boldest proposal approved by the 12th congress was to cede the two Spanish presidios on the opposite side of the Straits of Gibraltar to Morocco. This is a significant suggestion because Spain's precarious hold over the two enclave ports, Ceuta and Melilla, has been the main pretext for organizing Spanish military forces against a theoretical "threat" from the South. Gonzalez' Socialist government has accepted that "threat" in its efforts to woo the military. Since Spaniards by and large do not believe in the "Soviet threat," the "Moroccan threat" is necessary to justify NATO, but thereby opens the gates to pulling Spain into American efforts to engage NATO increasingly outside the European NATO area. This risks jeopardizing Spain's traditionally friendly relations in both the Arab world and Latin America.

The proposal finally approved by the PCE called for negotiations to reach a joint solution to three problems: the Southern Sahara, Gibraltar, and Ceuta and Melilla. Presumably, Morocco could be consoled for giving independence to the Sahara by getting Ceuta and Melilla, and Spain could be consoled by getting Gibraltar back from Britain. Indeed this seems the most sensible possible solution—so sensible that nobody has yet advocated it. Prime Minister Gonzalez refuses to com-



Julio Anguita will give women and labor more influence in the party.

Spanish Communist Party gets flamboyant new leader

pare Ceuta and Melilla to Gibraltar. The Spanish cities on the Moroccan coast are not colonialism, he insists.

The PCE favors a transition period of 20 to 25 years during which Ceuta and Melilla's population would be granted Spanish citizenship, Spanish troops would be gradually withdrawn from the two bases, and Spain and Morocco would jointly eliminate the smuggling that flourishes in the two ports.

The party also calls for strict application of the three conditions contained in the 1986 referendum on NATO membership: a complete ban on nuclear weapons, dismantling of U.S. bases and disengagement from the NATO combined forces. The PCE interprets the ban on nuclear weapons as implying refusal to allow the U.S. Sixth Fleet to use Spanish territorial waters. Carrying this one step further, the Communists have called for withdrawal of all foreign naval forces from the Arab-Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean, a proposal already made by the Soviet Union.

Anguita's reluctance to abandon his Andalusian prospects made it necessary for the PCE to beg him to accept the leadership. Until the last minute, Anguita insisted that he preferred to continue as president of United Left. When the 12th congress opened in Madrid, Gerardo Iglesias resigned as general secretary before a successor had been found—an unusual situation for a Communist Party. Anguita used his strong bargaining position to insist on a relatively free hand and a change of personnel in the central committee, at the expense of the party apparatus.

As a result, women and the labor movement gained influence: the Communist-organized Workers Commissions, the *Comisiones Obreras*, increased their representation on the central committee from 10 to 17.

Longstanding members such as veteran Workers Commissions leaders Marcelino Camacho and Antonio Gutierrez were joined by important Workers Commissions officials such as the Madrid general secretary, the secretary of the metalworkers confederation and the secretary of the banking confederation. The number of women on the central committee rose from four to 25, in the first application of a new quota of 25 percent.

The supreme goal: The PCE endorsed Anguita's view that building the United Left, the electoral coalition that grew out of the anti-NATO movement, was more important

He's Julio Anguita, the party's best, if not only, vote-getter.

than trying to unify the party's own splinters. This meant momentarily forgetting about Santiago Carrillo's little *Partido de los Trabajadores de España* (Workers' Party of Spain), since Carrillo rejects United Left. Under Carrillo's leadership, the PCE fell to 3.9 percent of the vote and four seats in the 1982 legislative elections. The endless ideological strife associated with "unifying the communist movement" has in fact torn it to shreds. The PCE's most crippling factional fight three years ago came after Iglesias, originally sponsored by Carrillo as a puppet successor who he could control after resigning as general secretary, broke away from his master. This led to Carrillo's expulsion in April 1985.

In the 1986 elections, the new United Left began to crawl out of the depths with 4.6 percent and seven seats, and might have done better if Carrillo had not drawn votes away by his own hopeless campaign. For the 12th congress, he was a disagreeable mem-

ory or a joke. Delegates laughed and applauded when a student mimicked Carrillo, declaring that "the unity of Communists must be made around me."

While abandoning any attempt to try to unite with the prickly Carrillo, the PCE appears to be moving closer to the small pro-Soviet *Partido Comunista de los Pueblos de España* (Spanish People's Communist Party), led by Ignacio Gallego. He had left the PCE in the midst of its worst factional convulsions, forming his party in January 1984 evidently in the expectation that the PCE was

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about to fall apart and that he could pick up the pieces in an orthodox structure with Moscow's blessings. But this did not occur, and with the advent of Mikhail Gorbachov's *glasnot*, *perestroika* and generous disarmament proposals, Soviet-bashing has lost its charm among the Eurocommunists.

The outgoing general secretary, Iglesias, had blamed Carrillo's sectarianism for the party decline in his opening speech on the day of his resignation. Recognition that Iglesias had done the best he could—even if it was not good enough—could be read in the final vote for the new central committee in which Iglesias got the most votes, even ahead of the legendary civil-war leader, Dolores Ibarruri, who normally comes in first. Anguita was third.

The emergence of Anguita is in keeping with the strong personalization of Spanish politics. The rivalry between the two men from Andalusia naturally appeals to the media. Felipe Gonzalez comes from Catholic Seville, Anguita from Cordoba, proud of its heritage of Roman stoicism and Moorish culture. An associate told *El Pais*: "Sevillans are more superficial. The Cordoban is more profound, more dignified." As mayor of Cordoba, Anguita annoyed the local Catholic hierarchy and won friends in the Arab world by returning a local mosque to Islam, in a gesture meant to show that Cordoba had not forgotten its glorious past as capital of Moorish Spain.

"Julio Anguita, the 'red calif,' is a seductor with gazelle-wolf's eyes," the weekly *El Globo* wrote. The Communist with bedroom eyes mixes his Roman-Arab inheritance of reflection and hedonism in a "cocktail that can be explosive and get the PCE out of its stagnation," it suggested.

Disillusion with Gonzalez' realism seems to open an opportunity for a dynamic left challenger to chip away his absolute majority in the 1990 elections and demand a left coalition government. Warning signals were heard at the PSOE congress in January, where the left socialist current showed surprising strength by winning 23 percent of the votes.

Although Prime Minister Gonzalez was unanimously re-elected as general secretary of his party, he came under strong attack at the party congress from Nicolas Redondo, the head of the socialist Labor Union Confederation. Redondo said that what makes a government "socialist" is its translation of economic improvements into social betterment, and that Gonzalez' government had failed to do this. Instead, Redondo said, there were greater social inequalities than ever and the "law of the marketplace" reigned supreme. □



FEMINISM

Indian society tends to hold women in extremely low status.

Discrimination by abortion: India's controversy

By Arthur R. Kroeber

NEW DELHI

THE BUSINESS OF PREDICTING AN UNBORN baby's sex is booming in India. So are efforts to stop it.

Fears that women in this male-dominated society are systematically aborting female fetuses have sparked a campaign by feminists and some health workers to outlaw the use of amniocentesis and other prenatal tests for determining the sex of fetuses. The effort is gathering steam and may result in national legislation by the end of the year.

The use of pre-natal sex tests has been defended by gynecologists and family planners, who say selective abortion is an unavoidable outgrowth of India's attempt to control its burgeoning population. They also accuse the legislators of attacking a mere symptom, not the real problem—women's low status in society.

Inappropriate technology? The problem has been brewing for years. Amniocentesis was introduced to India in 1975, and though its main purpose is to detect genetic abnormalities such as Down's syndrome, it quickly became popular as a sex-predictor

and now is used as little else.

In amniocentesis a needle is inserted through the mother's abdomen into the womb, and a sample of amniotic fluid containing fetal cells is removed. The chromosomes from the cells are cultured and analyzed, and the sex of the baby can be determined with 90 to 98 percent accuracy if the test is done properly.

The test has become available to middle-class women here as the cost has come down—it ranges from \$5 to about \$80 at the most expensive and reputable clinics. Another pre-natal test that can be used for sex testing, chorionic villus sampling (CVS), is also available but is more expensive.

There are now 274 testing centers in Bombay, India's most affluent and Westernized city—all but 16 of them private. Most large cities and many smaller ones also have testing centers.

A recent study of 50 Bombay gynecologists offering the test showed amniocentesis is most frequently undergone by middle-class women who have two or three daughters, but no sons. Most health workers agree these women have two desires: to have a small family, and to have a son. So if they know

their next child would be a girl, they are likely to have an abortion and hope for better luck the next time.

Thirty-one of the doctors in the Bombay survey said they would perform an abortion after the sex test if the patient asked for one.

No statistics are available on the number of post-amniocentesis abortions of female fetuses, but most gynecologists think the number is very high.

And it's clear the amniocentesis is coming to be thought of only as a sex test. "We also tell them of the other advantages of the test but they are not so interested in that," said Dr. Datta Pai, head of Bombay's largest amniocentesis clinic, in an interview with an Indian legal journal. "I have yet to come across a person who has come here for the test purely for detection of genetic diseases."

Tough issues: But even assuming that women are deliberately aborting female fetuses, complex problems are raised by legislation against sex tests.

Feminists here, as elsewhere, claim that abortion is part of a woman's right to control her reproductive process. But it now appears that women are using this right to discriminate against their own female offspring.

Also, what is more important, the question of discrimination or the problem of family planning?

Under the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, which legalized abortion in 1971, a woman may get an abortion through the 20th week of pregnancy if a gynecologist certifies that bearing the child would cause "grave injury to her physical or mental health." (After the 12th week, authorization from two gynecologists is needed.)

This has opened the doors to abortion for middle-class women who want small families, because they can claim that a large family would cause them mental harm. So in fact, if not in law, abortion has become accepted as a family-planning tool. How much planning is acceptable?

The question is a live one, because for an Indian woman the bearing of a son is not only a traditional duty but a perceived economic necessity. Even in middle-class In-

dian society, sons are expected to provide for their parents in old age. By contrast, the dowry for one daughter can consume the equivalent of several years' income. Parents with several daughters may spend their life savings on marriage costs.

Doctors who give amniocentesis say they offer a vital planning service in an overcrowded nation. They argue that couples who voluntarily limit their family size should be allowed to have at least one son. Some even say that since women suffer intense discrimination in Indian society, it is more humane for an unwanted girl to be aborted than brought up in misery.

"The largest problem in India is the population explosion," said Dr. K.K. Loomba, who has given amniocentesis sex tests for 10 years in Amritsar and New Delhi. "Suppose a family has two daughters. If they want a son—what objection can you have? The facility is available. Would you rather that they went on producing three or four daughters?"

Favorite sons: Many feminists and lawyers counter that aborting only female fetuses is sex discrimination—which is outlawed by the Indian constitution—and should be stopped.

"Why shouldn't females have the right to live?" asked Dr. Susy Ayaram, consultant to the Voluntary Health Association of India, which advocates a sex-test ban. "It's basically because of a cultural problem, and the solution is not aborting the female fetus but raising the status of women in society."

"We should never give legal sanction to discrimination against women," agreed Kapila Hingorani, a lawyer preparing national legislation against sex tests. She added that all forms of sex discrimination, both before and after birth, should be fought in the courts, and that "protecting" females from future discrimination by aborting them amounts to acquiescing in discrimination.

Hingorani noted that the issue has been clouded by the widespread acceptance of abortion as a method of population control. "It was not the objective of the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act that abortion be used as family planning," she said. "It has, unfortunately, and that is wrong."

Hingorani's bill must be reviewed by a Health Ministry committee, and may reach the floor of Parliament this year. Meanwhile, the state assembly of Maharashtra (where Bombay is located) is already considering a bill that would limit amniocentesis and CVS to government hospitals and to women over 35 years old or with a history of bearing abnormal children.

Opponents of legislation warn that the demand for sex testing is so great that outlawing it will simply drive it underground and into the hands of careless and unscrupulous practitioners.

Loomba suggested that instead of an outright ban, the test should be restricted to women who have at least two daughters.

And he said the real goal should be to change people's attitudes about the value of men and women—a goal that can't be achieved, he said, by imposing unenforceable laws.

"It is a social evil that Indians only want sons," Loomba said. "But if people want a son, how can one stop them? You must make people understand that there is no difference between a boy and a girl. People must be educated." □

Arthur R. Kroeber is a correspondent for Pacific News Service who frequently contributes to *In These Times*.

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