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Edited by Pascal Delwit

Social Democracy in Europe

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Social Democracy in Europe: a Future in Questions

Pascal DELWIT

European Social Democracy is traditionally analysed from a variety of perspectives in political science, but in other disciplines too such as history, sociology or economics.

Right from the outset, an initial semantic obstacle crops up for all researchers who study Social Democracy or a number of its components (parties, trade unions, associations…). Indeed, the term *Social Democracy* can take on a variety of meanings. The first one, which refers to the Social Democratic *model,* involves the term for a certain number of economic and social policies carried out in some states at certain times by parties proudly calling themselves Social Democrats. These political parties take on the specific ideological and organisational traits (ties with a trade union, party of the masses, Marxist ideological referents, and so on) [1]. The second is more all-encompassing and includes in the Social Democratic *family* all political and social players – mainly parties –, all organisations calling themselves *Social Democratic.* For a long time, this difficulty affected the approach to Western Socialist and Social Democratic parties. Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, its scope widened to the parties of Eastern and Central Europe claiming to belong to the Social Democratic family (Agh, Gueorguieva, Wiatr). All research on Social Democracy in Western Europe and/or in Central and Eastern Europe must absolutely start by establishing a set of definitions.

A second problem is the constant tension between peculiarity and uniformity in the Socialist world. "Socialism" and "Social Democracy" have often been studied in a global or total manner. Nonetheless, nothing could be more difficult. Gerassimos Moschonas immediately pinpointed this problem: "Yet the first impression made with the examination of this political force is one of diversity. The diversity of Social Democratic historic destinies, organisational structures, political achievements. In

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view of this diversity, one can wonder what unity actually brings" [2]. In this work, we have attempted to combine cross approaches and national views.

1. Social Democratic Developments

When one studies the organisation, cultural and, to a certain extent, ideological, features of Social Democratic parties, one notes that they were mainly formed before 1914. It is no coincidence that a classic work by Michels (1913) on parties and the sociology of organisations is first and foremost a detailed description and analysis of the German Social Democratic party (SPD) of the pre-World War I era, the "flagship" Socialist party at that time [3].

The period between the two World Wars was marked by a gradual integration of Social Democratic parties into Western political systems. Sweden, or more broadly speaking all Scandinavian countries, were the forerunners in this [4]. The inter-war period also witnessed the social, cultural and political integration of the social class that the Social Democratic parties were originally intended to represent: the working class. Finally, this was also the period in which Social Democracy gradually turned to economic and market principles and a period marked by the split in the working class movement between reformist/Social Democratic and revolutionary/Communist wings [5].

But it was really not until after World War II that Social Democracy was able to "get down to work" in terms of economic policies (Callaghan). The end of the Second World War enabled Social Democratic parties to make good progress in the amount of influence they exerted, notably through the creation of the *Welfare State*.

2. Political and Organisational Characteristics of Democratic Socialism

At political level, the Socialist parties assumed a certain number of characteristics that permanently marked them:

- An anti-communist and anti-Soviet position became a basic element of their identity. The "Social Democratic model", whose positive example was based on the principle of redistribution was set up with reference to the "*pseudo-Socialist*" counter-example of the Soviet Union and "people's democracies". The Social Democratic parties chose "one kind of society", in other words, "the West in order to get away from Stalinism" [6]. This option guaranteed Social Democratic parties their full integration into the political system of their respective countries and accordingly led to alliances – especially with Christian Democratic parties (Seiler). The Social Democratic parties thus became parties with "a mission to govern" and were recognised as such. But anti-Communism as identity trait occasionally obscured the evanescence of values or positive ideological examples.
- The acceptance, which is not historically obvious [7], of parliamentary democracy and political liberalism was adopted (Delwit). Not just adopted but enhanced as identifying element of Social Democratic parties and become one of the "key pillars" of representative democratic systems [8].
- In a position to assure this structure, the Social Democratic parties have generally been "externally formed parties" and "mass parties" [9] or "parties of social

integration" [10] with significant backing by working class by Social Democratic organisations. The Social Democratic parties acquired a massive organisation structured around an apparatus that was extremely powerful in both activist and financial terms at the same time (Marlière) [11]. To a large extent, Social Democracy's strength was consequently due to the *law of numbers.*

- This power was also that of a privileged connection, institutionalised or not, with a trade union confederation incorporating the greater part of the working class world which set up the Social Democratic model and paradigm.
- These parties amended their *Marxist or Marxist-leaning* ideological framework in favour of a doctrine or approach belonging to the Keynesian left wing. From this point of view, the 1959 German Social Democratic party conference in Bad Godesberg symbolised this change.
- Inside their arena, the Social Democratic parties were political parties that had no noteworthy rivals on the left. If not hegemonic, they were at least dominant in their hold on the arena to the left of the political scene, which constituted a "precondition for their restraint" and therefore for the wider acceptance of the legitimacy of their claim to power" (Delwit). It was the *Socialist* parties in particular that were able to confront a powerful Communist party – France, Italy, Portugal, and Greece.

3. Socio-economic Characteristics of the Social Democratic Model

If the forms and contents of the Welfare State were a matter of distinct structures in line with the traditions and the nations considered, the *Social Democratic model* of the Welfare State was often defined by several key features:

- State intervention in social relations and economic policy, presupposing some neutrality on the part of the State in the structuring of relations between employer and trade union organisations. The activity of public organisations aimed to "regulate" economic exchanges with a view to assuring a more equal distribution of the rewards of growth.
- The set-up of forms of institutional dialogues between groups representing workers and organisations expressing the employers' point of view.
- The establishment of a system of social security having as objective to guarantee several basic social services: access to health care, collecting unemployment benefits, family allowance, pensions, maternity leave, etc.
- The guarantee of extremely high employment levels [12].
- Power was exercised within the scope of a mixed economy whose objective was achieving redistribution among the opposing social classes. A "double compromise" then stepped in: between State and market and between money and labour.

It is essential to emphasise that the action and thought framework was developed within the context and environment of the nation. The State was an essential player. The "Scandinavian" and "Labour" models were typical. The "German model", on the other hand, was less conspicuous [13].

Can one speak of a *Social Democratic regime* as such [14]? Nothing is more uncertain. As significant as the attempts at institutional descriptions of the *Welfare*

State may be, they do not necessarily give an account of the origins and reasons of these developments, the conditions for their success or even their differences.

4. Social Democracy in Questions

In its day, the *Golden Age* attributed to Social Democracy was often associated with the "Thirty Glorious Years", in other words, the period from 1945 to 1975. From an economic and social point of view, those three decades had certain similar characteristics. But politically, they were not experienced in an identical manner by the entire Social Democratic family [15]. The fifties, a period of "internal division" and "doctrinal crisis" [16], were typical of this standpoint. The election results were not as good as they were compared with those at the Liberation (Delwit). Above all, the Social Democratic parties were often ousted from power: in the United Kingdom, in Germany and to a great extent, in France [17].

Without a doubt, the *Golden Age* of Social Democracy was fairly limited to the *Golden sixties.* At the end of the fifties, the consolidation of European economies was accomplished. European countries recording an increasingly larger growth rate. This progress was only made possible initially through reduced international tensions and later on through the first steps towards dialogue and forms of cooperation between authorities from the United States, Soviet Union and several European States. The *Golden sixties* represented an auspicious era from an election point of view for parties claiming to be on the left and favourable for the development and/or good working order of neo-corporatism.

The appearance of the economic and social crisis in the seventies eroded the terms of social compromise and of the "Social Democratic model". Two of its *pillars* came under attack: guaranteed relative full employment and the guarantee of an egalitarian redistribution policy, stemming from the rewards of growth.

The initial reactions from Social Democratic parties in power (SPD, SPÖ, SAP, Labour Party, …) were varied. In Germany, the government of Helmut Schmidt quickly set the priorities of maintaining the competitiveness of companies, a low rate of inflation and monetary stability. In the United Kingdom, the Labour government wanted to establish a *social contract* with the TUC and companies aimed at defending employment levels and limiting wage increases. In Austria, the SPÖ objective and gamble consisted in keeping public and private investments higher than the European average through the acceptance of wage restraint by trade union organisations. The Social Democratic governments in Sweden stuck to the course of an economic policy based on demand and a low rate of unemployment [18].

In the second half of the seventies, two primary conclusions could be drawn from the attitude of the Social Democratic parties in power faced with the first signs of the crisis. What determined the beginning and possibly facilitated the success of an alternative to a strictly economic policy based on supply was mainly the position adopted by trade union organisations. Beyond the attitude differences in the supporter and trade union world linked to Social Democracy, the ever more significant impact of external factors should be underlined: whether it concerned the beginnings of the acceleration of economic interdependence, multinationalisation of the world of

enterprise, or constraints of international politics, like the advent of the "new cold war" for example.

This observation was crucial in more than one respect. The transformations underway further complicated criticism of the capitalist system and the desire to go beyond it. Christine Buci-Glucksmann mentioned this as early as 1983 [19] while Padgett and Paterson announced a speeding up of the "decay of Social Democracy" [20]. The problem of the arena of Social Democratic action was especially raised and was to be underlined in particular as from the eighties: Nation-Europe-International (Ladrech).

The eighties were very difficult for the Socialist family, despite steady election results. A neo-liberal wave, symbolised by the election of Ronald Reagan as President of the United States (1980) and Margaret Thatcher as British Prime Minister (1979), spread throughout Western economies and societies. The *classic* Social Democratic parties experienced major political setbacks. Most went into the opposition for relatively long periods: two examples that stand out are the British Labour party (1979-1997) and the German Social Democratic party (1982-1998). Even in countries where they had often participated in a government alliance, they were excluded and replaced by Christian Democrat-Liberal or Liberal-Conservative coalitions: FRG, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway. In the Socialist family, it was the other movement – *Socialist* –, ideologically and organisationally different than the classic Social Democratic parties, that ended up "saving the stake", notably in Spain (Colomé). Above all, as Callaghan pointed out, we were witnessing the veritable "ideological retreat" of Social Democracy [21].

In Southern Europe, some Socialist parties stayed in power for a very long time. The PS in France, the PASOK in Greece, the PSOE in Spain and to a lesser extent, the PSI in Italy and the PSP in Portugal had governmental responsibilities. Alone in the cases of Spain, France, Portugal and Greece and in coalition in Italy, the Southern European Socialists were associated with a plan and a political process that were remarkably different to the Northern Social Democratic experience.

What distinguished these organisations from an organisational and identification angle was different if not to say radically different from parties and experiences categorised as *Social Democratic.* In these systems, the trade union organisations were weak and divided ideologically between pro-Communist, pro-Socialist and pro-Christian Democratic cores. So close links with trade unions were not present. The Mediterranean Socialist parties often relied most of all on the charismatic sway of a leader who was undisputed and indisputable: François Mitterrand in the PS, Mario Soares in the PSP, Bettino Craxi in the PSI, Andreas Papandreaou in PASOK and Felipe Gonzalez in the PSOE. Moreover, unlike Social Democratic type parties, they were faced with a "left hostile to parliamentary government that advocated revolutionary action and condemned reformism" [22]. The political objectives were just as clear as those that prevailed for the large-scale Social Democratic organisations in Northern Europe. For parties in countries that had been under dictatorships, the main concern was primarily to assure political stability and democratic consolidation (democratisation) of the country, as well as to bring about the "modernisation" [23] of their nation. The industrial and financial "catching up" of these countries was achieved through very large-scale opening up to international investment and through the multinational subsidiaries that

were set up [24]. From this angle, a parallel with the functions and “missions” of Central and Eastern European Social Democratic parties was interesting (Agh).

However the increased role played by external factors and the transformations underway in European societies led to a reconciliation of positions, operating modes and of referential elements of the Social Democratic parties. Nowadays there are no longer any differences, from all points of view, that are as significant as those observed in the mid 1970s.

5. The Stakes of European Social Democracy

Combined with the transformations of Western European societies, economic interdependence and sweeping identity crises were all challenges for Social Democracy. Shortly after the fall of the Berlin wall, a section of the liberal school of thought had predicted the end of the Social Democratic way of thinking and action due to its… success [25]. The Social Democratic parties had supposedly fulfilled their roles and no longer had any with regard to societal demands and sociological changes.

All the same, at the junction of the 20th and 21st centuries, Social Democracy experienced a “magical return”, structured around the promotion of a new “third way” (Bell, Moschonas, Marlière) [26], which had nothing to do however with the third way of the interwar period [27]. Once again, the angle was to base Social Democratic strategy on ideological and political outlines within a new context of economic, financial and political interdependence after the fall of the Berlin wall and the intensification of European integration.

A. A New Organisational Model?

As we noted, the realms of membership and activism were very crucial in the Social Democratic organisational model. In this area, the situation went through very powerful changes (Delwit) [28]. Beyond the decline in terms of numbers, there was also a change in relationships between members and leaders. This was in the realm of leader dominance as well as from the viewpoint of changes in political communication; in particular the increased importance of television (Colomé). For all that, the leader did not have absolute supremacy and was very tied to the political election results of his/her party [29]. But the impact on how things were run was decisive.

“The Socialist and Social Democratic experience, which goes back more than 100 years – and the organisational forms that it created – is not imaginable without the party-trade union link” asserts Gerassimos Moschonas [30]. However there was no choice but to note that the trade union-party relationship had become strained or even dis-institutionalised for a number of Social Democratic parties (Marlière). A reciprocal separation process seemed to be well and truly underway, symbolically marked by the breach of the organic link between the Danish Social Democratic party and LO, and by the end of the indirect membership scheme in Sweden. In Central and Eastern Europe, the issue showed up in different forms (Agh, Gueorgieva, Wiatr).

B. New Key Groupings? Electoral and Organisational Challenge

The Social Democratic parties carried the demands of the working class, without having always been a “party of class” as such [31]. Working class groupings formed

its base and its "soul". Their "centrality" [32] within Social Democratic parties was crucial. In thirty years, this angle changed radically both at membership as well as at voter level [33]. Working class support of the Social Democrats dropped sharply, giving rise to a "deproletarianisation process" with two effects: the abandoning of Social Democratic parties by a section of certain working class sectors to the benefit of conservative parties or the Extreme Right [34], and the socio-demographic decline of working class components in the world of work.

This change had a strong impact at electoral and organisational levels. Even if in terms of elections, it was not correct to present Social Democratic parties as *Catch-all Parties*, the fact remained that the electorate of these parties was changing. The erosion of working class support was partially made up for by the arrival of new electoral categories, notably the "new middle classes" from the public sector whose support the Green parties were also vying for (Villalba). Since the early eighties, some Social Democratic parties had to confront a new political and electoral rival with the emergence and development of the Green parties in Europe (Villalba) or the "New Politics" parties [35]. These parties reflected the increasing complexity of societies. Their watchwords "undermine the claims of the continuous growth of Social Democracy" [36]. In addition, they sometimes complicated the synthesis between the claims of "wage earners primarily attached to material security and prosperity" and that of new middle classes more attached to the quality of life. Furthermore, the Green parties challenged the traditional organisations in terms of operations [37]. The parties who felt this electoral competition most acutely were mainly Social Democrats: in Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Germany and in Austria or Sweden. The Socialist parties of Southern Europe and of Central and Eastern Europe did not experience such electoral competition.

The "membership vote" which for a long time had been that of major working class sections did not exist for middle classes. Their agreement and their vote were granted very sparingly and were more conditional. In other words, the Social Democratic parties found themselves in a situation of electoral and political uncertainty that was much greater than was previously the case.

C. The Fall of the Berlin Wall: the Stakes for Social Democracy

The collapse of the Communist regimes had a profound impact on the Social Democratic family. The Western European Social Democratic parties justified their action, based their balance of power at the level of their respective countries and incorporated into their identity the presence of a "counter-model" [38]: what could not and should not be Socialism, in other words what was practised by the Soviet Union and in the people's democracies. With the unexpected and lightning collapse of regimes in *Real Socialist* countries, Western European Social Democracy ironically lost one of its main references, albeit a negative one. It lost an adversary. Well, in politics, an adversary is a vital commodity.

The collapse of the Communist system resulted in the undermining of the very notion of Socialism, of some of its values and some of its means of action such as intervention at State or public level. At the same time, the democratisation of societies

in Central and Eastern Europe opened up a new field of action for all political families.

D. The Challenges of Interdependence: End of the National Welfare State

The issue of economic, financial and political interdependence was a critical matter for European Social Democratic parties. From this viewpoint, the advent and consolidation of the European Union were emblematic and raised problems for the Socialist family (Ladrech) [39]. The Social Democratic compromise and model were national structures and created at that level. This was true of the institutional dimension but also for the terms under which the Welfare States were able to develop. The conditions and balances of power in which the Social Democratic parties were able to have a decisive influence on the development of the latter were applied in a national context. The action of the working class – led by a trade union organisation and a political party with extremely close ties – was an imperfect but indispensable element for achieving social progress and for creating the Social Democratic model. Internationalisation and Europeanisation broke up this set-up. The adaptation of the Social Democratic model at European level was therefore extremely difficult. Lacking a voluntaristic and political dimension backed by a social movement, the left-wing parties lost the ability to intervene and provide impetus to social tendencies (Callaghan). Including through the benefits of representative democracy. Indeed, the areas in which the Socialist parties counted on social movements were within the parliamentary and governmental establishments they were part of. However, legislative and executive powers at national level lost their prerogatives to the European Union and other international bodies [40]. This greatly diminished representation of interest and balance of power for the Social Democratic parties. In addition, the distribution of powers was above all inside the European institutional framework. There, power was more disseminated and considered under a different angle than that of national parliamentarianism. Most of the power belongs to the Council of Ministers, European Council and the Commission inside which the types of monitoring and delegation are more restricted, indirect and much more intricate. At this level, the scope of action of the Party of European Socialists remains an open question (Ladrech).

As we pointed out, at the start of the nineties, several authors took another look at the very widespread notion of a generalised decline of the Social Democratic left. At this turn of the century, it was undoubtedly time to question the "magical return" of Social Democracy that was dismembered in the second half of the nineteen nineties [41]. In electoral and political terms, political times have changed and Social Democracy no longer makes such a significant mark (Callaghan). Nonetheless, beyond cyclical electoral and political events, the chapters of the book analyse the state, the transformations and potential futures of the family of Social Democratic parties in Europe.

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The “Third Way” in Comparative Perspective

David S. Bell

Western European Social Democracy has lost its bearings and its sense of direction since the fall of the Berlin Wall and not developed a replacement for the old certainties. Before the 1980s Socialists in Europe believed that they had both the project for an egalitarian society and the means to implement it without a revolutionary upheaval. Civil society and civil rights could be preserved as the tools of Keynesian economics and Beveridgian planning made full employment and prosperity a reality. This belief began to falter with the inflation of the 1970s and fell to the onslaught of the free market right in the 1980s. Although the Social Democratic parties won elections in the mid-1990s (when socialist governments governed all but four EU states) their confidence had collapsed. Retrieving this sense of mid-century certainty through a revived theory has become an objective of the Social Democrats.

Blair, with the “Third Way”, has certainly achieved this [1]. Leaving aside, temporarily, the question of exactly what it is, the “Third Way” has been a remarkable public relations achievement. Focus on the “Third Way” has enabled the New Labour Party and government to suggest something beyond a mere floating with the tide and to draw attention to the genuine doctrinal and political change in the Party. It is this “Third Way” that has meant that Blair is talked about abroad, and in academic and professional circles. Blair has earned a degree of respect not just as an election winner (of two landslides against the once seemingly invincible Tories) but as the bringer of a new philosophy of more than parochial interest. Blair, so it seems, has discovered the cure to the Social Democratic malaise not just in votes (after all only five years ago there was almost a clean sweep of conservatives in the European Union) but in philosophy. For many the future of Social Democracy was the “Third Way” something different from mere opportunism.

This is a review of the "Third Way" and not an assessment of the New Labour government which would be another task entirely. What is asked here is what is the "Third Way", what was its genesis and where does it stand relative to Social Democracy and other social philosophies? From some perspectives (and not just electoral) it could be argued that the Blair government has been one of the most successful in recent UK history and that its achievements will be remembered long after the "Third Way" has faded from memory. It has devolved government to the regions, it has given London and other cities mayor and it has devoted a good deal of time and energy to Northern Ireland. In other domains it has dealt with the young long-term unemployed and has made advances in tackling child poverty. In addition rivers of cash have been poured into the public services. Health has been a major beneficiary with spending coming up to European levels but a major effort has had results in primary education and standards are being raised. This is a Labour government that is willing to try to find solutions to long-term problems and it is constantly setting targets and assessing progress. However, that balance sheet is not under review here and is best left to more extensive studies [2].

1. Historical Context

Firstly, before untangling the meaning of the "Third Way", why was a new start believed necessary? To understand why it was brought in a brief review of the recent history of the Labour Party is necessary. In the 1980s the Labour Party took its leftward lurch symbolised by the "longest suicide note in history" and it was run by socialists not to mention lunatics. It was nearly displaced by the Liberal-Alliance as the Opposition party in its *annus horribilis* of 1983. This disaster was recognised for what it was and the party leadership of Neil Kinnock was determined to change direction something that, over the next nine years, they managed to do but it crucially still failed to win in 1992.

This election was a shattering defeat for Neil Kinnock at a time when the UK was in recession, people were losing their homes, unemployment stood at three million and there were fears that Labour would never be in government again. This rebuff in 1992 also helps explain New Labour's often crippling obsession with polls and focus groups and Blair's behaviour as if he were only a night away from being brought down by a confidence motion. Throughout the first term it was plagued by doubt. This concentration on opinion leads to a febrile gimmickry (like on-the-spot fines for delinquents) but also to a lack of direction. Because focus groups did not prioritise transport in the early days of the 1997 government it was not on the agenda until it was substantially degraded and a major public issue. It might be added that the election result of 2001 endorsed Mr Blair, but did not exalt him as the results seemed to imply (in the same way that the Conservative landslide in 1987 did not show that people had been persuaded about the poll tax) [3].

But Blair's Labour was determined to shed its image of mismanagement and gain a reputation for competence. There were Blairites before Blair but at that particular point it was decided by a quintet of "modernisers" (including Gould, Mandelson, Brown and Campbell) that further changes had to be made in the Labour Party's programme and appeal if it were to survive into the next century. Neil Kinnock

stepped down and John Smith, essentially a man of the Labour movement, took over the party although before he had time to effect much in the way of change he had died of a heart attack. John Smith had decided to cost spending increases to be paid for by specifically targeting tax and National Insurance increases but Smith was from a Labour background and had roots in the party and had a solidity that enabled a safety first approach to succeed.

It was decided to extend Labour's appeal beyond its heartlands to the English suburbs where the floating voters, notoriously deaf to Labour's message, were located in mass. Whether Smith could have made the appeal, Blair was well placed to do so. A former Fettes public (private) school boy, English sounding from a Conservative-voting family and a lawyer from an Oxford college, Blair rose through the ranks of the party as an efficient and to an extent classless and unmarked by a regional identity. Blair's strategy was to appeal to middle England and the "big tent", although the victory in 1997 was based largely on a rejection of the Conservatives, it owed something to this "southern strategy".

Tony Blair could not have been more different in style and outlook from Smith (and he had no mass support in the party) but he took on the modernisation project and tried to turn a tactical turn into a political credo. It was imperative, in the view of the modernisers, for New Labour to establish a reputation for reliable economic management in the first term and for that reason it could not have dropped the fiscal plans inherited from the Conservatives in 1997 nor departed from its early austerity. For this reason Mr Blair came to power in New Labour's first term with two promises among others: that the Conservative spending plans would be adhered to and that tax rates would not be increased. He or, rather, Mr Brown kept both of them. This self-imposed austerity left New Labour in something of a difficulty when trying to explain why most public services not only failed to improve but, in numerous areas, got distinctly worse.

2. Tactical Considerations

It was this move onto essentially Conservative territory that characterised Blair's approach. Blair was accused of opportunism and, perhaps in response to this, has had a number of "gurus" in his past including the theologian John Macmurray, the "stakeholder" Will Hutton, the communitarian Amatai Etzioni, the labour economist Robert Reich and the theorist of the "Third Way", Anthony Giddens. (Perhaps impressed by Blair's religious background, it has even been suggested by David Marquand that the "Third Way" is Christian Democracy for the United Kingdom [4]). Some have seen in this an attempt to disguise the (politically astute) move to steal the Tories clothes and there are colourable reasons for thinking that to be the impetus behind the "Third Way" [5]. But the "Third Way" is presented as essentially a negative rejection of both Old Labour (the old idea of "equality") and the Conservatives without proposing much that is positive and ideologically speaking it is a mess [6]. It is a magpie approach with no single idea although its champions insist that it is "beyond" left and right [7].

In some ways the "Third Way" is a calculated escape from self-definition and an evasion of precision. Many of the pronouncements could have been made by political

leaders of any hue like Blair's assertion that the "Third Way" is an "alliance between progress and justice" or that it seeks to take the essential values of the centre and centre left and applies them to a world of fundamental social and economic change" [8]. But, of course, it goes beyond the platitudinous. It is Blair's aim to harmonise "democratic socialism and liberalism" and in this way to rebuild progressive forces. It is not one way, but a way of finding ways, which may go left, now right [9]. This is at a piece with Blair's position in politics with a mobile phone to Middle England and all-inclusive bringing in "men and women of good will", and a depoliticised coalition in which Prescott, Meacher, Charles Kennedy, Shaun Woodward (and his butler) can all work together in non-ideological sweet-reason. (This combination of the lion and the lamb is expected despite the growth in inequalities over the 1980s and 1990s). It reconciles opposites at a rhetorical level while rejecting extremes; the repudiation of extreme left-wingery for its "statism", spending, centralisation and ignoring of the need for opportunities and of market fundamentalism for social divisiveness and dogmatism.

"Third Way" rhetoric also enables Tony Blair to haver: when Pierre Mendès France said that "to govern is to choose" he clearly did not have Mr Blair in mind. Thus the "Third Way" brings together the two incompatibilities of the markets and communities, European fairness and solidarity can combine with the "economic dynamism of the USA, toughness on crime cannot work without an attack on its causes (punishment and compassion) and a decentralisation that does not detract from uniform standards [10]. This has been the case with the Euro on which the other parties are clear: the Conservatives are against, the Liberal Democrats are for, and New Labour won't say. No issue has been so assiduously evaded and a debate must be held which the government leads. In this matter Blair is like Stanley Baldwin "adamant for drift, resolved to be irresolute".

In essence the "Third Way" is simple enough and summed up in the phrase "whatever works". (Or, as the wonks like to say, "evidence-based" policy-making). Blair is not the first Labour leader to emphasise the need to harmonise the dynamism of the private sector with social justice but then Wilson, Callaghan and Attlee have been written out of history in an effort to show that the leopard has changed its spots. By making this switch "Third Way" politics can claim to be the way in between the "statism" of Old Labour (or old socialism) and the Thatcherite free-market neo-liberalism and claiming to be modern and ethical. It is prepared to embrace the dynamic of the market but it does not abandon social justice even though the old bureaucracy of the welfare state is not the means to accomplish that. In the "Third Way" view the state will become more entrepreneurial and help people to help themselves rather than handing out standard services through bureaucracies.

3. Philosophical Underpinnings

Anthony Giddens exposition of the "Third Way" is the nearest New Labour has come to an official policy. Anthony Giddens who, in a variety of books, pamphlets and articles, has become the most pervasive of advocates and can be presumed to have the ear of the Prime Minister. Tony Blair is credited as a joint author in the most recent translation into French of the "Third Way" (prefaced by Jacques Delors) and Giddens travels to seminars with Blair almost as the official philosopher. Giddens' work is

probably best regarded as an explanation and justification or proselytism rather than as an inspiration because Tony Blair is reluctant to have his hand tied by an official thinker as such. "Third Way" politics is in Giddens view a bit more than the Golden Mean and is more of a transformation or resolution of the dialectic between old labour and the New Right.

The Third Way

	Old Labour	*Third Way*	*New Right*
Approach	Levelling	Investment	Deregulation
Outcome	Equality	Inclusion	Inequality
Citizenship	Rights	Reciprocal	Obligations
Welfare economy	State	Public/private	Private
Mode	Central Command	Co-operation/Partnership	Competition
Accountability	Upwards to the State	Market Local/national state in combination	Market
Social expenditure	High	Needs driven	Minimal

Source : A. Giddens *et al.*, *The Third Way*, Cambridge, Polity, 1998.

There is no entity identifiable as "Old Labour" as such although there were groups in the party that held similar views. It has to be remembered that Labour has always been nearer to Methodism than to Marx and that it is a "broad church" of libertarian, Christian, New Liberal (of which more later) and so on. Old Labour is something of a caricature in this work (more like Communism or heavy Marxism than the Labour left) and nothing like the Croslandite socialism that inspired the mainstream of the Labour Party over many years with its emphasis on equality. Tony Crosland is the principal Social Democratic thinker of the Labour Party and, because his ideas were close to those of many European parties, the "Croslandite" position has been taken as representative here although it was never uncontested.

In Crosland's view "Equality", as a core value is what defines most European Social Democrats – in the mainstream at least. It is by looking at equality, for Labour as for continental Social Democrats, the key concept in socialist theory and practice that the "Third Way" can be set in the context of Social Democracy. As can be seen the "Third Way" postulates a median between the Old Labour approach and the New Right but one that is qualitatively different and, of course, "modern". This is not a dispute about means, but about values. Croslandite socialists had this argument in the 1950s in their shattering clash with the left precisely over their pragmatism about means (and in particular nationalisation which they rejected). They were "pragmatic" – as is New Labour – but they were clear about the ends envisaged. For Croslandite Social Democrats Redistribution did promise and equal start and an open road [11].

Blair's "Third Way", as Giddens depicts it, does *not* stand for rigid forms of state ownership or provision. It is "pragmatic" as to whether public or private means are the best delivery mechanism [12]. People are autonomous and must take responsibility for

their actions so that there are "no rights without responsibilities" (no unemployment pay without a serious search for a job) [13]. This is close to the formulas of the past: "the market where possible, the state where necessary" or even to Jospin's "yes to a market economy, no to a market society". It is pragmatic, what works best is best, but that becomes problematic as soon as it is put into practice. Even in the formative age of the welfare state Labour prided itself on its pragmatism. New Labour is a classless party that does not promote the interests of one section and intends to reconcile interests by increased efficiency and good will [14].

In the old view the object of Social Democracy was to preserve the market system but, without destroying the creation of wealth, to rectify the distributive injustices that arose within that. Croslandites rejected equality of outcome and equality of opportunity and favoured an intricate view of equality (close to what Rawls was later to detail) although there was something of a weakness in this undertheorising of a key concept. Inequality is a necessary part of the market and eliminating it would involve massive repression but meritocratic equality of opportunity was also unacceptable because it rewarded existing privileges (and haphazard genetics). State action was needed on a substantial scale to eliminate pre-existing inequalities so that starting points would be fair. But if inequalities were justified they had to be "presumptive", they had to have a moral justification, and if they are to be justified must meet a number of criteria including the rent of ability but also – crucially – the improvement of the position of the worst off. Of course, for the New Right inequalities are inevitable and do not matter because "trickle down" will ensure increasing wealth and the important thing is the absolute level of income of the lower groups and not the relative level. As long as the poor are getting better off it does not matter that the gap is growing between rich and poor.

New Labour is committed to equality and rejects inequality of outcome but equality is defined (where it is expounded) in terms of "opportunity" rather than being Croslandite in concept. Equality of opportunity is stressed at many points by New Labour (including education) and the Prime Minister even endorsed the idea that the absolute level of poverty was the key (not relative poverty) at the last general elections. However, it is not easy to believe that the Croslandite view of equality is on the government's mental radar and the measures proposed by New Labour are not intended to tackle social inequality.

New Labour's view of "equality" was reiterated once again on September 18 (before the 2002 Blackpool Conference) when Tony Blair used the terms "equality" and "redistribution" but the content of these terms was not Croslandite. Once again it was "equality of opportunity" and the "redistribution" mentioned was defined as a "redistribution" of opportunities to enable people to enter the market with saleable skills. New Labour would concentrate on the supply side by retraining, helping the disabled and long-term unemployed and improving education. (These take state action further than any New Right free-marketer would go). These supply-side measures will draw people back into the market and "include" them in this way diminishing exclusion and poverty – a hand-up not a hand-out. People are to be moved out of poverty by taking them off benefits and putting them into work and this is at odds with the view of welfare as being part of social justice. There is a tension

in government policy here because Treasury Economists believe in a "natural" level of unemployment and neo-keynesians believe in running the economy at a level of unemployment that will keep wages and inflation down. A level of unemployment is assumed in government policy. This leaves the questions of what New Labour is willing to pay those out of the market and will they be enough to ensure that those people can participate?

4. "Third Way" Practice

But the vital ingredient of how to decide what is done best by whom is missing. For that reason the evaluation of the "Third Way" requires a look at its real world performance. On specifics, however, the Third Way tends to be vague beyond what sort of measures should be implemented and where the line is between public and private or on the tax regime. There is no understanding of the value and role of the public sphere and no evidence as to what the private sector can do better. A genuine "Third Way" requires a clear distinction between industries that can be run on market lines and those in which market processes are inefficient or damaging.

In practice the "pragmatism" of New Labour can look more like an exaggerated faith in the free market and a trust in private enterprise that is unfounded. Evidence for this is the obduracy of the government over the abstruse issue of the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) for public service projects and the Public Private Partnership in the London Underground and the newly proposed Foundation Hospitals. A PFI means going to the private sector to take out loans and repaying the private companies with profits on top over 20-30 years. This has been used to generate a vast programme of public investment. Since 1997 some 40 hospitals and 550 schools are under construction or in operation and a further 60 hospitals are planned. This is a massive improvement on what preceded when capital investment in the public services shrank to 5% of national income then down to 1% putting the UK at the bottom of the EU in public investment. But in the New Labour "Third Way" it is PFI or nothing.

PFIS are financial instruments that reduce the government's "borrowing" by taking it "off-the-book" but they are based on the argument that they save money, transfer risk of failure from the public Treasury and are more efficient than the public equivalent. These assertions are contestable. PFI costs more in the long run than direct state investment and "although capital money is removed from the government's account in future years the taxpayer will face a recurring liability". As the same commentator said, "that is a classic example of giving with one hand and taking with the other" [15]. Sooner or later the state pays and it will pay more so the plans imply that a huge proportion of future spending will be dedicated to PFI repayments. Edinburgh Royal Infirmary will cost £30 million at today's prices for the next thirty years at a cumulative total of £900 million when it could all have been built for £180 million. Financial risk is not transferred by the PFI and the public blame for services remains where it always did [16]. But in these essential areas the state cannot offload the risk and will have to continue the hospital programme or transport works or a provider will have to go out of business. Risks in many cases have been transferred back to the state : Railtrack, air control, British Energy, passport agency and so on. PFI, equally controversial, has launched a gigantic hospital building programme but up to 18% is

spent on annual leasing costs compared to the Treasury's 6% charge and contracting out 40% of cleaning and catering has failed. (Health Concern's Dr Taylor won Wyre Forest from Labour in 2001). Efficiency is often at the expense of staff who often experience reduced conditions of work – 51% of contracted-out workers took real pay cuts [17].

Investigations of PFI by, for example, CABE, the House of Commons Public accounts Committee, the National Audit Office as well as by academics and specialists do not confirm the case for PFIs under any of these three headings. At the Party's Blackpool Conference in 2002 the government refused a further independent review of PFI. But during Labour's first term the "Third Way" revolution was prepared to facilitate private involvement in services. Private sector involvement running schools, hospitals and prisons has so far been far from glorious and public sector union are very opposed to this furtive privatisation [18]. Aside from the cost there have been design and quality problems. PPP is imposing a long-term disaster on the city as it breaks up an integrated structure (it does not look like "what works"). This pays too much attention to the notion that business knows best and the evidence that the private sector is not very efficient at producing certain public goods and services is swept aside. Public opinion has not been convinced about this as only 30% back the idea of getting private companies to run schools and only 26% want private involvement in the National Health Service [19]. Of course, things have not stood still since the first PFI contracts – and conditions have been tightened – but it is far from a convincing story.

Health and education are not amenable to marketisation. Attempts to inject the free market into these areas are the remnants of the Major government's policies (internal markets and rail competition) and its attempt to prove more Thatcherite than Thatcher. Education is a case in point. Real choice in education would require a serious over-provision so that a pupil in any district could decide between Church schools, Islamic schools, secular schools and so on. But this is not a serious prospect and diversity through specialist schools is not a strategy but an abdication. In its Green Paper of 2001 New Labour declared that it would create 1,000 specialist schools by the end of 2003 to lock pupils into specialisms such as engineering, science and business. If only some schools are to be specialist then a two-tier system will be created and, of course, some areas will have the full range of specialisms, and others will not. In education there was a launch of free-market policies in the summer of 2002. If taken to their logical conclusion they would phase out existing arrangements on pay and conditions. In sum the government has decided that schools may be given the right to abolish teachers' pay and conditions, that teachers should not proceed up the incremental scale but will be appraised each year and schools are to be given the right to start up their own businesses.

New Labour's implication that sustainable growth could reconcile business with the environment does not look convincing. As to the combination of workers rights and business freedom, this means more part-time working, more short-term contracts, more opportunities for private contractors to provide public services and the removal of barriers all now normal in the UK. Economic growth won out and jobs and prosperity were the priorities. Very little support was offered to substitute non-

fossil fuels and the promise to finance research on renewable turned out to turn on a £50 million grant from the lottery. In the same way petrol has been taxed (until the protests) but the parallel policy of improving public transport that would move traffic off the roads has not been put in place.

New Labour has backed off using the tax-benefit system and disparaged redistribution for fear of offending "middle England". Blair's embrace of meritocracy is not a Social Democratic principle. Meritocracy removes the barriers to progress for the minority but it was not Social Democracy's ambition to create escape routes but to change society to reduce the deprivation from which people had to escape [20]. New Labour has no appetite for saying that increasing inequality in income is in itself a bad thing [21]. There have even been suggestions that the income gap does not matter as such – what matters is the absolute level of income – as long as the poor are getting better off it does not matter that the gap is widening.

Blair has not changed the depiction of taxation as a burden and has not challenged the "them and us" division nor has any attempt been made by New Labour to build support for tax-benefit policies and an inclusive society. In 1999 Blair declared "the end of the something-for-nothing welfare state" with the announcement of compulsory work focused interviews for most benefit claimants [22]. In this view social justice means that individuals must be responsible for their own development and that self-development is envisaged in labour market terms. Here the "Third Way" put heavy emphasis on the "responsibility" of benefit claimants and an extension of means-testing while work, education and training were offered. As Gordon Brown said, productive potential must be maximised, and thus the economy takes priority over culture, politics, environment or social interaction [23].

At the same time as the rhetorical stress on enterprise and initiative something has been done for the less well off by stealth. There has been a direction of resources to those at the bottom and a rise in support for children under 11 in out-of-work families. Some low income families saw their incomes jump by more than a quarter in Blair's first term but this will not swing the pendulum back and even the hope to halve child poverty by 2010 would not take it back to 1979 levels [24]. Although post-tax income inequality started to rise again in 2000 and the high level of poverty in the UK has hardly been touched the budget of 2002 meant that for the first time since 1997 the top tenth will be worse off. (In 1979 8% of adults were in poverty, in 1994-5 24% and in 1988-9 25%) These are progressive changes from which the poorest 40% will gain. "Redistribution", though, is only done to pull the very poorest over the poverty threshold.

Another test case is the "right to buy" programme afforded to tenants of public housing – in effect the subsidised sale of council houses. This policy was introduced in 1979 as the flagship of Thatcherism but there is no reason, either in economics or equity, why councils should sell off their assets at low prices. But there was no policy to replace the lost social housing and as a result there is now a shortage of affordable housing (acute for key workers in places like London) and the end for council housing is at hand. Collective provision was downgraded by the 1979 government as they promoted the culture of ownership. New Labour has accepted this, repudiating the amendment of the policy, in terms of the Thatcherite "opportunity agenda". All the

same the housing crisis cannot be resolved if houses are sold off for an average price of £40,000 while they can only be replaced if they receive a subsidy of £65,000 [25]. In 2001 53,000 council houses were sold and only 18,000 were built and some 80,000 families are in bed and breakfast accommodation. Under this policy society pays for a few of its members to make capital gains and individuals increase their well being at the expense of the community.

Labour may well come to regret promising not to raise the top rate of tax. Its argument against a 50% rate for those earning over £100,000 would net about £3.5billion per year. Raising the National Insurance ceiling to the rate at which people start paying the top rate would hit those earning over £25,000 and that is the group most assiduously wooed by New Labour recently. In the USA public spending is about 30% of national income and in the UK it is about 40% but in Europe it is mainly around 50%. It is not possible to provide European services with that tax rate nor could the current levels of service be maintained on an American tax rate (Giddens wants to see "European levels" of social expenditure) [26]. This is a problem that cannot be ducked as it has been. In 2001 Labour was never tested as to how European levels of expenditure could be achieved by economic growth and private sector involvement.

5. Arguing for Public Services

It might be added that the hybrid of public and private undermines the public service ethos and demoralises the public sector. A proliferation of quangos removing health, education (through foundation hospitals and city academies) and the like from the public sphere also reduces the civil society of active citizenship that New Labour wants to encourage. Turning people from citizens into consumers reduces – if it does not eliminate – people's capacity for involvement and the handing over of these to technocrats and private interests keeps out the public.

New Labour wants to promote an enterprise culture and it wants to audit and control. New Labour has contemplated supporting private medical care and pensions and has promoted meritocracy as well as social mobility [27]. Labour has largely neutralised the Conservative lead on law-and-order but this is by being tough on the criminals and increasing the size of the prison population. There has been prison privatisation and the reduction of the rights of defendants. On the other side of the equation there have been no initiatives aimed at reducing the causes of crime.

New Labour's "newspeak" is much derided because the address to the nation like the CEO delivering a report to shareholders does not convince and it lacks an overarching justification. Can you address people in that way and is there no difference between using public services and visiting the supermarket? Unless there is commitment to a service that is public and free to all, people will simply demand more. When there is no ideology there is no attachment to the public service ideal and asking people to judge public services on its targets is no substitute. In the Conservative years there was a relentless *Kulturkampf* against the culture of citizenship and the public realm and public functions of all kinds were forced into a market mould. Without a confident champion of the values of citizenship and equity the public services are at risk. At present there is nothing to prevent the undoing of what has been done by a Conservative Opposition determined (as it is) to cut public services. This, it has

been suggested, was the besetting sin of British Labour. Labour did not take the long view and try to transform the values by which people lived and instead took a top down approach working through the state machinery. Social Democracy had a rather shallow hold on British society and hence collapsed quickly when challenged by a neo-liberalism confidant about its moral force [28].

New Labour devoted its economic efforts to eliminating the connection in the voters' minds between incompetence and Labour governments and gave priority to stability [29]. But in the second term (promised as "radical") the mood has shifted thanks in part to Labour's efforts. Voters now realise that indirect taxes can rise and transport and health have displaced defence, housing and environment. (This should be natural Labour territory although not as Blair has used it in Labour's first term). There has been a change in Labour's politics and the agenda has moved on since 1997. In July 2002 the Chancellor announced the biggest sustained rise in government spending for 30 years, raising its level by £93 billion over three years [30]. Health and education will get 7% more per year after inflation at a point when the stock markets are having a breakdown and other economies are cutting back.

This is not a U-turn back to Old Labour. The streets of Whitehall are not paved with gold and Downing Street still winces at any attack on Labour's "tax-and-spend" partly because the speed with which fuel protests gathered in the autumn of 2000 shows that tax still motivates voters. Polls in 2001 showed that instead of hoping for more money in their pockets, voters are expecting Labour to deliver better services [31]. This is a change impelled by the problems of public transport, the quality of education and tackling crime and a response to Middle England's problems but it is a government still scared by tax as an issue. Contrary to mythology, cuts were taking place well before 1979 and in several departments – including education – spending was lower as a share of national income in 2001 than in 1997 when Labour came to power. These are not reckless sprees but ideology-free managerial targets carefully planned down to the last penny and they are "Third Way" monitored and controlled handouts [32]. In health the government is proposing a sharp-elbowed competitive system involving both public and private health systems making more use of the private sector than the Conservatives dared propose. As a quid pro quo to investment in the NHS there would be an end to the barriers to the use of the private sector. Downing Street's Delivery Unit will be watching the implementation of minister's budgets and there will be strings attached. They were presented, not in terms of justice or fulfilment but, for example, Education was important for productivity and in Blair's words: "Education will be our number one micro-economic policy" [33]. Yet critics say that if Mrs Thatcher shifted the public consensus (cutting top rates of tax by 38% in the first budget), that mood could be changed again.

For one theorist of the "Third Way" this is all too much. Giddens, in a new book, has urged Blair to back up [34]. Giddens has attacked the plans to raise tax to pay for public services and has argued that money comes in from high employment and faster growth rather than from higher taxes. One of the assumptions of the "Third Way" is that supply-side reforms will create jobs and that consequently that is where government action should be concentrated (education, education, education) to widen access and invest in "human capital" [35]. On the other hand demand management

belongs to the outmoded tool kit of the past [36]. Thus raising the marginal tax rates to 50% would "only" bring in £3bn and in any case the top 1% of earners contribute 20% of income tax. In this view equality of opportunity must be the priority and redistribution is not the object of policy but it is charged that the New Labour outlook lacks a concept of "distributive fairness" [37]. Thus most of New Labour's emphasis is on labour-market mobility and on supply-side measures along with increased incentives to work although some argue that widening "opportunities to work and learn" are the contemporary means to redistribute wealth and power [38]. This does not eradicate the particularly British problem of low-paid, flexible work, fragmented, casualised and uncertain that heightens inequality. It also ignores the European social policies intended to create a fairer society [39]. But the second term government has begun to contemplate new directions (as Railtrack going into receivership in 2002 showed).

6. British Politics and the "Third Way"

There is a space for the "Third Way" on the British political spectrum that does not have equivalents in the rest of Western Europe. This is partly historical and cultural and partly structural but in part it is also conjunctural and has its weaknesses even though, at present, Mr Blair carries all before him in the opinion polls and in real elections (as in Mrs Thatcher's day, these two don't always coincide) [40]. There are therefore difficulties in transferring the "Third Way" to other western parties as a solution to the current Social Democratic dilemma that are more than just the problems of personnel and of "British exceptionalism".

To start with the British party system is essentially bi-polar as between government and Opposition. At base there is in the first-past-the-post electoral system that puts a premium on two party competition but it also benefits parties with geographically concentrated votes, something that prevented Labour's annihilation in the 1970s and which has helped the nationalist parties in the "Celtic fringe". There are problems for parties with geographically dispersed votes like the Liberal Democrats who find it exceptionally difficult to break through. Where the Opposition is represented by an unelectable party, as the British Conservatives currently are, then there is a "dominant" party (to use Sartori's terminology) and Labour are in an almost hegemonic position. In the 1980s it was the Conservative Party that was given an extended lease on power by the problems of Labour and, from the Left, Blair's New Labour has from a mirror image much the same opportunity.

This therefore necessitates a brief examination of why the Conservative Party has become unable to work as an Opposition to New Labour. It has achieved the unmemorable oxymoron of being unpopular populists. Here tribute must be paid to the "Third Way" which, by moving on to Conservative territory and adopting much of "Thatcherite" rhetoric has effectively prevented a rehabilitation of their old message. In 2001 there was a swing to Labour amongst most middle class "AB" voters (but a swing away amongst C2DES). It is not possible for Conservative politicians to say that "they should have done it our way" and they face having to concentrate on details. Details are crucial in political/administrative life but they do not enable the Conservative Party to develop a bigger picture – or an alternative narrative – which

is in any way convincing. That was Mr Hague's problem. Despite considerable success at Prime Minister's Question Time in stripping the government's pretensions, no alternative of any coherence or credibility emerged. There have been numerous government failures, more than enough to disillusion Labour's supporters, but they are not connected. Although the Conservative Front Bench is now more-or-less cleared of Major's generation (a necessary pre-condition as nobody could argue, for example, that Railtrack was a good system) the pretence to greater administrative competence is not at the moment a winning formula. There has been no lack of possibilities (foot and mouth, petrol price protest, Wembley stadium) for an even moderately competent Opposition. Many errors originate in parts of the Conservative programme that Blair has cannibalised but the failure to even inconvenience ministers has made them irrelevant.

Conservatives thus face impossibly hard choices. One is the swing further leftward, animated by the former Portillo supporters, to a fiscally conservative but socially liberal stance. This counsel of despair might induce a split but it would ultimately redound to the Party's favour as the SDP did for Labour. From the Party's right, like the Thatcherite Centre for Policy Studies, (*Paralysis or Power)* comes the view that "Conservative values" should be emphasised and those who will follow will respond. This response will come in particular with the budget and comprehensive spending review of 2002 and will test New Labour's clear proposal of an active state funded by higher taxes. In this view the voters will have to be told "hard truths" as, for example, that they will have to pay more for health care and that there should be a low tax country (with public spending falling from 40% of GDP to 30% in two terms) with people themselves paying for schools and hospitals. Leaders since Major, by contrast, have tried to steer a course mainly by fretting about style and about presentation but not substance. Here things are problematic because the Conservatives have lost faith in their usual argument for lower taxes and minimal government and in consequence have nothing to say about Labour's spending plans other than that they would spend slightly less but do it better. If public appreciation of Blair's spending on public services falters then the fundamentalist Conservatives are waiting. New Labour, meanwhile, is able to say if you do not like our approach to the revival or public services then look at the alternative which is the scrapping of them and the institution of privatised services for the better-off and a residual cheap safety net for the poor. Needless to say this is repeated often.

Elsewhere the "Third Way" has been the beneficiary of a change in conditions although it did not create them. In Scotland and Wales the Nationalist Parties are capable of challenging in Labour's heartlands and of making inroads into Labour's core vote. However, the devolution of power to local legislatures in Cardiff and Edinburgh has stilled the call from the mountains. This is not a triumph for the "Third Way" as such. Tony Blair has not evinced much interest in devolution (as one of his rare gaffes in 1997 indicates) and inherited this policy from the late John Smith in a condition where it could not be much changed. (Though in Scotland, Wales and London Blair tried to override local preferences by putting his own lieutenants in charge). A Nationalist revival is possible but at the moment Labour leads a turbulent but solid life in the regions.

As to the Liberal Democrats they are torn between attacking Labour or the Tories although they have recently made clear their determination to attack the moribund Conservative Party as a priority. Under Kennedy they have, perhaps temporarily, lost momentum but they will be a difficult Party to defeat if it goes badly for the Blair/Brown strategy of diverting rivers of cash into the public services. Liberals have also been capable of undercutting Labour and where Labour councils fail (as in Hull) it is them – not the Tories – that pick up the winnings. This depends on the way the Conservative Party jumps because the emergence of the Liberal Democrats as the Opposition of the right is not impossible or alternatively the development of the (Ashdown) Party as the partner to Labour against a resurgent free market Conservatism is also not excluded.

In English political culture there are no parties of consequence to the left of Labour (no enemies to the left). Even the Communist Party survived as an electoral force only as long as it was associated with Labour. There are therefore no other homes for the disaffected Labour voters and it would need a seismic shift in political culture to see the extreme left do more than annoy Labour. (New Labour may be more worried by the extreme right). In that sense Blair's calculation that a move to the right would not be sanctioned was correct (though how many Social Democratic parties have that luxury?). But Labour voters in the heartlands, who expected changes in 1997 and who believe themselves betrayed, have moved into abstention. In 2001 Labour's heaviest fall in support occurred in its safest seats. Where Labour started with an over 30% majority in 1997, its vote fell on average by four points, twice the average [41]. In 1999 the Conservatives "won" the European elections (by 36% to 28% on a 29% turn-out and in 2001 Labour, in terms of votes cast, was the least popular government since 1924 supported by only one eligible voter in four. This was disguised at the general elections of 2001 because the fall in core Labour constituencies did not alter the massive labour majorities in these areas. At the same time there was also an abstention in Conservative areas and the Conservative leadership proved unable to work on this Labour weakness but it is an effect of the "Third Way's" rightward move.

There have also been threatening noises from the unions. This is crucial to Labour because, even now, the unions pay the bills and without union support the Party would be very soon bankrupt. (Thus the floating of the idea of state subsidies for parties). In its first term the government virtually froze public spending and partially privatised air traffic control and the underground and the unions showed considerable restraint although he snubbed them. Referring to the "scars on his back" and they were "wreckers" while Blair courted the CBI in an attempt to demonstrate that the unions' money did not buy them influence. (Though it was the TGWU that persuaded Blunkett to replace the asylum seekers voucher with cash payments). In keeping with the "Third Way" the more the demands of the unions were dismissed the greater the prospects of a Blairite hegemony. However, the union leadership who remembered the Conservative years (and hence initially favourable to New Labour) has begun to change. This was symbolised by the election of the left-winger Derek Simpson to lead the largest manufacturing union (Amicus) to replace the ultra-Blairite Sir Ken Jackson [42]. On the shop floor it will make it more difficult to make no strike agreements and to engineer PFIs but it will mean that the unions, under a new leadership of angry young men, will

not be the subservient allies of a government that seemed to cold shoulder them. It could also mean a change in donations and even affiliation and that would mean an ideological earthquake in New Labour. A formal divorce, much canvassed (partially out of frustration and some out of malice) would see the unions avoiding choices and content with making satisfying gestures.

7. Conclusion

In summary the "Third Way" is a tactical positioning that has political advantages in the situation as current in the United Kingdom. It is presented as a philosophy and one compatible with Labour "values" and that it is a modernisation of Social Democracy in a "global" environment where individualism is a priority and where the Old Labour levers of state intervention no longer work. It has been sold on this premise and admired by outsiders because, at a time when Social Democracy is conspicuously in crisis, it is a message of hope. Whether it is transferable must be a question for Second International leaders but its efficacy in its own terms in the UK must wait on the delivery of the services and social exclusion.

In intellectual terms the "Third Way" has more in common with the New Liberalism developed by Hobhouse, Hobson and others of the Belle époque Liberal Party than it cares to admit. Much of the foundations of the UK welfare state, it has to be remembered, were built by the Liberal Party and its theorists were New Liberal thinkers and not Labour or socialists. Thus the two principal theorists, Keynes and Beveridge, were pure products of the New Liberalism and not socialists (a term they would have rejected). This may appear to be a historical digression (and it is English "exceptionalism" once again) but the New Liberal outlook pervades the UK welfare state. New Liberalism was – is – a substantial political theory very close to Social Democracy but not the same [43].

Of course, New Liberalism was not itself free from internal wrangles and contradictions but the basis for much of New Labour had been laid in the old Liberal Party. New Liberalism laid the basis for Keynesian fiscal demand management, employment policy, public ownership and Beveridge's social security and they were infused with a socialised understanding of the individual, a positive conception of liberty and a more nuanced market conception of the economy. New Liberals did not embrace the unfettered free-market, about which they were sceptical, and had a developed idea of where they ought to operate and how they ought to be regulated. State regulation would have to be imposed in employment law, education, health, housing, social policy and so on. There were plans to make the labour market work more effectively and the autonomous moral individual was emphasised but the state was still confined to a limited and enabling role. Self-help in institutions like the Lloyd-George social insurance were strongly individualistic and intended not to hand out benefits but to receive contributions that would enhance their contributions to the formal economy. Overall the project was to reconcile social justice with the market and to put the policy emphasis on opportunities and production and to shift it away from distribution.

New Labour shares with the New Liberals the judgemental approach and the concern with the bonding of rights to duties and the reciprocal nature of state benefits

(something Old Labour neglected). New Liberalism was sure that participation in the world of work gave individuals dignity and independence but they were also worried that excessive benefits (or just reasonable ones) might lead to a degree of backsliding. Ordinary “worthy” workers would, it was thought, resent this as they would be paying for others and would turn against the schemes. Beveridge was determined to fight against “want, unemployment and idleness” and in this view assistance is owed only if character is enhanced. In this welfare to work makes sense. New Liberalism identified a residuum of “moral weaklings” who were incapable of meeting obligations and were therefore the subjects of special measure. Like New Labour, segregation and stigmatising were to be used to prevent but they also believed that society had a role and a “surplus” to distribute to the less well off.

Notes

[1] T. Blair, *The Third Way,* Fabian Society, 1998.

[2] For example P. Toynbee and D. Walker, *Did Things Get better?*, London, Penguin, 2001 ; S. Ludlam and M. J. Smith (ed.), *New Labour in Government*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 2001 ; D. Coates and P. Lawler (ed.), *New Labour in Power*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2000.

[3] *Sunday Times*, 10 June 2001.

[4] On “stakeholding” see Blair’s *New Britain : My Vision of a Young Country*, London, Fourth Estate, 1996 and D. Marquand’s comments, see *Guardian,* 20 May 1998.

[5] See S. Hale, “Professor Macmurray and Mr Blair”, *Political Quarterly*, 2002, 73/ 2.

[6] D. Marquand *in* the *New Statesman*, 14 May 2001.

[7] A. Giddens, *The Third Way : The Renewal of Social Democracy*, Cambridge, Polity, 1998 – this version includes “Social Democracy” in its subtitle.

[8] J. Faux, “Lost on the Third Way”, *Dissent*, 1999, 46/2, p. 67-76.

[9] *New Statesman,* 25 February 2002.

[10] *Prospect*, February 2001.

[11] C.A.R. Crosland's main work is *The Future of Socialism*, London, Cape, 1956. The point is made by Roy Hattersley in the *Guardian* 23 January 2002.

[12] *Prospect* article, March 2001.

[13] A. GIDDENS, *op. cit.*, p. 65. Giddens italicises this and suggests it as the motto for "Third Way" politics.

[14] A. Giddens in the *Guardian,* 7 January 2002.

[15] A declaration by Tony Blair, while in Opposition, in the House of Commons on 28 November 1995 (reported in the *Guardian,* 2 October 2002).

[16] M. CRAWFORD, "Partnership?", London, LSE, 2001.

[17] *Guardian*, 27 September 2002.

[18] *Independent*, 17 May 2001.

[19] *Scotsman*, 9 June 2001.

[20] *Observer*, 24 June 2001.

[21] Tony Blair's remark during the general elections of 2001 reported in the *Guardian,* 2 June 2001.

[22] *Guardian*, 2 May 2001.

[23] Gordon Brown's articles in the *Guardian* on 27 August 1997 and 27 November 1997.

[24] *Observer*, 3 June 2001.

[25] *Guardian*, 2 August 2002.

[26] A. GIDDENS, *The Third Way…, op. cit.*

[27] *Guardian*, 17 June 2002.

[28] Raymond PLANT, "Social Democracy", *in* D. MARQUAND and A. SELDON, *Ideas that Shaped Post-War Britain*, London, Harper, 1996.

[29] G. RADICE and A. POLLARD, *Any Southern Comfort?*, Fabian Pamphlet, 1994, n° 568.

[30] *Sunday Times*, 21 July 2002.

[31] *Independent,* 5 May 2001.

[32] *Guardian*, 17 July 2002.

[33] *Sunday Times*, 20 May 2001.

[34] A. GIDDENS, *Where Now For New Labour?*, London, Polity, 2002.

[35] T. BLAIR, *The Third Way: New Politics for the New Century*, Fabian Society Pamphlet, 1998, n° 588.

[36] See F. VANDENBROUCKE, *Globalisation, Inequality and Social Democracy*, London, Institute for Public Policy Research, 1998.

[37] *Ibid.*, p. 68.

[38] G. MULGAN, "Whinge and a Prayer", *in* M. JACQUES (ed.), *Marxism Today* (Special Issue), 1998.

[39] W. HUTTON, *The State We're In*, London, Cape, 1996.

[40] See Chapter 1 of R. SKIDELSKI, *Thatcherism*, Chatto, 1998.

[41] *Scotsman*, 9 June 2001.

[42] *New Statesman*, 29 July 2002.

[43] This point, which is far from original, comes originally from Alan RYAN, "Britain: Recycling the Third Way", *Dissent*, 1999, 46/2 but see also P. CLARKE, *Liberals and Social Democrats*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1978, M FREEDEN, *The New Liberalism*, Oxford, 1978 and A. VINCENT, "New Ideologies for Old", *Political Quarterly*, 1998, 69/2.

On the Verge of a Fresh Start
The Great Ideological and Programmatic Change in Contemporary Social Democracy [1]

Gerassimos Moschonas

> "For those who are interested in the issue of the survival of organisations well beyond their original cause, the observation of political life (…) is a permanent source of marvel".
>
> Pierre Martin [2]

Even the most superficial study shows that Social Democratic parties have changed. They have been exploring new ideological and electoral territories, "trying out" new organisational forms and disciplines and proposing and implementing totally new governmental solutions. Social Democracy has been going through a change of era, even if the foundations and benchmarks with which the Social Democratic group was historically constructed have not been fully weakened nor are they fully exhausted.

The problem of the identity of this political force, issue which judging by history, has followed Social Democracy like a shadow, was at the heart of the debates on Social Democratic change. Well, as with any change, in every undertaking involving adaptation and redefinition, in every reassessment, the implicit yet vital question asked was the following: is there *coherence* between the new ideological-programmatic profile and the historically defined identity of the actor that preceded the transformation. Thus established, the problem was basically that of "safeguarding" the identity in the new historical phase [3]. The ideological-programmatic change and the link with the past – or better yet: with the different Social Democratic pasts – is the subject of the analysis that is about to follow.

The thesis is developed around two points:

a) The ideological and programmatic change has been a major change that – for the most part – has been outside of Social Democratic tradition.
b) This change, which has been consistent with all (organisational, sociological, cultural) transformations of the Social Democratic party spectrum, is part of a non-transient identity, an identity in the process of being consolidated.

1. Without a Central *Normative* Idea: Ideological and Programmatic Change

The new ideological and programmatic profile of modern day Social Democracy has emerged from a combination of *three* thematic groupings. The first, descendent par excellence of Social Democratic tradition is directed towards growth and traditional values of the left that include equality, the Welfare State and employment. The second set of themes can be tied in with the neo-liberal agenda: privatisations, market priority, price stability, public sector reform, hard-line and occasional "sacrificial" views, stabilised or reduced fiscal "pressure", increased labour flexibility. Finally, the third thematic configuration has been largely inspired by cultural or post-materialist liberalism (to cite the term used by Ronald Inglehart). Especially the Scandinavian, Dutch and German Social Democratic parties and to a lesser degree, the Austrian party, have made major efforts to overhaul programmes and integrate new political themes (environmental in particular). In addition, in certain cases, a fourth theme focussed on a *moderate* emphasis of the traditional conservative theme of "law and order" (notably: crime-fighting measures and measures for more effectively controlling immigration) are included in new Social Democrats' programme plan of action of the new Social Democrats. Nonetheless, this fourth thematic grouping has not been worked out in as much detail as the others and does not appear to have "autonomy" or hold any key importance in the totality of the plan, with the exception of British New Labour (where the "law and order" theme is integrated into the concept of "communautarism" and is important to the extent that the *communautarism's* theme is important [4]). Admittedly, it is possible to have within these three – or four – thematic structures, several combinations, several options, several symbolic paths-all different, depending on the country and the situation in each country. Nonetheless, generally speaking and despite significant national differences that have resulted in the fact there is not just a single "third way" but several [5], contemporary Social Democracy has shaped its ideological and programmatic profile around these three thematic groupings. This change has meant that all national parties currently operate around a *similar ideological core* – despite major but not fundamental differences [6]. It is the great convergence within the European Socialist and Social Democratic family.

This "threefold" series of choices and priorities has given rise to an all-encompassing programmatic discourse, a kind of catch-all, simultaneously produced from several co-existing, distinctive and very nearly contradictory moulds. The new Social Democracy is *fairly neo-liberal, fairly non-liberal, fairly Green and post-materialist and sometimes fairly law-and-order.* Admittedly even if the semantics of the discourse is overwhelmingly catch-all, (more catch-all than ever), *a centre of gravity is certainly present.* Despite a clearly composite format, the Social Democratic rhetoric gave and continues to give greater priority to leftist themes and values. Social Democrats have not overlooked the danger of distancing themselves too much from their social and ideological roots. This has led to their insistence (which is not just rhetorical) on traditional and less traditional leftist themes. For example, and it was indeed more than just suggestive, "social issues" were at the centre of the latest European election campaigns (fighting unemployment, maintaining social protection, even with reforms, reduction of working hours (for some parties), aid for the underprivileged, etc.) [7]. The themes of "*equality*", "*solidarity*", "*cohesion*", and

the *fight against exclusion,* even in a redefined form compared with the past, are the heritage, loyalty and foundation points of the Left. They continued to be the main dividing line between the latter and the right. In reality, the new Social Democratic elite only partially abandoned the "traditional" values and cultural codes of the post-World War II era. The persistence with leftist themes was not a secondary element of Social Democratic programmatic identity. Quite the opposite, it has been a *constituent element* of this identity.

At the heart of this complex ideological and programmatic plan, the neo-liberal choice is no longer accepted as an imposition, which was the case during the eighties, and has, since the second half of the nineties, become a *natural and central* element of the contemporary Social Democratic world. Nonetheless it did not become a dominant element. On the other hand, in the semantics of action (*versus* the semantics of discourse) the neo-liberal inspired selection (competitiveness, price stability, balanced budget, lower social expenditure, privatisation or merchandisation of a wide range of activities, increased labour flexibility, etc.) ended up being a major factor and very noticeably affected Socialist governmental practices. At government level, liberal economic logic dominated and Neo-Keynesian and environmentalist counterparts were reduced to the strict minimum. Thus exercising power became a key factor in identity transformation.

In light of the *centrality* of the neo-liberal choice (in particular in Socialist governmental practices), one cannot regard this new ideological-programmatic "solution" as just a *correction* in the pragmatic, moderate, catch-all sense of the standard Social Democratic profile (which was already "pragmatic, moderate and catch-all"). Such an interpretation is not enough. It is not about either simple updating and emphasis of ideological-programmatic features already known in the past or about a simple "shift of the political centre of gravity" to a more centrist position [8]. The revision trend has been more decisive, there is a more radical character: Social Democracy has been modernised "by going outside its own tradition and re-examining its own basic values" [9].

In fact, the new Social Democratic profile no longer embodies the principle of redistribution and solidarity, which gave this political force its basis and its influence during the first post-war era; likewise it no longer embodies a different approach; by way of example: the neo-liberal approach, which would have enabled Social Democracy to turn its back definitively on the practice – and policy – of solidarity. Social Democracy could not and did not want to abandon the leftist course and the values that went with it. So it found itself in an *ideological* and identity "interim". In this regard, the formula of former French Prime minister Lionel Jospin "yes to market economy, no to market society", formula taken up in the PES electoral manifesto on the occasion of the June 1999 European elections, perfectly sums up this ideological and identity "interim". The will to bring together two party lines, apparently opposites, the line of regulation *by* the market and the line of regulation *of* the market, was from then on the most taut and fragile tightrope – intellectually and politically – of the new Social Democratic programmatic mixture. Well of course, since there was no coherence, it was governmental practice in particular that ended up creating "coherence". A coherence that distinctly leaned towards neo-liberalism [10].

In view of this new direction, in view of this difficult game of accommodating nearly incompatible courses, contemporary Social Democracy found itself without a *main prescriptive plan* that could serve as implicit (or explicit) decision-making *guide* – and therefore, for cohesion – on the different social, political and institutional playing fields [11]. Its newly worked out programmatic details have been deprived of a "motivational ethical core" [12]. This has led to the lack of self-definition, to the deep-seated doubt regarding the ethical aim of contemporary socialist action. This very mixed profile did not succeed in providing itself with powerful symbolic resources or indicating a genuine "reformist imagination" [13]; while present day Social Democracy has no main prescriptive plan, it also has no *major political themes* in its electoral proposals that are likely to attract strong public attention and shape the vote. It lacks a powerful political message with its political (and electoral) agenda not being presented as a powerful dividing line between parties. The analysis of the Scandinavian case by David Arter is applicable to a wider extent: "[…] if the Swedish party dropped the "big idea" early, it has had over the years a number of "big issues" around which to mobilize a wider base of support. […] Today, however, the Scandinavian, and in particular the Swedish Social Democrats' policy agendas, appear bereft of big issues" [14]. In the majority of cases, new Social Democratic discourse has thus become *minimalist*: extremely catch-all, extremely flexible, extremely "middle-of-the road". So Social Democracy has been shaped, to use the expression of Donald Sassoon, like a "modest" force in terms of ideology and program [15]. In a sense, the newly worked out Social Democratic programmatic plans crown the triumph of "pragmatism". However pragmatism is not and has never been a structured ideology with an established stable content. The "climate" of the Social Democratic transition to pragmatism ("climate" marked by the political and intellectual hegemony of neo-liberal ideas) strongly influenced the ideological contents of the latter.

In short, confronted with double ideological competition from neo-liberalism and New Politics, Social Democrats made a double "retreat": they gradually became more "neo-liberal" and more New Left at the same time. The Social Democratic slide towards moderate neo-liberal discourse, combined with a more traditional Social Democratic social discourse (also moderate) and post-materialist sensitivity (moderately confirmed) created a rather "socio-liberal" programmatic profile. A profile that Magnus Ryner describes as "Social Democratic neo-liberalism" [16]. Well, in the ever difficult and uncertain balance between ideological continuity and split, it was the split that won over continuity. Split or semi-split on three positions.

2. On the Verge of an Identity Split

A. The Weakened Active State

By the development – for the first time so openly and so systematically – of markets and the depreciation of the economically active State, Social Democrats directly called into question what they had held dearest and most persistently in their ideological tradition: the role of the State as an apparatus for regulation, production and social well being. The matter of the State, whether in the shape of a revolutionary State (prior to the 1910s) or in the form of State as re-distributor of wealth has always been *at the core* of Social Democracy identity building. In all past revisions, despite

major ideological abandonment, even despite the paralysed circumstances of the '20s (when Social Democrats had difficulty in asserting their specificity and remained prisoners of the liberal orthodoxy of the era), Social Democracy did not call into question either ideologically (before WW I) or practically (1930s and post war period) the role of State intervention – and of a certain planning. In the nineteen thirties in particular, the vital aspect of Social Democratic program transformation was in the economic expansion of the State (with regard to *deficit spending,* employment, Welfare, etc.) and challenging automatic market triggers. "The specificity of Social Democratic compromises sought or implemented as of the 1929 crisis was (…) in the search for a post-liberal solution", wrote M. Telò [17]. After the Second World War, even if the Social Democrats did progressively abandon the anti-capitalist *credo* (especially since the second half of the fifties), even if the State was considered less and less as a tool of transition to socialism, even if private initiative was more and more valued (notably in the context of a mixed economy), the active State nonetheless remained central in the strategy – and culture – of Social Democrats. In addition, the establishment (once they were in government) of a relatively powerful public apparatus for *regulation* (administration), *production* (public service sector) and *redistribution protection* (Welfare State) were part of "the Social Democratic idea" [18]. The post-war bi- and tripartite compromise, which was at the foundation of the edification of the modern Welfare State, of the mixed economy and of a better taking into account of lower classes' interests, was an agreement of a *post-liberal* nature – and partly anti-liberal – which challenged the supremacy of the markets.

Admittedly, nowadays the development of State action continues to be a vital part of Social Democratic programmatic documents that contain a large number of commitments in favour of State intervention in the economy [19]. However, the substance and objectives of this action have greatly changed.

The role of the State in steering the economy has not just been reduced to a minimum but it has been completed by a conscious strategy of *deregulation interventionism* aimed at market development. The use of the plan, in most cases already hardly implemented, has been completely abandoned. The policy of public ownership of hundreds of large companies has been replaced by a policy of conventional or partial privatisations. The strategy of moderate redistribution of wealth in favour of the working classes within the scope of a major social compromise has been virtually abandoned. On the other hand, the State strengthened its role in the realm of the fight against social exclusion. In these Social Democratic programmes, but also in the action of left-wing governments, the State has appeared to reaffirm or even strengthen its presence – basically: the final aid mechanisms – in the social sphere to counteract the extreme effects of poverty and the tremendous increase in insecurity (at least in some countries).

On the whole, by taking Social Democrats at their word, it would be wrong to think that their approach is simply pragmatic, based on the principle of *what works matters*, as the British put it. For example, with regard to the relationship between public and private sectors or public-private partnerships, the rule of conduct has been ideological rather than pragmatic: the private sector is preferred quasi systematically (and in all countries) by the action of Social Democratic governments at the expense

of the public sector [20]. In short, by *conscious and explicit* adherence to a mode of regulation moderately but clearly neo-liberal, Social Democracy has made the decisive ideological leap: it has indeed ended by accepting – certainly in practice, partially, in terms of rhetoric – that State intervention as well as certain aspects of the Welfare state, do not threaten freedom and democracy, as asserted by the most extreme supporters of liberalism, but they do threaten economic growth and competitiveness. The change in policy, without being complete, is fundamental. Social Democracy has always tried to combine, within the same approach, the famous "invisible hand" of liberalism with the "visible hand" of the State. But the balance between the two has shifted. Contemporary Social Democracy has – to a large extent – subordinated the State and society to market discipline [21].

B. The Neglected Working Classes

The new Social Democratic ideological and programmatic position, *an updated, revised* and more in-depth formula of the *semi catch-all* strategy of the fifties and sixties, represented the most historically pronounced societal opening and the one most emphatically made towards middle classes and the corporate world – and culture [22]. At the same time, at rhetorical level it has shown an emphasis of the already long established trend of socialist discourse addressing either all voters or segments of voters on the basis of *more or less conventional* semantics. The accent – from then on – has been clearly placed on the class agreement and not on class conflicts. This explains the technocratic, "responsible" and "modernist" nature of the current discourse. It also explains the semantic shift with regard to group orientation of the discourse, *social classes* and *quasi-classes* (capital, the rich, working class, upper, middle class) to *individuals* (citizen, voter), to *non-classes* (families, tax payers, pensioners, women, young people, etc.) or to the *nation* as a whole (the population, the French, the Belgians, etc.). Apparently, the arithmetic and politico-cultural weakness of the "worker" socio-professional category has led Social Democracy not to consider the working class as "linchpin" and "major unifier" [23] in its political strategy. So today's Socialist/Social Democratic parties associate and aim at associating the most daring "ideological depolarisation" to the most advanced merged semantics of their history (without that meaning as such that they are opting in favour of "pure" merged strategies). And yet, historically, the allocation of a real and/or symbolic *centrality* (different according to the eras), to the promotion of *workers' interests* has been virtually continuous within Social Democratic tradition. This permanent feature has taken on very different forms depending on the period or the country within the scope of the same period. It took on the form of promoting *democratic rights of* citizen-workers, rights that were well short of the redistribution goal (this concerns Social Democracy at the end of the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth). It has taken on the form of the promotion of a kind of *radical equality,* which went well beyond the "modest" objective of redistribution and had as condition of achievement the overthrow of capitalism (this involved the historical Social Democratic parties with an anti-capitalist and revolutionary tradition); likewise it took on the form of a promotion of *workers' interests*, promotion tied to the necessity of improving the difficult everyday life of the "little man" (this involved both the

explicitly and openly anti-capitalist parties as well as more moderate parties; in addition, it took the form of the promotion of redistribution *strictly speaking* (this included all parties of the period following the Second World War and to a certain extent, the parties of the interwar period).

Furthermore, what is much more important, the macroeconomic and social management of present-day Socialist governments has proven their incapability to implement "positive discrimination" [24] policies to the benefit of workers and disadvantaged strata of the population, despite certain worthy but insufficient efforts.

And yet, in the light of the Social Democratic system of *normative beliefs* (and therefore following and applying a Social Democratic calculation to judge Social Democratic policy) the Social Democratic performance of the past twenty-five years is disappointing. Under this system of *normative beliefs,* priority to employment, the halt to the current trend towards redistribution of wealth in favour of the rich, the defence of the Welfare State and intervention of new social institutions to combat new areas of poverty and insecurity should have been the first task of the Left in government. However, performances in this realm have been insufficient [25]. The current Social Democracy, this modernised Social Democracy appears to be incapable of providing an effective response to an extremely vital question of advanced modernity: the social question.

By presenting itself for the first time so clearly, so openly and so offensively as an *inclusive* political force, contemporary Social Democracy has achieved more than a stylistic innovation and more than a overhaul and update of its turn of the century worker-working class image, or of its semi catch-all/semi-worker image of the first post-war period. By doing away with the language of class, by its governmental incapability to promote the interests of workers' and working classes' world, the "new" Social Democracy promotes, accelerates and goes in-depth into – but undoubtedly does not initiate – a political process (simultaneously sociological and cultural) which, during the last twenty-five years of the twentieth century, gradually challenged the *autonomous* political representation of the working class and working class strata. Quite naturally, the working class strata abandoned – certainly in part – Social Democracy and the latter lost touch with the working class areas and environments. In this light, the crisis experienced in the link between Social Democracy and subaltern classes was the most serious historic consequence of the new Social Democratic transformation. With the new Social Democracy, with its discourse and its governmental practices, the "politicisation project", which stemmed from working class culture, was on the way out – really and rhetorically. And this was a break in the long tradition of this old political family.

C. Pre-eminence of Politics Abandoned

By accepting globalisation and Europeanisation as constraints, the Social Democratic Left abandoned the policies of redistribution and the moderate version of "politics against markets" that every Social Democratic tradition had embodied, not always successfully, since the thirties at least. In fact, in the difficult economic circumstances of the thirties, the Social Democrats gradually confirmed, timidly but firmly, the *supremacy* of politics vis-à-vis economic forces, thus freeing itself

from the "passive" tradition of both orthodox Marxism as well as the laissez-faire of classic liberalism [26]. Indeed, at the turn of the century, well before the thirties, one of the issues implicitly at stake in the *revisionist debate*, which opposed Kautsky and Bernstein, was precisely this question of the pre-eminence of politics. The entire approach of Eduard Bernstein highlighted (not always explicitly, consciously or systematically) the *importance of politics* in a *reformist* context, trying to establish a kind of *leftist realism* opposite the "utopia" and "dogmatism" represented by Marxism codified in an ethico-politico doctrine dominant within the German Social Democracy [27]. This "unrefined" Marxism – not very developed but popular – was marked intellectually on the one hand by the pre-eminence of the revolution and on the other (and simultaneously) by the pre-eminence granted to logic and economic forces [28]. And yet, the entire Social Democratic approach of the interwar period was based on the pre-eminence of politics, on the necessity of turning to *political* agents (notably the State but also trade unions or action of the masses) in order to control economic forces and limit the market perimeter. Of course the pre-eminence accorded to political agents was integrated into a *reformist* perspective, into a perspective that virtually did not endanger the prerogatives of capital in the capitalist society as a whole. This pre-eminence of politics, reconfirmed during the entire post-war era, was a key aspect of Social Democratic ideological and programmatic identity. Yet nowadays, this pre-eminence of politics has been challenged in part by the Social Democratic economic choices and by the quasi "passive" acceptance of neo-liberal globalisation.

3. Revision outside of Tradition

Quite ironically, the new revision (based on the market, the gradual privatisation of State property, reduction of government presence) compared to the most conventional and well known of revisions, that of Bernstein (advocating the gradual socialisation of the means of production) enables to understand the gap that spectacularly separates today's approach with revisions of bygone days [29]. Moreover, a large number amongst the most important reforms proposed or implemented by contemporary Social Democracy (note: *not all of them)* have clearly been assimilated and not always with a "bad conscious" into the *opponents*' *reformist project* (privatisations, liberalisation of markets, independence of Central Banks, labour market flexibility, etc.), which was not at all the case with Bernsteinian reformism.

The ideological evolution of Social Democracy thus confirmed the analysis of Albert Hirschman. Oddly, according to Albert Hirschman, it was the *third* great "reactionary" movement, the one that criticised the Welfare State and social capitalism (the first was the one that fiercely opposed the French Revolution, the second was the one that opposed universal suffrage and political equality) that was the "least consciously "committed" movement, the least determined to defeat the dominant trends of its time, that was (…) the one that did the most damage" [30]. So this "third great reactionary movement" to stick with Hirschman's terminology, was consolidated in Europe thanks to the decisive contribution of Social Democratic governments.

Thus the new Social Democratic revision contributed decisively to drastically reducing the ideological distance between Socialists and centre-right forces. It is because of this reduction that a "major ideological and identity mix up", according to Marc Lazar, marks present-day Social Democratic culture. It is also the reason why the Social Democratic parties, "understood not as strict agents of political competition but as producers of sense" are in crisis [31].

Even if in past compromises, the safeguarding-better yet: *a certain safeguarding*, of Social Democratic identity could be achieved, despite the major identity-related costs, it is not so much the case today. It is in this sense that the recent ideological-programmatic transformation was a *major historical change*. It questioned the basic core, unchanging, central and *never challenged* during the entire Social Democratic course: the allocation of a major role to the State, the maintenance and affirmation of a privileged representational tie between Social Democracy and working class strata. The twofold "core" has been part of the political heritage both, to use the terminology of Seraphim Seferiades, of the "rational-revolutionary" [32] model of continental Social Democracy of the period prior to World War I (especially before 1910) and of the "rational-reformist" model of later periods. The State and promotion, a specific promotion, of the interests of underprivileged strata are the two points of contact – and continuity – between the different phases of Social Democratic history. In addition, the recent ideological transformation also questioned the *pre-eminence* of politics on the basis which a bit later, interwar and post-war Social Democracy was gradually developed on, a Social Democracy in the *usual* sense of the term. Well Social Democracy had never gone this far. It did in fact involve an *extraordinary* evolution (in the etymological sense of the word) that probably touched the *last lingering root*, the last distinctive foundation of the Social Democratic structure, at least such as we knew it during three "half-centuries". Its own neo-liberal revision is a "*borderline-revision*", that considerably goes beyond *everything* that was called "Social Democrat" until the seventies. As a result, the recent ideological and programmatic change was a major transformation. The Social Democratic past does not underpin the present, which means that the last revision was – to a large extent – a revision outside Social Democratic tradition.

Certainly under a macro-historic angle, although the Social Democratic change was substantial, it did not create however a new structure of politico-social polarities as it was the case during the liberal "left" passage to socialist-working class left [33]. Contemporary Socialists did not propose a *re-founding* of democratic working and of labour-capital compromise, nor a *new* "account of the origins" to borrow a phrase from François Furet. Rather, they "proposed" by their applied policies, a major *re-arrangement* of the terms of this compromise to the benefit of capital and middle classes. Social Democracy has changed, it has even changed profoundly, but this change is not comparable to the one in the nineteenth century: the last revision does not erase and does not aim to erase the left-right divide. Likewise, this is why all the work of ideological and theoretical innovation carried out up to today by what one calls the "new Social Democracy", as iconoclastic as it may be, only partially challenges the priority of the theme of equality. Furthermore, there are facets of contemporary Social Democracy (plan for social measures, more consultative approach of economic

policy, a certain taking into account of trade union interests and in other realms, a more environmentally and ecologically friendly policy, more welcoming to cultural liberalism) which are more than a simple "leftist tint". The new Social Democracy is not the other face of the right wing, a right that does not dare to say its name. It is a left incapable of making a distinctive leftist mark *other than in a very anaemic form* – on the social and political system.

4. Coherent Change in the Process of Consolidation

How does the ideological and programmatic change blend into the whole contemporary Social Democracy plan? This change fits functionally and coherently into the entire face of Social Democracy. The identity of present-day Social Democracy includes three consistent facets:

a) coherence between its opposition discourse (finally become "moderate" compared with the traditional left-wing discourse of bygone days) and its governmental practice (likewise and traditionally moderate);
b) coherence between its ideological-programmatic profile that is resolutely catch-all (the most catch-all format in the entire history of Social Democracy) and the coalescent structure of its voters (also by far the most coalescent in the entire history of Social Democracy)[34]. The merging semantics, historically original, thus found real support – not rhetorical – in the coalescent make-up, *likewise a historical first*, of Social Democratic voters;
c) finally, coherence between the resolutely catch-all programmatic-ideological profile and the organisational structure that functions on the absence of strong attachments (sociological, cultural or organisational). The strengthening of leadership, the increased importance of experts in the formulation of the Social Democratic discourse, the weakening of militant density, the dropping of ties with the trade unions, *all go together* with the modesty of the programme that characterises all rhetoric as catch-all. It thus establishes balance and harmony, *coherence* between the absence of strong commitments (ideological or programmatic) and *the absence of strong attachments* (sociological, cultural or organisational).

These three coherence factors have made a certain sociological re-stabilising – and homogenisation – between the different spectra (organisation spectrum, voter spectrum, associative spectrum) of the Social Democratic structure. At this stage and in the near future (for the medium term as one says), Social Democracy had found a certain equilibrium; it is coherent in its social-liberal moderation, it has found a balance between its ideological-programmatic profile and the social profile of its organisation and electorate; it is homogenous within its dynamic sociological heterogeneity. There is a kind of coherence between men and women who *are* the new Social Democracy and the ideas that *make up* the new Social Democracy. So if one replaces the ideological and programmatic identity in this perspective, a hypothesis appears by itself: in all probability, the new Social Democratic identity, and since it is supported by this "threefold" coherence, is not incidental and short-lived.

Moreover, this identity, which has been worked out patiently, includes a certain historicity because it repeats, clarifies, stresses and – especially – *reformulates* the

knowledge of earlier times. The Social Democratic overhaul was a slow, pragmatic process. It came before the "new" Social Democracy à la Blair, Schröder or Simitis. In fact a large number of the highly praised reforms and revisions of the new Social Democracy, from the management skills or the practical adherence to the anti-interventionist opinion through to the overtures to the middle classes, were for a large part started or acquired before the "new" Social Democrats or supporters of the Third Way came into power inside the Socialist parties.

This is what gave political depth and stability to the new profile. Contemporary Social Democracy *is not a force* "*in transition*". And it seems to have found a certain "inertia" after the fervour and agility of the "great transformation" [35]. Therefore it would be very improbable to see the Socialist parties get involved again in an adventure of re-revision and re-definition of their political and programmatic identity. As Knut Roder rightly states, "the role of slowly changing paradigms within the party institutions clearly rules out another painful period of reorientation and reinvention, at least for the time being" [36]. The phase of ideological agility has passed; it is an "ordinary" era that has already begun. An ordinary period that will be accompanied by "ordinary" election results. The recent elections in Western Europe only confirmed that contemporary Social Democracy is an important force in elections but is fragile, with a *weak* ideological identity, out of inspiration and ideas and with a *minimalist* project. The trivialisation of Social Democratic election results is directly linked to the "trivialisation" of its ideological and programmatic identity.

Notes

[1] The text that follows includes in part, in a reworked form, the analysis developed in G. Moschonas, *In the Name of Social Democracy, The Great Transformation: 1945 to the Present,* London, Verso, 2002, chapters 9 and 17.

[2] P. Martin, *Comprendre les évolutions électorales. La théorie des réalignements revisitée*, Paris, Presses de Sciences Po, 2000, p. 117.

[3] See: M. Telò, *Le New Deal européen: la pensée et la politique sociales-démocrates face à la crise des années trente*, Brussels, Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 1988, p. 42.

[4] On the "cultural conservatism" of the New Labour's discourse, see Ph. Marlière, *La troisième voie dans l'impasse*, Paris, Syllepse, p. 129-131.

[5] Among others: S. Driver and L. Martell, "Third Ways in Britain and Europe", *in* O. Schmidtke (ed.), *The Third Way Transformation of Social Democracy*, Hampshire, Ashgate, 2002, p. 75-104 and R. Cuperus, K. Duffek, J. Kandel (ed.), *Multiple Third Ways, European Social Democracy facing the Twin Revolution of Globalisation and the Knowledge Society*, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2001, especially W. Merkel's chapter, "The Third Ways of Social Democracy", p. 27-62.

[6] As a rough guide for Western Europe, see the contributions per country in *Parliamentary Affairs*, 56/2003. In Central and Eastern Europe, where the socio-economic split ended up increasing more and more as time went on (M. Novak), the Social Democratic parties are all supporters of a market economy. The influence of international financial organisations that often have a say in the policies conducted, the prospect of EU membership, as well as the vacuum created on the left by the collapse of Communism, made a decisive contribution to the neo-Liberalism in programme choices made by the parties concerned. Nevertheless, the political conditions in these countries remained very unstable and there was a high degree of political flexibility. Apropos these issues see: M. Novak, "Les systèmes de partis en République tchèque, en Pologne et en Hongrie", *in* J.-M. De Waele (ed.), *Partis politiques et démocratie en Europe centrale et orientale*, Brussels, Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 2002, p.109-111, and J.-M. De Waele, "Consolidation démocratique, partis et clivages en Europe centrale et orientale", *in* J.-M. De Waele (ed.), *op. cit*., especially p. 147-149.

[7] Apropos the main election campaign themes of Socialist parties, see: G. Hermet, J.T. Hottinger, D.L. Seiler (ed.), *Les partis politiques en Europe de l'Ouest*, Paris, Economica, 1998. This book is a complete practical guide to European political parties.

[8] S. Driver and L. Martell, "Third Ways in Britain and Europe", *op. cit.*, p. 91.

[9] D. Sassoon, *One Hundred Years of Socialism*, London, Tauris, 1996, p. 679.

[10] See: J. Callaghan, "Social Democracy in Transition", *Parliamentary Affairs*, 56, 2003, p. 125 and following.

[11] See: O. Schmidtke, "Transforming the Social Democratic Left: the Challenges to Third Way Politics in the Age of Globalization", *in* O. Schmidtke (ed.), *The Third Way Transformation of Social Democracy*, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

[12] A. Finlayson, "Third Way Theory", *The Political Quarterly*, 8, 1999, p. 274, quoted in O. Schmidtke, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

[13] Z. Laidi, "Qu'est-ce que la troisième voie ?", *Esprit*, March-April 1999, p. 46.

[14] D. Arter, "Scandinavia : What's Left is the Social Democratic Welfare Consensus", *Parliamentary Affairs*, 56, 2003, p. 97.

[15] One dimension of Social Democratic "modesty" involves its political contribution within the EU. The influence of Social Democracy on the European construction process and on EU policies is perceptible but "minimal". See: R. Ladrech, "The Left and the European Union", *Parliamentary Affairs*, 56, 2003, p. 112-124. Also: E. Külahci, Le Parti des socialistes européens et le défi de légitimité socio-économique de l'UE, PhD, ULB, 2003.

[16] M. Ryner, *Capitalist Restructuring, Globalisation and the Third Way, Lessons from the Swedish Model*, London, Routledge, 2002.

[17] M. Telò, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

[18] J.-P. Fitoussi, P. Rosanvallon, *Le nouvel âge des inégalités*, Paris, Seuil, 1996, p. 164.

[19] K. Roder, *Social Democracy and Labour Market Policy. Developments in Britain and Germany*, London, Routledge, 2003, p. 168.

[20] See: S. Driver and L. Martell, “Third Ways in Britain and Europe”, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

[21] M. Ryner, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

[22] G. Moschonas, *op. cit.*, p. 158-162.

[23] P. Cours-Salies, “Un futur antérieur et un présent”, *in* P. Cours-Salies and M. Vakaloulis (ed.), *Les mobilisations collectives, Une controverse sociologique*, Paris, puf, 2003, p. 64.

[24] Term used by R. Castel, *Les métamorphoses de la question sociale. Une chronique du salariat*, Paris, Fayard, 1995, p. 375.

[25] G. Moschonas, *op. cit.*, p. 194-204.

[26] On this issue see the important work of M. Telò, *op. cit.*, and the remarkable analysis of Sh. Berman, “The Roots and Rationale of Social Democracy”, *Social Philosophy and Policy*, 20/1, 2003. See also: Sh. Berman, “Rediscovering Social Democracy”, *Dissent*, Fall 2000.

[27] The Bernsteinian criticism of economic determinism, with emphasis placed on class cooperation in order to build a majority strategy for the conquest of power, the promotion of moral aspects of the socialist project, established the foundations of a true political and ideological alternative to the dominant Marxism of the era. On the other hand, the October revolution, which symbolised the triumph of political will, laid the foundations of a political and ideological alternative *within* Marxist orthodoxy. The fundamental problem posed by Bernsteinian revisionism was that of the pre-eminence of politics within a *reformist* framework, whilst the problem posed by Lenin was that of the pre-eminence of politics within a *revolutionary* framework. (Sh. Berman, “The Roots and Rationale of Social Democracy”, *op. cit.*, p. 120-125).

[28] F. Engels was the leading figure in the process of codifying Marxist ideas and K. Kautsky was the symbolic figure in the undertaking of “popularising” this Marxism. Apropos this issue, see: Sh. Berman, “The Roots and Rationale of Social Democracy”, *op. cit.*, p. 115-120. On the causes of the superiority of Marxism before 1914, a superiority that explains its rapid expansion (“the best available theory of exploitation and the best available theory of history”), see: D. Sassoon, *op. cit.*, p. 6-9).

[29] S. Séferiades, “Stratégies sociales-démocrates au cours du vingtième siècle”, *in* I. Katsoulis (ed.), *La nouvelle social-démocratie*, Athens, Sideris, 2002 (in Greek).

[30] A. Hirschman, *Deux siècles de rhétorique réactionnaire*, Paris, Fayard, 1991, p. 20.

[31] M. Lazar, “Invariants et mutations du socialisme en Europe”, *in* M. Lazar (ed.), *La gauche en Europe depuis 1945,* Paris, puf, 1996, p. 42.

[32] S. Seferiades, Working-Class Movements (1780s-1930s). A European Macro-Historical Analytical Framework and a Greek Case Study, PHD, 1998, Ann Arbor, Columbia University, umi Dissertation Services (1999), p. 71-73.

[33] M. Salvati, “A View from Italy”, *Dissent,* Spring 1999, p. 83.

[34] G. Moschonas, *op. cit.*, p. 83-119.

[35] The Social Democratic transformation was part of the more general change of the European political landscape. For the change in conservatism and Christian Democracy, see the excellent joint publication: P. Delwit (ed.), *Démocraties chrétiennes et conservatismes en Europe, une nouvelle convergence?*, Brussels, Editions de l’Université de Bruxelles, 2003. In particular, the contributions by Paul Magnette (“Qu’est-ce que le conservatisme politique?”), Wouter Beke (“L’identité démocrate chrétienne”), Daniel-Louis Seiler (“Bilan des partis démocrates chrétiens et conservateurs à l’aube du xxie siècle”) and the summary chapter by Pascal Delwit (“Démocraties chrétiennes et conservatismes : convergences subies ou volontaires ?”) indirectly participate in a fascinating debate on the transformation of the two families in question.

[36] K. Roder, *op. cit.,* p. 206.

Programmatic Change in the Party of European Socialists

Robert LADRECH

European Social Democracy, over the past decade, has opened a new "front" in terms of its actions, priorities and challenges. This new front is the European Union, that is, its policy agenda, its supranational as well as intergovernmental institutions, and finally, the European level in general in which transnational networking and organizing is obliged. Ten years ago, in 1992, the Party of European Socialists (PES) was founded in order to give Europe's Social Democratic parties a better means of translating their shared concerns onto the European level. The Party of European Socialists represented an organizational advance over its predecessor, the Confederation of Socialist Parties of the EC (CSPEC). The PES instituted Party Leaders' summits at the time of European Council meetings, a revamped bureau and secretariat, and a number of initiatives involving working parties bringing together both party leaders and socialist members of the European Parliament. Today, in 2003, one can survey the efforts of the PES – and by extension Social Democratic party leaders – and evaluate its evolution. This will enable one to more clearly understand the contemporary challenges and programmatic innovations that confront Europe's Social Democrats today.

The paper is divided into three sections. Firstly, I briefly describe the most significant activities of the PES over the past ten years, focussing on actual output. In the next section, I discuss the contemporary challenge to the PES in the context of change to the EU itself. Finally, the paper investigates the relationship between the PES and its constituent members, the national parties. The theme explored in this section is both organizational and ideological, that is, how does the PES itself advance as an organization, and the degree to which this advancement depends on the further Europeanization of national Social Democratic parties.

1. PES Activities Evaluated

The PES was launched in the wake of the Treaty on Economic and Monetary Union and Political Union, otherwise known as the Maastricht Treaty. The French had earlier that year, 1992, narrowly ratified the treaty, and it was clear that many Social Democratic parties harboured reservations about the details of the monetary union [1]. The first major effort to which the PES was put for use by party leaders was to develop a Social Democratic approach to employment, and secondly, to bring a Social Democratic dimension to monetary union. How successful was this effort? In this section I describe the output and the process the PES engaged. This is important, for the very fact that *some* output at all was engineered is itself a mark of success.

A. The Employment Chapter

At the signing of the Amsterdam Treaty in mid-1997, a new chapter was inserted into the treaties of the European Union, an Employment Chapter. For a Treaty that some have dubbed "Blairite" [2], highlighting and linking such a significant policy area to the European Union was an impressive achievement. The actual details of the Employment Chapter are far from any interventionist or *dirigiste* state action that a neo-liberal would fear, but the fact that the EU now has some responsibility in this area broadens its influence into a previously sacrosanct area of national control. So, the first point to consider is the collaboration by so many governments over the decision to share such a vital aspect of national policy to the supranational level. But precisely how did this occur? Johansson declares that a transnational coalition of many actors was assembled – trade unions, Social Democratic parties, actors within the Commission, etc., and from this assemblage agreement was reached. All that was necessary for final victory was a favourable political line-up among member state governments, which duly occurred in the spring of 1997. In reality, the work to prepare the ground for party leaders/prime ministers to agree such a document took several years, and in the process a new type of communication and co-ordination evolved. Two dimensions are worth mentioning. First, the PES presented itself as a new arena in which different parties could intensively exchange views on public policy issues in an on-going fashion, punctuated, with increasing frequency, by more formal meetings of party leaders and ministers. If we pause a moment and reflect on this, it becomes apparent that no such opportunity existed for Social Democrats. Although member parties of the PES had also been members of the Socialist International for decades prior to the PES or CSPEC, SI meetings every two years involved more than simply European members. For this reason substantive work of a shared and narrowly defined policy issue was absent at these events. Thus the ambitious pace of meetings conducted under the auspices of the PES – that is, an organizational format set up precisely to facilitate such concentrated work – was an innovation among Western Europe's Social Democratic parties.

The second dimension encompasses the policy agenda of the PES, and by extension, a majority of Social Democratic member parties. At its founding, the PES was given a mission as defined by its congress. An employment initiative was the first priority. When, in the mid-1990s, another intergovernmental conference was scheduled, the PES was also focused in the direction of facilitating additional

positions, for example on monetary union, sustainable development, etc. Thus the PES represented a co-ordinated policy "projection" by national Social Democratic parties onto the EU stage. In this manner, it served the interest of national-based parties to influence the EU policy agenda. Combining its communication and co-ordination functions, we can appreciate its part in the development of various national positions regarding an Employment Chapter in the EU treaties.

B. Monetary Union

The Maastricht Treaty, in particular Economic and Monetary Union, was a historic initiative that is still transforming the political and economic landscapes of Europe today. Although the antecedents of EMU can be traced to the 1970s, the present project arose in the latter half of the 1980s and early 1990s, under European Commission president Jacques Delors. Space does not permit a full recounting of the technical side of the plan, nor the political dynamics between France and Germany, Mitterrand and Kohl. However, reaction within Social Democratic parties illustrates the fact that the logic of EMU was not regarded as a specifically Social Democratic, or left, policy. As Notermans' argues, party leaders/prime ministers presented many reasons for support of EMU. These ranged from international relations – competition with the US – to domestic requirements for budgetary discipline administered with an external mandate. Once accepted, Social Democratic parties within the eurozone have supported the project, although specific criticism of the European Central Bank (ECB) has been forthcoming.

The more specific input of Social Democrats as regards monetary union has come in the form of suggestions for closer economic co-ordination and a revision of EMU's Stability and Growth Pact. The common denominator in these two areas is a re-orientation or addition to the logic of EMU, namely, a co-ordinated effort to boost and maintain economic growth (the ECB's mandate focuses on price stability). From the PES congress at Malmö in 1997 to the PES contribution (party leaders) to the Convention on the Future of Europe in 2002, Social Democratic party leaders and prime ministers have attempted to introduce this additional element into the European level of economic policy-making. Dyson [3] notes the input, though of a more diffuse nature, by Social Democrats already at the beginning of stage one of monetary union, in the late 1990s. He writes : "the EU political agenda shifted towards a higher valuation on growth and employment objectives ; on protecting and promoting infrastructural spending and renewing the "capital stock" ; on social exclusion and poverty ; on eliminating unfair competition in social policy, labour market policy and taxation so as to ensure minimum standards of social protection ; on defining an optimum policy mix at the EU level to strengthen economic development ; and on strengthening European policy co-ordination for these purposes" [4].

In both of the above examples the PES was utilized as a tool for party leaders to exchange views and ideas and to co-ordinate actions. In this way it would be fair to conceptualize the PES as an organization which serves to lower transaction costs to its individual members, the national parties. Although dramatic change in the EU policy agenda has not occurred due to PES input, it would be wrong to expect that change could come about in a fundamental and swift manner, for at least three

reasons. Firstly, EU decision-making is consensual in practice, resembling a national coalition government. Thus the most concerted effort on the part of Social Democratic governments – even if comprising all member state governments, would run into decision-making blockages. In other words, the Westminster model does not apply to the EU. Secondly, most member state national governments are themselves coalitions, and therefore veto points arise from this level. Finally, the national traditions among member states account for variations in Social Democratic perspectives. If one assembles together these three features of decision-making, institutional and otherwise, expectations of what could be accomplished from a partisan viewpoint at the EU level is modest at best. Nevertheless, the above examples demonstrate the closer integration of party elites towards European level challenges.

2. Evolution of the EU

The establishment of the PES in 1992 corresponded to historic changes in the then European Community. Not only did the Maastricht Treaty usher in the grand plan of monetary union, but elements of political union also had profound implications, for example European citizenship, voting in other EU member states, etc. The EU stands on the brink of probably its most far-reaching and significant changes, or evolutionary leap. This has to do with its enlargement to Central and Eastern Europe and all of the consequences implied in this expansion. What are the challenges of EU enlargement for the PES? In this section I connect PES activities to the wider changes in its operating environment, the EU. Three issues are briefly considered, firstly, relations with parties in the east ; secondly, implications of the Party statute; and thirdly, the role of the PES regarding an elected president of the European Commission.

A. Relations with Parties in Central and Eastern Europe

The PES, including the leaders of its member parties, has a particular incentive to develop close relations with those parties deemed part of the European Social Democratic party family. Beyond the solidarity displayed to those actors now (re)integrating Europe, there are two practical reasons for the PES to develop and strengthen ties with these parties. First of all, the situation in all Post-communist states for parties is the adaptation to a competitive environment. For parties recognized as Social Democratic, their association with the Left is not in many cases an advantage considering the history of communism. In this respect, linkage with parties in Western Europe is a favourable association. Their need for organizational resources and expertise is something the PES is in a position to advice, and from the perspective of the PES, something it wishes to impart so as to influence the partisan composition of these governments. One must also add the fact that the PES' major competitor, the European People's Party – European Democrats (EPP-ED), is also engaged in aiding those parties it has chosen as partners. Thus party development is the first reason that the PES (along with individual national actors such as the SPD's Friedrich Ebert Stiftung) has involved itself with parties in EU applicant countries.

The second reason for PES activities with parties in Post-communist Europe is linked to the partisan composition of these governments. As of late 2002, ten countries have been approved for eventual membership in the EU in 2004. Although

parties associated with the PES are in power in several key applicant countries (*inter alia* Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland in late 2002), in an EU of twenty-five member states, Social Democratic parties could easily be outnumbered. Therefore, strengthening the Social Democratic Left in the applicant countries contributed to the eventual "balance of power" in an enlarged EU.

B. The Party Statute, Article 191

Included in the Treaty of Nice is a Statute regulating the financing of European level parties. At the time of the summit in Nice, the government leaders could have, by a unanimous vote, decided to implement this statute, which basically is meant to bring greater transparency to the manner in which EP party groups support their respective transnational parties. At the time of the summit, some member state governments chose not to support this statute without further amendments which would have aided parties of the populist right without trans-European representatives, i.e. the Austrian Freedom Party of Jörg Haider. In the end, without unanimity, the majority-supported Statute would have to await ratification of the Nice Treaty, which was postponed due to the Irish referendum rejection. In October 2002 the Irish again voted on the Nice Treaty, and this time gave it their approval, opening the way for a majority vote on the Party Statute. As financial resources are the critical "life-blood" for an organization, the enhanced independence of party federations may have consequences for organizational development and relations with member national parties. In any event, with eventual approval of a Party Statute, the existence and role of transnational parties is further inscribed into the "constitution" of the EU.

C. Election of the Commission President

In the spring of 2003, the Convention on the Future of Europe presented the Heads of State and Government with its treaty for a new Constitution and new operating procedures for the European Union.

At the end of long discussions, the Brussels summit, under the ltalian presidency, was not able to reach a compromise. The Irish presidency was left with the task of starting all over again from scratch. On 18th June 2004, a compromise was finally achieved. On the issue of the presidency of the European Commission, the Heads of State and Government tried to find a balance between intergovernmental and supranational viewpoints.

The initiative to nominate the candidate was still up to them, but they had to do it taking into account the European election trends and the person put forward had to have the endorsement of the European Parliament.

In addition, the European Council set up a new mechanism for the European Union presidency. For the European Council itself, it put an end to the rotation every six months. From now on, the presidency will be for two and a half years and a president can be re-elected once.

In the three issues we briefly dealt with, it has clearly emerged that demands on an organisation like the PES are quite direct. Both enlargement towards the East and EU institutional changes have had repercussions on PES activities. Party status could contribute to affecting issues of financing and organisation relating to PES operations.

3. Europeanization of National Parties

Even if the PES does become more independent financially, it is still essentially an organization designed to project agreed national initiatives onto the European level. But member parties are themselves, beyond rhetoric – as documented in party manifestos and programmes – yet to fully internalize the scope of European Union influences into their policy development processes. If this situation were to change, the PES would then become a much more significant instrument for European Social Democracy. In this section, I investigate the problems and prospects for the PES in relation to the Europeanization of the national member parties.

For purposes of this chapter, Europeanization will be defined as the internalization of EU influences and inputs into the logic of domestic policy-making. This internalization can extend to domestic organizations such as political parties [5]. National political parties are far less "Europeanized" than interest groups, national bureaucracies, major companies, etc. The reasons for this are not too difficult to understand. Firstly, the EU does not transfer any type of resources directly to national parties. Thus the incentive to adapt or even pay too much time to EU decision-making is absent from most parties. Secondly, the actual rewards for parties are situated in their domestic environments – votes, government offices, etc. Political parties are therefore anchored in their domestic environments and unmotivated in regards to pursuing or expending resources on EU matters. Finally, we might also add the fact that a single national party is unlikely to influence a *supranational* and *multinational* organization such as the EU in the first place.

Yet there are incentives for Social Democratic parties to more fully engage the EU. To put the matter as concisely as possible, the generally neo-liberal policy agenda that emerged from the late 1980s – both the Single European Act and the Maastricht Treaty on EMU – have had implications for Social Democratic national governance. In this respect, then, it obliges Social Democratic parties to introduce a Social Democratic logic into the EU as a counterweight to such dynamics as socially irresponsible competition, privatisation, etc. But linking national fortunes to EU dynamics has not extended beyond the elite interaction mentioned above or experts within parties. A more fully engaged and profound reassessment of the role of Social Democracy in a multilevel EU – from sub-national through to the supranational level, a type of transnational "Bad Godesberg" for European Social Democratic parties as regards the EU – has still to occur [6].

How might the PES be involved in this historic enterprise? From a positive perspective, one that entails little cost, the PES could become a forum for influencing the policy agenda of a more partisan European Commission. This implies the election of the Commission president, and the PES serving as the vehicle for selection and linkages between the Commission and national supporters. This also implies an altered relationship between the PES-party and the PES-EP party group in terms of a division of labour. With regards to national parties, beyond some debate within each party over the suitability of candidate(s), the status quo would probably be maintained, i.e., EU affairs are a preserve of experts and party elites. On the other hand, to stimulate more far-reaching debate over the role of EU policies and national governance, matters beyond rhetoric are required. It is not the case that *intellectually* party members are

insufficiently aware of the impact of European integration (or even globalization) on domestic policies and government. The problem is that national parties have no mechanism for involvement in EU affairs such that it can inform programmatic developments. Certainly, most parties have an international secretary, and possibly also a European affairs spokesperson, but this treats the EU as a "foreign policy object", which the present nature of European integration into domestic spheres – from social policy to fiscal policy to environmental policy – clearly demonstrates it is not.

This analysis brings us to the "historic blockage" concerning Social Democratic parties and the EU. Put simply, many Social Democrats have recognized that in order to reassert control over their destinies, that which has been lost at the national level – either through European integration, globalization, technology, etc. – could possibly be regained at the European level. But in order to endow the EU with the power commensurate with this task, an element of national sovereignty must be transferred (or shared). The issue is "where to draw the line" in this transfer. Since the early 1990s, Social Democrats have made the *intellectual* choice to "go for Europe", but have *practically* constrained the full unfolding of the logic that this implies. Elections for a Commission president and European Parliament elections that are more meaningful in terms of actually arguing European policies, challenge the status quo within national party *organizations*, as well as the continued fiction of the primacy of national sovereignty articulated to the general public by national governments. This hesitation to relinquish control over party organization (or better put, to open up national parties to EU level dynamics, such as election of delegates to PES congresses), also prevents thorough debates about strategies to satisfy policy objectives.

What are the positive consequences for more thoroughly europeanized Social Democratic parties? At the most general level, innovation in policy ideas developed in national parties and/or co-ordinated across the PES family of parties, could influence debates within the EU. Potentially, Social Democratic programmatic development could be deepened by integrating the European dimension into current debates. There are at least five areas in which this would enrich debates over the future of European Social Democracy:

– debate on the role of the state would be intensified. This would lift present discussions over the architecture of the EU – federal versus intergovernmental – out of a stalemate and into the actual functions of state structures shared between levels;
– debate on the model of society would be given more resonance, as the merits of national policies would be more firmly linked with EU dynamics, such as trade negotiations with the US, or environmental protection, or minimum social guarantees;
– debate over economic policy would be given more direction, instead of promising certain actions only to find budgetary constraints imposed by EMU commitments negating those promises at a later date. The emergence of a debate over the Stability and Growth Pact in late 2002 is a foretaste of what could be further developed;
– debate over the merits of social pacts. Relations between Social Democratic parties and trade unions require a new perspective. One dimension of this could

be at the European level. John Monks, the general secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), has stated that one new area of industrial relations to explore is the concept of pacts between the social partners at the European level [7]. This certainly has implications for the nature of relations at the national level as well;

– finally, if national parties have a "public space" within their organizations that does not have direct national electoral implications, perhaps more bold and innovative proposals could be debated and shared across the wider party family. In a sense, as the EU does not have a direct involvement in national elections, the dominance of electoral logic on Social Democratic parties might be lessened, at least in regards to "thinking European".

3. Conclusion

What does this imply for the PES? The closer involvement of the PES within national parties requires the approval of party leaderships. Yet they have seen both the intellectual and practical advantages of "thinking and acting European". Websites linking national parties together through the PES website have existed for some time; national party websites having a link to the PES is not yet uniform. Election of delegates to PES congresses has negative implications for some national parties, but more involvement in debates and proposals to PES congress within national parties could be fruitful in terms of establishing the fact that a transnational arena for debate is available.

In the end, as stated at the beginning of this chapter, the PES is a tool for national party leaders. The responsibility is theirs to use the PES – understood as a "network facilitator" – to develop truly a European Social Democratic approach. Hesitation as a result of the "historic blockage" mentioned above is compounded by the fact that no one single national party could ever hope to influence the EU policy agenda. This is precisely the "added value" of the PES ; it links national parties in a way that any attempt to "act European" would be collective. Thus "collective action", one of the historic hallmarks of national Social Democratic struggles over the past one hundred years, can also be applied at the European level. The PES has been referred to as a "party of parties". As national parties themselves are collections of communities, there is no reason why the aggregation of communities should be limited to the national level.

Notes

[1] For a survey and analysis of positions among most Social Democratic parties in the EU, see T. Notermans, *Social Democracy and Monetary Union*, Berghahn, 2001.

[2] See M. Pollack, “A Blairite Treaty : Neo-Liberalism and Regulated Capitalism in the Treaty of Amsterdam”, *in* K. Neunreither and A. Wiener (ed.), *European Integration after Amsterdam: Institutional Dynamics and Prospects for Democracy*, Oxford, 2000.

[3] K. Dyson, “Benign or Malevolent Leviathan? Social Democratic Governments in a Neo-Liberal Euro Area”, *The Political Quarterly*, March-April 1999.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 197.

[5] See R. Ladrech, “Europeanization and Party Politics: Towards a Framework for Analysis”, *Party Politics*, 2002, 8/4, p. 389-405.

[6] The recent statement by French Socialists Fabius, Mauroy and Rocard is a plea in this direction. See « Socialistes de toute l’Europe, unissez-vous! », *Le Monde*, 28 October 2002.

[7] Stated at a lecture and in response to question by the author at Keele University, 8 October 2002.

Electoral Developments in European Social Democracy

Pascal Delwit

Has not all been already written, explained or examined on the various *golden ages* or stages of the (unavoidable) decline of Social Democracy? Without a doubt, Social Democracy is the political family that has engendered the greatest amount of research on its different facets, especially in terms of progress and decline in its political influence, existence or political action.

The object of this contribution is to examine the changes in European socialism since the Second World War, using as yardstick the basic indicator in representative democracies: electoral performance.

Our ambition is to test the hypothesis of major European Social Democratic movements over the past sixty years; among them, the hypotheses of a *golden age* [1] in the electoral field and a decline that has been going on for around twenty years. To accomplish this, we proceed in three major steps.

In an initial stage, we consider the historical doctrinal position of Social Democracy with regard to the issue of voting rights and representative democracy.

Then, we examine and analyse the electoral results of the Social Democratic family in *Western* Europe. The results of Social Democratic Parties are reviewed for sixteen states: Germany, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Spain, Finland, France, Great Britain, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Norway, the Netherlands, Portugal and Sweden.

Finally, we look at the situation that has prevailed in the new representative democracies of Central and Eastern Europe, following the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989. The electoral curve is examined in ten countries: Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, the Czech Republic, Romania, Slovenia and Slovakia.

Unless mentioned otherwise, the parties studied are parties *labelled* as Social Democrats through their membership in at least one of the two major international

Social Democratic organisations: the Socialist International (SI) and the Party of European Socialists (PES). This approach is not without problems. Indeed, there is obvious difficulty in affixing a *Social Democrat* label to certain member parties of either of these major international party associations. Conversely, some parties that are not or have not always been labelled so can *in actual fact be* Social Democratic Parties. Nevertheless, this option has the merit of being clear-cut and self-termed, with the legitimacy a political party secures from membership in an international organisation of political parties [2].

To carry out our analysis, we have examined all national elections held in a democratic context in the twenty-six states since 1945.

1. Social Democracy and Elections

The initial attitude by the first Socialist/Social Democratic organisations towards representative democracy was an in-between stance. The Marxist model posted revolutionary claims and purposes: the state was an institution to be brought down and the approach was categorical and blunt. “The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie”, the *Communist party Manifesto* proclaimed [3]. Likewise, Bernard Manin stated that “the choice of political democracy (meant as a term for those governing by virtue of universal suffrage) was not at all obvious for labour and Socialist parties” [4]. As democracy was “identified with the free market system” [5], it was rejected just as much as capitalism.

Nevertheless, a number of Social Democratic organisations rapidly supported further extension of the right to vote into universal suffrage (for men) [6]. The parliament was then presented as a forum to let workers’ voices be heard and attract them to socialism.

Subsequently, the democratic institutions and their underpinning element – universal suffrage – were depicted as an active framework for accommodating workers’ demands and achieving socialism. From the end of the century, Bernstein made himself a champion of the slow but sure route to socialism by and within institutions of representative democracy. But already before him, Engels himself had taken a positive view of universal suffrage as an access road to socialism. Referring to the evolution of electoral results of the German Social Democrats after the emergency laws were lifted, he noted: “And if universal suffrage had offered no other advantage than that it allowed us to count our numbers every three years; that by the regularly established, unexpectedly rapid rise in the number of votes it increased in equal measure the workers’ certainty of victory and the dismay of their opponents, and so became our best means of propaganda; that it accurately informed us concerning our own strength and that of all hostile parties, and thereby provided us with a measure of proportion for our actions second to none, safeguarding us from untimely timidity as much as from untimely foolhardiness – if this had been the only advantage we gained from the suffrage, then it would still have been more than enough. But it has done much more than this. In election agitation it provided us with a means, second to none, of getting in touch with the mass of the people, where they still stand aloof from us” [7]. He especially envisaged the possibility of a socialist victory by peaceful means: “We

can count even today on two and a half million voters. If it continues in this fashion, by the end of the century we shall conquer the greater part of the middle section of society, petty bourgeois and small peasants, and grow into the decisive power in the land, before which all other powers will have to bow, whether they like it or not. (…) And if we are not so crazy as to let ourselves be driven into street fighting in order to please them, then nothing else is finally left for them but themselves to break through this legality so fatal to them" [8].

Consequently the project was revolutionary and international. To succeed, the revolutionary process could not be completed in just one single country. As Engels noted in the *Principles of communism*, initially four countries should be involved at the same time: "It follows that the Communist revolution will not merely be a national phenomenon but must take place simultaneously in all civilized countries – that is to say, at least in England, America, France, and Germany" [9].

To a large extent, the trend of integration and participation in parliamentary democracies started before the 1914-1918 war. And the debate on ministerialism in the Second International [10] corroborated the new reality *that was open* to Social Democratic Parties: not only accede to the parliamentary benches, but quite possibly cross the Rubicon and join the ranks of government.

Referring to the debate between Kautsky and Lenin, Alain Bergougnioux refers to the period immediately after World War I as the time when the two perspectives, socialism and democracy, merged: "It was the final awareness of what was essentially the party of the masses in a democratic tradition. In a manner of speaking, Kautsky sees this – and this is the problem of Social Democracy in a nutshell – as the distinction of the two periods in stages: socialism and democracy; he sees the democratic republic as the only path to socialism. To conclude, I would say that Social Democracy is only truly theoretically formed when it has to confront Leninism and reject it. This period enables clarification of the implications of Social Democratic choices. So, starting from the 1920s, it is clear that the shift to socialism will be progressive for Social Democracy and that any socialist government will have to adapt its objectives to the state of the economy and to the level of worker awareness. Likewise it is obvious that this transition can only be made via democracy, that democracy will have to be guaranteed for all population categories, and therefore that co-existence within the same social entity will have to be secured. And finally, it is clear that it is up to the parties, the associations and trade unions to take up the control of authority" [11].

In the aftermath of the Second World War, Social Democracy summoned up representative democracy as one of the elements that set it apart and defined it. This was already indicated in the motion passed by COMISCO, the grouping of Social Democratic Parties who were anticipating the foundation of the Socialist International: "At this point in time when the salvation of the world depends on the victory of socialism, upholding democracy is obviously the socialists' primary duty. In the presence of events provoked in various European countries by the joint action of the Cominform and Soviet policy, the committee proclaims its determination to construct a democratic and socialist Europe, free from any threat of tyranny or aggression" [12].

Likewise, the first declaration of principles of the (re)constituted Socialist International, the *Frankfurt Charter* expressed deliberate and confirmed support to political democracy:

> "1. Socialists strive to build a new society in freedom and by democratic means.
>
> 2. Without freedom there can be no Socialism. Socialism can be achieved only through democracy. Democracy can be fully realized only through Socialism.
>
> 3. Democracy is government of the people, by the people, for the people" [13].

According to Guillaume Devin, this Charter ends up a "historical debate" [14].

2. The Electoral Transformations of Western Social Democracy

To begin with, we adopted two methodological approaches to assess the electoral transformations of Western Social Democracy:

(1) First of all, we have decided to regroup electoral results by decade. The averages are calculated on the basis of elections held between the years 00 and 09 [15], and the results relate to the total number of votes legitimately cast for a Social Democratic Party as related to the total number of valid votes expressed. Unlike the option chosen by Wolfgang Merkel, we did not make a division into *possible political periods (golden age or decline,* economic growth or recession, participation in government or opposition position) [16]. To say the least, our working approach requires to take two precautions in the reading and the analysis.

a) The first option concerns the 40s decade. Obviously it is a *shortened* decade due to the Second World War. The 1940s average does not have the same *meaning* as that of the other decades. For some states, it involves only one election.

b) As one would expect, the second precaution is connected with the years in the 21st century. In this case, we are dealing with a decade that is still in progress. In this case as well, the average does not have the same meaning as that of completed decades. It is therefore necessary to take a very guarded view of the 21st century average, especially from a comparative viewpoint.

(2) Then, we chose to present three curves in light of the advent of representative democracy in Spain, Greece and Portugal. The first curve – *Western Europe 1* – comprises the thirteen states that have been democratic since 1945. The second – *Southern Europe* – aggregates results from Spain, Greece and Portugal. The third – *Western Europe 2* – combines the first and second curves – ergo, the sixteen national situations.

At the end of this initial work of aggregation and establishment of decade averages, what can one point out and detect as trends?

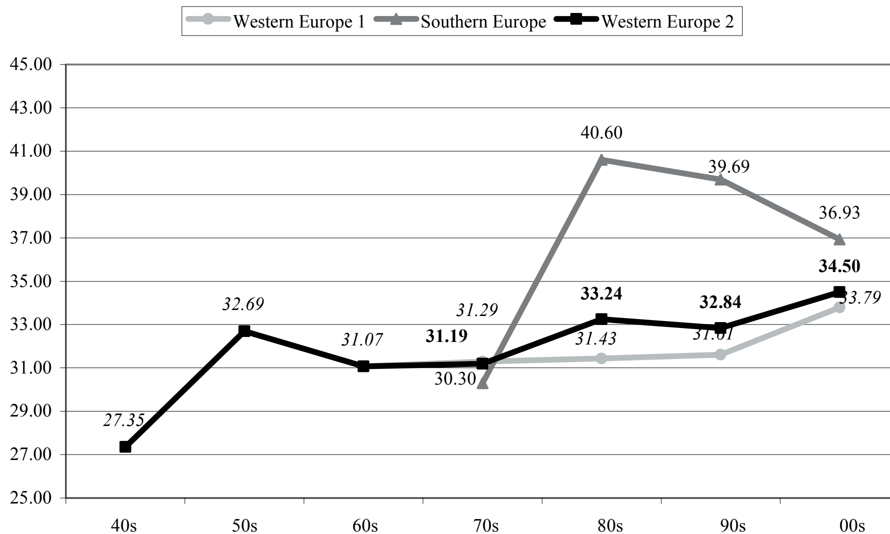
The first major lesson is the high stability of Social Democratic results at Western European level over the past sixty years. When we examine the changes in the *Western European 1 or 2* curves, we can see that average 10-year result is mainly the same for all complete decades: between 31.07% (minimum figure, 1960s) and 32.69% (maximum figure, 1950s) in one instance, and between 31.07% (minimum figure, 1960s) and 33.24% (maximum figure, 1980s) in the other. If one incorporates the situation that prevailed in the 1940s and in 2000, the observation is relatively

corroborated insofar as the Social Democratic average is lower in the 1940s. In the years “2000 +”, both curves reach their peak: 33.79% and 34.50%. More generally, within this stability, one should even note that on average, the Social Democratic Parties reach better scores in the current period than they did in the first four decades. Consequently, there is an upward *trend*.

Secondly, we can observe that the global approach to Western Social Democratic electoral figures does not fit in well with the *political ages* they are often supposed to correspond to. From an electoral viewpoint, one does not detect either glorious periods, or traumatic or difficult times, with the exception of the 1940s, which we consider later on. The paradox is striking for the years 2000+, often viewed by a number of observers as a period of Social Democratic setback. Nonetheless, *at this stage*, the average results are the highest for the two curves reviewed. From an overall perspective, the setback is even more striking than for the 1980s. And yet, the decade is held up as the decade of the *wave* of triumphant neo-liberalism. It was however during these years that the European average of Social Democratic Parties in the sixteen states studied was highest. At the same time, one must note that the democratisation of the three newly democratic southern states in the seventies markedly contributed to boosting the general average for the period.

More generally, the electoral results of the new democratic states of Southern Europe were higher on average than those of the thirteen other states, whether in the 1980s or ‘90s.

Figure 1
Electoral Performances of Western Social Democracy (1945-2003)



Obviously, an average can only serve as an indicator. Therefore, we have sought to find out if this exceptional stability was hiding any nuances or even deep discrepancies, or if it was reflecting homogeneous trends for the various national Social Democratic Parties. To do this, first of all, we establish two distinctions.

The first reflects on the development of Social Democratic Parties in the main Western European countries – France, Italy, Germany, Great Britain and Spain – and that of parties in small or medium size nations, demographically speaking – Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Greece, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Norway and Sweden. In addition to some political cross-checking required by this type of division, this research allows us to examine whether the trends in the curve for these two groups offers some understanding of a homogeneous overall electoral achievement over sixty years.

The second considers the electoral development of three *Social Democratic Europes*: Northern Europe that includes Denmark, Ireland, Great Britain, Sweden, Norway and Finland; continental Europe that includes most of the consociational European democracies – Germany, Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg; Southern Europe, that includes the socialist parties that do not cover the traditional Social Democratic organisational and political *model*: Spain, France, Greece, Italy and Portugal. For a more in-depth approach to this subject, we now set up two sub-groups within the first two Europes:

(1) Labour Social Democracy (Great Britain and Ireland) and the Scandinavian Social Democratic model (Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden) for Northern Europe,

(2) Benelux Social Democracy (Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands) and Germanic Social Democracy (Germany and Austria) for Continental Europe.

A. Social Democratic Parties of the Major States and of the Small and Medium States

The information gathered from the comparative evolution of electoral curves of the Social Democratic Parties of large nations – viewed from a demographic perspective – and of smaller nations, can vary. However, one can sketch three possible scenarios.

(1) For reporting purposes, we can assume strictly parallel developments. In this approach, the average development pattern of Social Democracy would indicate similar trends in the development of Social Democratic Parties, if assessed in relation to the demography of the states to which they belong.

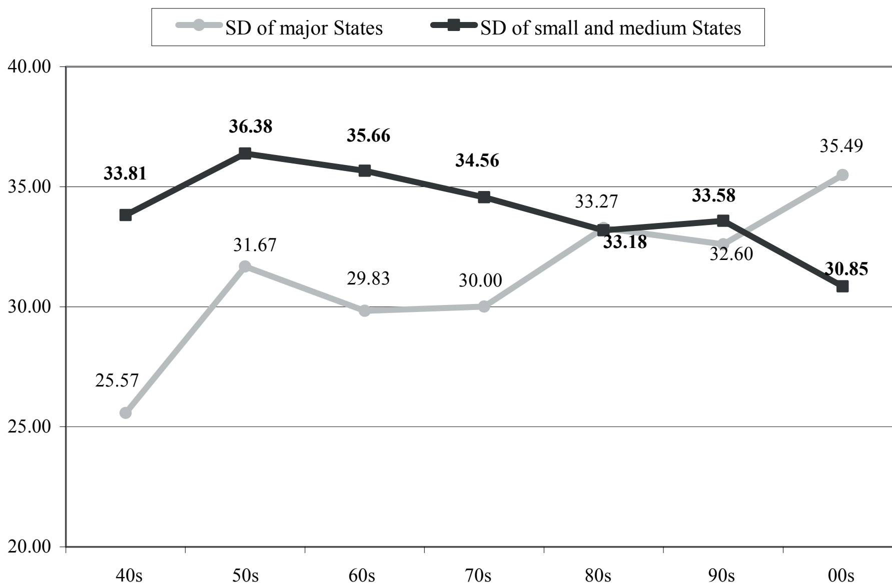
(2) A second possible appraisal pattern would consist in uncoupling the two curves *to the benefit of* Social Democratic Parties of larger states. If this model were to bear out, the upward stability seen in the first analysis herein would then reveal potentially stagnant trend in the development of European Social Democratic Parties insofar as recent data on average results would in fact mainly come from the results of a few parties in the most densely populated Western European countries.

(3) Finally, one can imagine a third scenario; one where, quite the reverse, any uncoupling of the two curves would be due to Social Democratic organisations in states with smaller populations. In this theory, the average stable curve would in fact reveal a situation even much more positive in trend for the majority of Western European Social Democratic Parties.

When analysing the two curves, it appears that the second scenario prevails. The average results of Social Democratic Parties from the smallest states are on the decline. While they stood at 36.38% in the 1950s, they only reached 33.18% in the ‘80s and 33.58% in the ‘90s, a lower total than for the 1940s, which was a difficult period however. The first years of the current decade show an even duller overall picture since results as of 30 December 2003 are barely above 30% of the votes.

A contrario, the average results of Social Democratic Parties in large states have been better in recent decades than they were in the 1950s, ‘60s and ‘70s. Whilst the average total was less than 30% in the sixties, it reached 33.58% in the eighties. In the current decade, the average percentage is the highest ever obtained. The divergence factor between the two curves clearly shows the two movements. In the forties, the gap between the two sets of results is 8.24 in favour of the Social Democratic Parties of small and medium-size nations. It stabilises at 4.71, 5.83 and 4.56 respectively in the fifties, sixties and seventies. For the eighties, the curve just about reverses: -0.09. On top of that, in the nineties, the gap is lower than 1 point (0.98). At this point, it shows a net setback for these parties: -4.65 points.

Figure 2
Electoral Performances of Social Democratic Parties in major states and in small/medium Size states in Western Europe (1945-2003)



The first run offers a preliminary refinement of the average curve for Social Democratic results. The progress in the eighties and nineties came from the parties of the large states. For the parties from states with smaller populations, on the other hand, the past twenty-five years have been far less flourishing. Consequently, the overall curve does not show satisfactory electoral results for the great majority Social Democratic Parties. To put it briefly, in terms of the impact of Social Democratic Parties within each of the national political systems, the situation comes across in relatively unfavourable light in many states.

B. The Three Social Democratic Europes

As we have pinpointed, the division into three Europes largely corresponds to operable divisions inside the European Social Democratic movement but also to the respective properties of the regimes and systems of parties in Western Europe: prevailing Social Democratic Party system in Scandinavia, consociational democracies in Continental Europe, bipartisan or bipolar systems in Southern Europe.

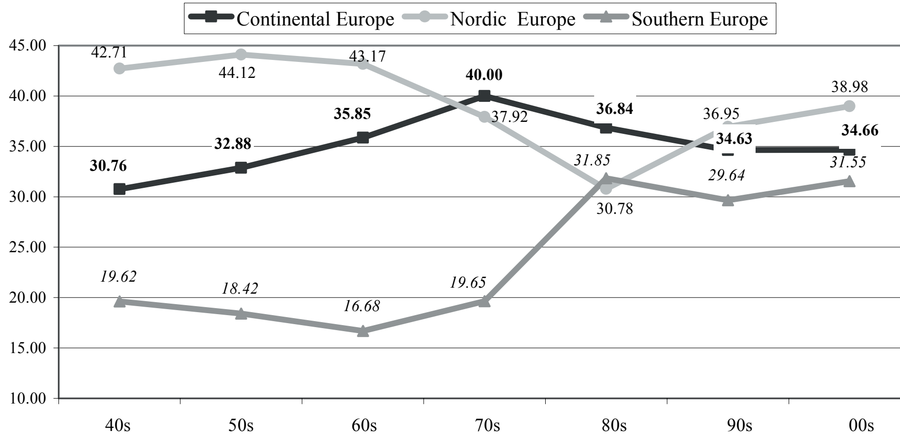
The comparative perspective here is also meant to test the option homogeneity *vs* heterogeneity of Social Democratic electoral developments. There is a great deal of information to be drawn from comparative analysis of the three curves.

The first one is the significant difference of the baseline of the three curves being examined. On this topic, we should emphasise that the comparison is only really valid for Northern Europe and Continental Europe. The itinerary in Southern Europe is affected by the non-democratic nature of the Portuguese, Greek and Spanish governments until the mid-seventies, and consequently the lack of results for the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE), the Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) and the Portuguese Socialist party (PSP) until the second half of the decade. But for the first two Europes, the observation is clear. In the forties and fifties, the average Social Democratic result was 42.71% and 44.12% in Northern Europe versus 30.76% and 32.88% in Continental Europe. This represents a gap of 11.95 and 11.24 points, respectively.

The second is the process of the homogenisation of electoral results obtained in the sixties and seventies, which continued. Starting from the seventies, the discrepancy, in one direction or the other, remains settled within a range of four to six points. When integrating the results for Southern European Socialist Parties, the difference settles within a range of five to nine points.

The third main finding relates to the unique nature of the Social Democratic election result curves for Northern Europe. The trends are sharp and fast rising. From the sixties to the nineties, the average result went down by 12.50 points! Conversely, the increase is over six points from the '80s to the '90s. The evolution in the average results of Social democratic Parties in Continental Europe is smoother and includes longer phases: regular gains over some thirty years – over ten points, with a subsequent set-back in the '80s and '90s – down by 5.4 points. As regards the Socialist Parties of Southern Europe, the average remains most stable for the decades for which comparisons can be made, some 30% of votes cast.

Figures 3
Electoral Performances of Western Social Democracy (1945-2003).
The Three Europes



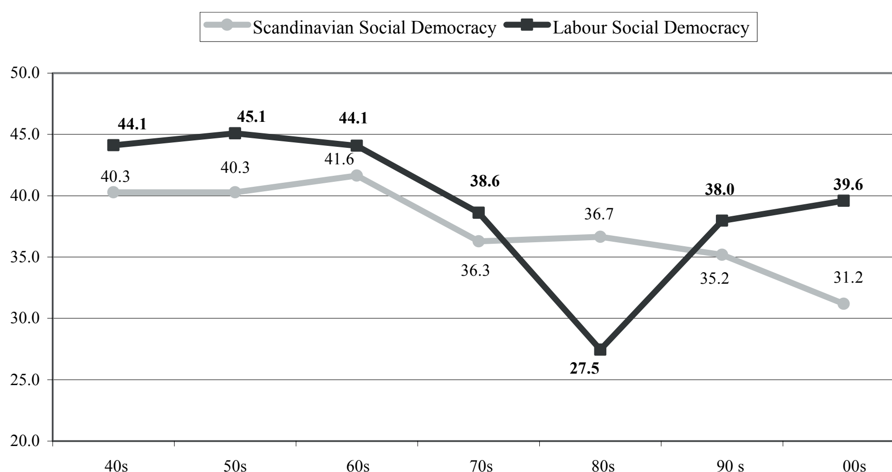
1. Electoral Fate of Labour's Brand of Socialism and of the Scandinavian Model

Within *Northern European Social Democracy*, the distinction between Labour (Ireland and Great Britain) and Scandinavian models (Denmark, Finland, Sweden and Norway) reveals partially dissimilar profiles. In the case of the Scandinavian Social Democratic group, the theory of structural erosion is confirmed from an electoral viewpoint, even if decline remains regular. In the forties, fifties and sixties, the aggregated data for the four Scandinavian Social Democratic Parties show them winning more than 40% of the votes. Social Democracy then loses five points within a ten-year period and stabilises at 35% of the vote in the eighties and nineties. At the moment, the first years in the 21st century show a new decline that is primarily affecting the Norwegian Labour Party (DNA) and the Danish Social Democrats (SD). These two reference parties of the Scandinavian model have lost the dominant character they had in their respective national political systems. In 2001, the Danish Social Democracy even lost its position as number one in the Kingdom to the detriment of the Liberal Party (Venstre). The same year, the Norwegian Labour Party bottomed out with its worst ever result (26%) and the distance with its direct rival (the Conservative Party) was reduced to three points, while it was still twenty points in 1997!

As for the graph for the Labour Party, it should be read with some caution. It mainly reflects the situation of the British Labour Party, considering that the Irish Labour Party has a very low impact in the Irish party system and that the population of Ireland is small as compared with the UK. Until the early eighties, the Labour curve coincided nearly perfectly with that of Scandinavian Social Democracy. Then they diverged. The British Labour Party experienced a spectacular loss of votes in the eighties (most notably in the 1983 elections). In the nineties, there was a recovery to the average results the party had in the seventies, due in particular to its 1997 election victory. The electoral fate of the Labour parties therefore underwent more upheavals

and has been less steady than that of Scandinavian Social Democracy. And yet it should be noted that in both cases, the recent trends show a lower performance than the average for the first three decades examined.

Figure 4
Electoral performances of Scandinavian and Labour Social Democracies (1945-2003)



2. *The Electoral Fate of the Benelux and Austro-German Social Democracies*

What happens if we examine, inside Continental Europe, the situation of German and Austrian Social Democrats on the one hand, and that of Benelux Social Democrats on the other?

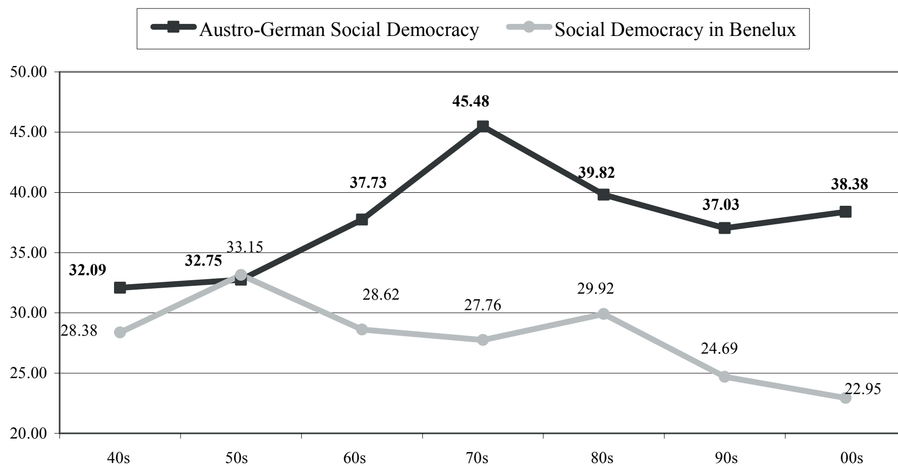
The prevailing set-up for Austro-German Social Democracy is one of relatively long phases. Up until the seventies, the Austrian and German Social Democratic Parties showed steady progress because they went from a low average of 32% in the forties to over 45% in the seventies. The curve then turned down. The Austro-German Social Democrats show a steady decline in the following two decades. Here too, caution is in order when interpreting the electoral results in the nineties and in the first part of the 21st century. The reunification markedly overemphasised the weight of Germany. In actual fact, the paths of the Austrian SPÖ and the German SPD went separate ways in this period. In Germany, after a long period in the opposition and very disappointing results in the 1990 elections, the SPD got back on its feet and won the elections in 1998. It had only had a limited setback in September 2002. As for Austria, after having dominated the Austrian political scene throughout the seventies, the SPÖ experienced a veritable descent into hell in terms of electoral results in the eighties and nineties. Results improved slightly in the 2002 elections. But this was not enough for it to regain control over from the ÖVP.

As for the Benelux Social Democratic parties, we note four decades of relative stability. The average percentage of Belgian, Luxembourg and Dutch socialists stood around 28-29%, with a peak of 33% in the fifties, however. Over a period of ten years,

this average percentage dropped by four to five points, down to under 25% in the '90s. In spite of the excellent results of Belgian Socialists (PS and SP.A) in the May 2003 national election, the overall performance at the start of the 21st century remains low. This can be largely explained by the *disastrous election results* of the Dutch PVDA in the spring of 2002, even if the Dutch Labour Party recovered their electoral posture in the early elections of January 2003.

It is clear that electoral developments are distinct for the two groups. Over the longer term, the Austro-German Social Democracy safeguards the upward trend of the global performance of European Social Democracy in the eighties and nineties. On the other hand, for two decades, the overall impact of the Benelux Social Democrats has showed lower performances, as related to earlier results.

Figure 5
Electoral Performances of German and Benelux Social Democracies (1945-2003)



C. *Nuanced Performance*

Beyond the obvious delineations that can be drawn amongst the Western European Social Democratic Parties, it is also possible to assess the average result of European Social Democracy in the light of developments external to the Social Democratic family. In this chapter, we present two situations that enable us to assess the context of the electoral evolution of European Social Democracy.

(1) The first element considered concerns performance as related to registered voters not actual valid votes cast.

(2) The second relates to the results achieved by the political rivals of Social Democracy on the left side of the political spectrum.

1. *The Ratio to Registered Voters*

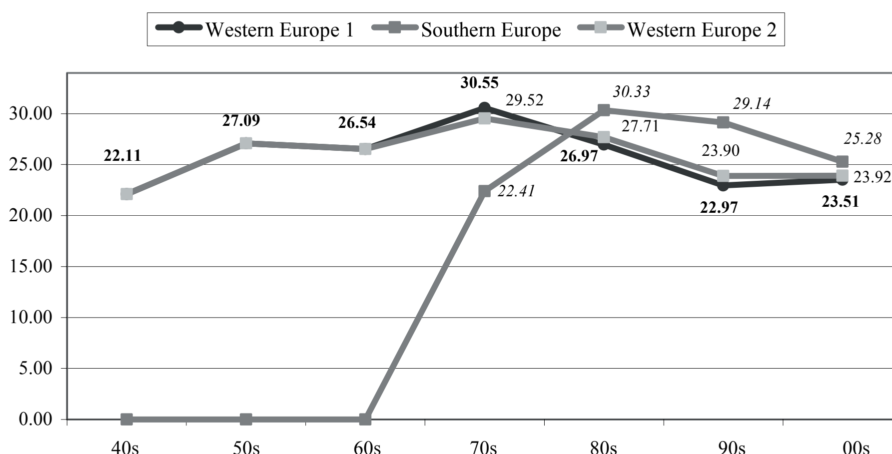
The issue of political participation or its *negative* counterpart, abstention, has been at the heart of numerous studies and many documents in recent years [17]. It was

therefore useful to plot the trend curve for Social Democracy in Western Europe in relation to registered voters.

Viewed from this angle, one moves away from an impression of stability – on the increase. The seventies proved a remarkable period from an electoral viewpoint. On average, the Social Democratic Parties secured 30% of the votes of registered voters. This is three points more than in the fifties and sixties. And yet, the electoral situation was less favourable in the eighties and nineties. The average score only reached 27.71% in the '80s and 23.90% in the '90s. The latter percentage also applies to the beginning of the 21st century.

First and foremost, this evolution confirms the decline in political participation of the past twenty-five years. The increase in abstention has obviously equally hit all the political rivals (left and right) of Social Democratic parties, but at the same time confirms the current difficulty Social Democratic parties have to mobilise employees and workers, who are their core voters [18]. Consequently, for the Social Democratic Parties of Western Europe in the eighties and nineties, this should be considered as a moderating factor in appraising overall apparently stable results over six decades. The chart reveals a paradoxical situation for the nineties: the highest average score ever achieved by Western European Social Democracy, calculated on from legitimate votes cast (34.50%) and the lowest average percentage ever reached by the same group of parties from registered voters (23.90%), excluding the very specific situation of the '40s.

Figure 6
Electoral Performances of Western Social Democracy (1945-2003).
Report to registered voters



2. The Electoral Curves for Other Parties on the Left

In order to assess the electoral results of Social Democracy in Western Europe, we also had to compare them with those of its rivals on the left. To do this, we examine the posture of two political persuasions: the Communists and the Greens.

a. The Communists

In some Western European countries, the Communist Parties have cropped up as serious political rivals for Social Democratic Parties [19]. France, Italy and Finland in particular come to mind. In other cases, they have been (or still are) capable of standing as non-marginal competitors in some segments of the working class or the peasant world. In the contemporary era, this is most definitely the case in the *new* democracies – Spain, Greece and Portugal – as well as in Sweden and Germany (Eastern). One could add left-wing socialist rivals, parties that are break-offs from Communist movements, in particular (people's) left-wing socialists in Denmark and Norway. Until the end of the seventies, that occasionally applied to the Belgian, Dutch and Luxembourg Communists. Finally, one must also emphasise situations with no genuine electoral rivals to the Social Democratic left: Great Britain, Austria, Germany (until 1990) or to a large extent, Ireland.

We have plotted three ten-year curves of average election results on the same basis as the one worked out for the Social Democratic group. The Western European 1 curve covers the thirteen democracies established since 1945. The one called Southern Europe includes the results of the Communist Parties in Spain, Portugal and Greece [20]. Finally, the curve Western European 2 includes the sixteen aggregated groups.

Basically, it is possible to distinguish four electoral periods for the Communist movement.

(1) The first period is the forties. It is a well-known fact. This was "*the*" electoral heyday of European Communist Parties. Towards the end of the war, at a time of great prestige for the Soviet Union, the Communist Parties achieved exceptional results. For the thirteen states considered, the average performance then stood at 16.5%.

(2) This breakthrough was followed by an equally remarkable collapse, since in less than a decade, the average percentage fell by half! This situation is largely tied to the impact of the cold war and to the spectacular reversal in trend recorded by the Communist Parties that had no previous historical roots.

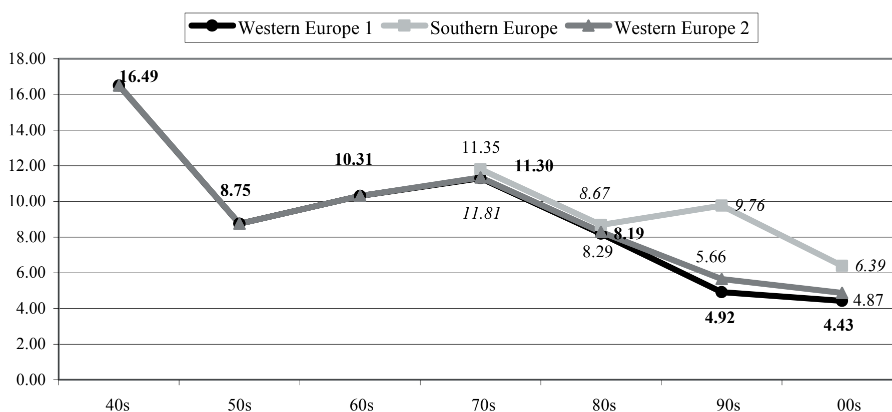
(3) After this collapse, the Communist Parties regained some electoral colour in the sixties and seventies. They took advantage of the détente in international relations and of the wave of student and social protests in May 1968. In addition, the Communist Parties from Spain, Portugal and Greece achieved strong results in the first democratic elections.

(4) Since then, this political family has been sustaining a second, even more spectacular decline. Predictably enough, the fall of the Berlin wall hit them full force. But the setback trend was already well underway in the eighties. Considering the sixteen states, the *extended* Communist family only reached some 5% in the nineties. And in this century, it is currently below that mark. And yet some nuance is required when reviewing the whole of the nineties; the setback is also due to the *departure* of one of the two largest European Communist Parties: the Italian Communist Party was transformed into a Party of the Democratic Left [21] and quickly joined the international Social Democratic organisations. The Communist Refoundation

Party (and today, the Party of Italian Communists PDCI) did take up the torch but its results are significantly lower than those of the PCI in the1980s [22].

It is therefore clear that for Socialist and Social Democratic Parties, competition on their left, in particular for working class and farming voters has recessed over the past twenty-five years. The average performance of Social Democracy cannot be validly assessed without this observation.

Figure 7
Electoral Performances of Western Communism (1945-2003)

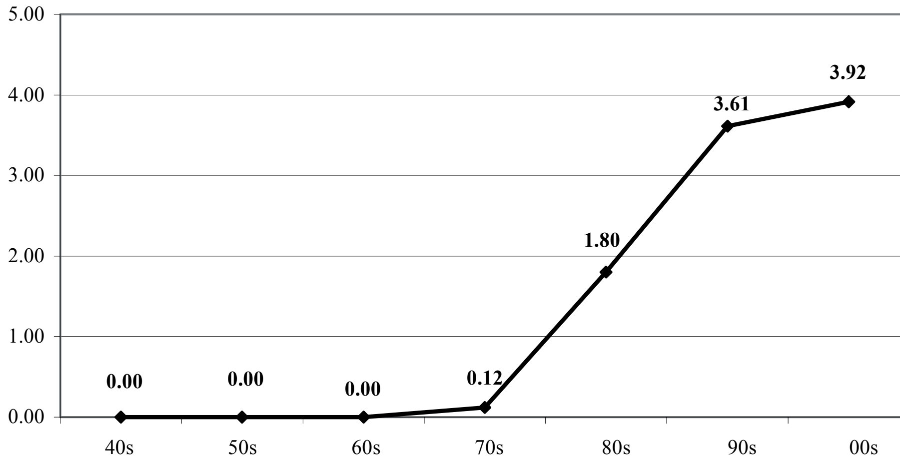


b. *The Greens or the* Left-Libertarian

Another political *family* can be regarded as a rival on the left: the Greens. In Western Europe, most Western parties belong to the *New Politics* [23] or the Left-Libertarian to quote the terms used by Herbert Kitschelt [24]. We should however stress that their rival electoral segments are not the same as for the Communist Left. While the majority of the latter attracts its electorate from working class and farming communities, the Greens reach the new middle-class of wage-earners.

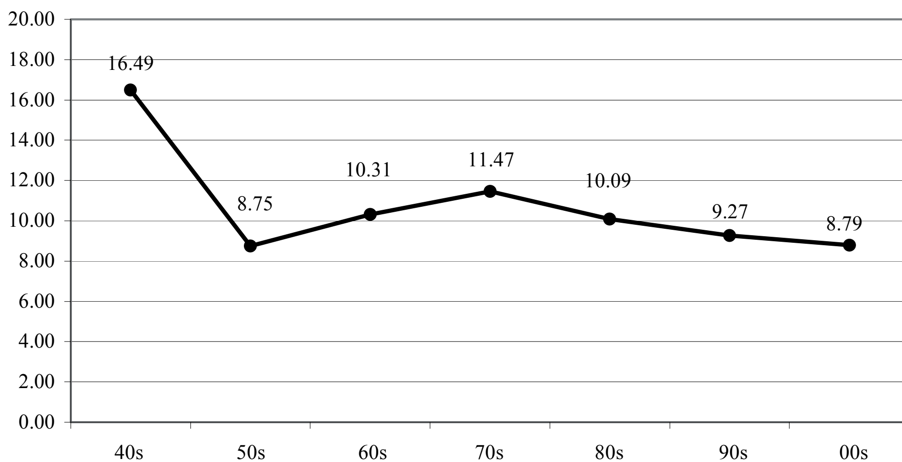
In a period of twenty to twenty-five years, the average result of European Green parties has increased. But this progression does appear to be relatively modest [25]. Indeed, the average score in the nineties was 3.61%. And throughout the elections that have already been held in the first decade of the new century, it has remained below 4%. Of course this picture should be cautiously assessed as this average situation reflects a variety of very different national circumstances. The fact remains that, globally speaking, the electoral competition from the Green parties on the Social Democratic Left remains subdued [26], especially when compared with the political adversary power the forties Communist family held in the eighties.

Figure 8
Electoral Performances of Greens in Western Europe (1945-2003)



Globally, therefore, and contrary to what the initial impressions could lead us to believe, competition on the left is weaker today than it has ever been for the Social Democratic Parties. Consequently, more than ever, Social Democracy is "lord of the left wing" in the electorate [27]. Seen from this viewpoint, Moschonas' forecast is not borne out [28]. The addition of Communist and Green results are patent evidence. The total number of Communist and Ecologist votes is lower in the eighties, nineties and the early years of this decade than the average Communist score of the sixties and seventies.

Figure 9
Electoral Performances of Green and Communist Left
in Western Europe (1945-2003)



In the end, it therefore would seem that the growth in the average Social Democratic score is achieved in parallel with a drop in the electoral results of the Communist family and in the context of relatively modest competition, all things considered, from the Green parties. Inside this *spectrum of left-wing parties,* the weight of Social Democracy has grown over the past twenty-five years. This also accounts for the remarkable overall stability of left-wing parties. Over the past six decades, the average percentage for the left has been fluctuating between a range of 41.44% (minimum average score) to 43.84% (maximum average score).

3. The Itinerary of Social Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe

It is rather complicated to make an assessment of the electoral development of Social Democratic parties of Central and Eastern Europe. The time-scale is in fact especially short. At best, one can only take into account a fifteen-year period. Moreover, the *Social Democratic* label has also evolved in most of the relevant countries. The parties accepted, as observers or members, in the Party of European Socialists (PES) or in the Socialist International have varying statuses.

Initially, the international organisations for socialist cooperation tended to be mainly involved with parties that stemmed from dissidence or opposition to a Communist regime. However, with the notable exception of Czechoslovakia, this option did not turn out to be very effective [29]. Such parties proved weak from an organisational, electoral and political point of view and sometimes created problems for the Party of European Socialists (the case with Hungary).

Likewise, rather quickly, the PES established links with former Communist Parties that were on their way to Social Democracy transformation. Nowadays, these parties are the foundation stone of the Social Democratic family in Central and Eastern Europe. Most of them successfully reconverted their doctrine and identity. And they have become powerful political players in elections and political life. The left Alliance in Poland (SLD) and the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP) particularly come to mind, or in a different context, the Bulgarian Socialist Party (PSB) and the new Romanian Social Democratic Party (PSD).

What are the main facts since the collapse of the popular democratic regimes? We should distinguish between three geo-political areas.

The first covers Central Europe. In this area, after the first referendum elections (for or against the old regime), the Social Democratic parties succeeded in gaining influence. This was especially true for the three main states in the region: Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary. In these three nations, the party or parties belonging to the Party of European Socialists achieved highly significant scores on a regular basis. On several occasions, these results have enabled them to secure government offices as major partners: in Hungary between 1994 and 1998 and since 2002; in Poland between 1993 and 1997 and since 2001; and in the Czech Republic since 1998. In Slovenia and Slovakia, on the other hand, the situation is more difficult. There, these two parties belong to the PES. Their inability to set up a coalition during the latest national elections meant havoc in the Social Democratic group since neither the Social Democratic Party nor the Party of the Democratic Left was able to win even a single seat.

In Balkan Europe, two features should be noted. The Social Democratic transformation of parties or sections of parties linked to the Communist regime is more complicated and less advanced than in Central Europe. The Bulgarian Socialist Party, the current Romanian Social Democratic Party (and the parties that preceded it), or even the Albanian Socialist Party do not meet the same *Social Democratic standards* as their counterparts in Poland or Hungary for example. This results in difficult relationships with the Party of European Socialists which has not yet formally accepted the Bulgarian and Albanian Socialist Parties into its ranks, and which has only just recently moved on to accepting the Romanian Social Democratic Party. However, and this partially explains the first point, these parties immediately gained authority on the electoral scene. By way of example, the Bulgarian and Albanian Socialist parties won the first "referendum" election. The Romanian, Albanian and Bulgarian parties have had access to government positions on several occasions.

The set-up in Baltic Europe is different. In Latvia and Estonia, the Social Democratic coalition and the party of moderates only obtained weak scores, which did not really allow them to play a significant role in the political landscape. The situation in Lithuania is more complex. The Lithuanian Democratic Labour Party (LDDP), heir to the Communist Party, is not a member of the PES, but the Lithuanian Social Democratic Party (LSDP) is. In the first half of the nineties, the LDDP was a key party. But its failure in the 1996 national elections led to internal reappraisal and to a clearer "Social Democratic" option. In the 2000 election, the LDDP formed a coalition with the LSDP, the Union of Russians in Lithuania and the New Democratic party. The alliance won 31.1% of votes (8.20% for the LSDP alone). This result led to the formation of a government with Social Democratic colours headed by Algirdas Brazauskas (LDDP). But we should not forget that at this stage, the influence of the *Social Democratic label party* remains insignificant.

4. Conclusion

At the end of this appraisal, what are the lessons that stand out in terms of the electoral fate of Social Democracy?

The first item that should be mentioned is the challenge of the supposed *obvious decline* of Social Democracy. On the basis of electoral indicators, the Social Democratic decline is in no way proven. So, our work confirms the sceptical approach of Callaghan and Tunney as to a supposed electoral erosion of Social Democracy. Over time, one notes a major stability in the average electoral results of European Social Democracy. Over a sixty-year period, the overall results for Social Democratic Parties in Europe have hardly changed. And while we can detect a few variations, they rather point to a rise – albeit modest – in scores over the past twenty years [30].

However, as we have seen, this overall stability includes wide variations in the itineraries of the parties reviewed. In this light, we could paraphrase Moschonas and his commentary on Social Democracy: "Diversity however, is the first impression the observation of this political force can give. Diversity of Social Democratic fates in history, of organisational structures and political achievements. Faced with such diversity, one may wonder what unity really means" [31]. Unity and stability in the electoral arena expose highly diverse routes.

Two observations must be singled out in this diversity.

1. Nowadays, there is virtually no longer any Social Democratic Party playing the role of the dominant party in the system [32]. Only the Swedish SAP still meets this label. But the Danish and Norwegian parties that over a long period embodied the typical ideal of the dominant party no longer fall under this category. This observation relates, to a large extent, to the current difficulties of Social Democratic Parties experience in the politico-organisational sense of the term: the observation that prevails for the Scandinavian parties can be extended to the Austrian SPÖ.
2. With the exception of Ireland, all Social Democratic/European Socialist parties are one of the two principal forces of change in national political systems. Taken individually and whatever their current stance, they therefore remain credible political and electoral back-up forces. From the *family* perspective, it is obviously the same.

Finally, the Social Democratic group's electoral averages per decade also lead to challenging the political phases often recorded. There has not in fact been any clear "*golden age*" or any marked "*decline*" since 1945. This should nevertheless be nuanced in the light of two facts:

1. The first belongs to method. The original bias was to try not to isolate potentially valid political periods but to work on a purely chronological basis.
2. The second relates to environments factors alien to Social Democratic Parties. We have noted, for instance, that the overriding electoral regularity continued throughout changing circumstances, in particular, with evolving electoral participation and potential competition (on the left). The curve of Social Democratic results should also be read with these elements in mind.

Notes

[1] For example, Bergougnioux and Manin speak about *the Social Democratic years* between 1959 and 1975. A. Bergougnioux, B. Manin, *Le régime social-démocrate*, Paris, PUF, 1989, p. 173.

[2] P. Delwit, J.-M. De Waele (ed.), *La démocratisation en Europe centrale. coopération pan-européenne des partis politiques*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1998; G. Devin, "L'Internationale socialiste en Europe centre-orientale: définition et rôle des "amis politiques"", *in* P. Delwit, J.-M. De Waele (ed.), *La gauche face aux mutations en Europe*, Brussels, Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 1993.

[3] K. Marx, Fr. Engels, *The Communist Manifesto,* London, Penguin, 1988, p. 82.

[4] A. Bergougnioux, B. Manin, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

[5] M. Braga Da Cruz, "La gauche et les institutions politiques", *in* M. Lazar (ed.), *La gauche en Europe depuis 1945. Invariants et mutations du socialisme européen*, Paris, PUF, 1996, p. 623.

[6] P. Delwit, "The Belgian Socialist Party", *in* R. Ladrech, P. Marlière (ed.), *Social Democratic Parties in the European Union. History, Organization, Policies*, London, Macmillan, 1999, p. 30-43.

[7] Fr. Engels, "Introduction du 6 mars 1895", *in* K. Marx, *La lutte des classes en France. 1848-1850*, Paris, Editions sociales, 1984, p. 66-67.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 74-75.

[9] F. Engels, "Principes du communisme. Forme : questions", *in* K. Marx, Fr. Engels, *Le Manifeste du parti Communiste*, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

[10] *Histoire de la IIe Internationale*, T. 16, Minkoff-Reprint, 1978.

[11] A. Bergougnioux, "Kautsky-Lénine: la question de la démocratie", *in La social-démocratie en questions, par des socialistes, des sociaux-démocrates, des Communistes*, Séminaire organisé par l'Institut socialiste d'études et de recherches, Editions de la Revue politique et parlementaire, p. 73.

[12] *Motion votée à la réunion du COMISCO des 19-20 mai 1948 à Londres*, Institut Emile Vandervelde's Archives.

[13] See the full text on the web site: http://homepage2.nifty.com/socialist-consort/SDforeign/SI/Frankfurt/FrankfurtDecl.html

[14] G. Devin, *L'Internationale socialiste (1945-1976). Politique et éthique du socialisme international*, T. 1, PhD thesis under the supervision of H. Portelli, 1988, p. 8. See also G. Devin, *L'internationale socialiste. Histoire et sociologie du socialisme international, 1945-1990*, Paris, Presses de la Fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1993.

[15] From 1940 to 1949, from 1950 to 1959, from 1960 to 1969, from 1970 to 1979, from 1980 to 1989, from 1990 to 1999 and since 1 January 2000.

[16] Merkel distinguishes two political times: 1945-1973 (golden age); 1974-1989 (presumed decline). W. Merkel, *After the Golden Age: A decline of Social Democratic Policies in Western Europe during the 1980s?*, Center for European Studies, Working Paper Series, Harvard University, 45 pages, p. 9.

[17] P. Delwit, "Participation électorale et scrutin européen: une légitimité minimale", *in* G. Grunberg, P. Perrineau, C. Ysmal, *Le vote des quinze. Les élections européennes du 13 juin 1999*, Paris, Presses de Sciences Po, 2000, p. 295-315; F. Subileau and M.-F. Toinet, *Les chemins de l'abstention: une comparaison franco-américaine*, Paris, La découverte, 1993; A. Blais, *To vote or not to vote?: the merits and limits of rational choice theory*, Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000.

[18] L. Togeby, "The nature of declining Party membership in Denmark: Causes and Consequences", *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 15, 1992, p. 1-19; D.-L. Seiler, *Les partis

politiques en Occident : sociologie historique du phénomène partisan, Paris, Ellipses, 2003; G. Moschonas, *In the Name of Social Democracy. The Great Transformation from 1945 to the Present*, London, Verso, 2001.

[19] P. Delwit, J.-M. De Waele, J. Gotovitch, *L'Europe des Communistes*, Brussels, Complexe, 1992; P. Heywood, M. Bull (ed.), *West European Communist Parties after the revolutions of 1989*, New York, St Martins' Press, 1994; M. Waller, M. Fennema (ed.), *Communist Parties in Western Europe: decline or adaptation?*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1988.

[20] In the Portuguese and Spanish cases, the figures are slightly higher because they include the results of coalitions in which the Communist party prevails.

[21] P. Ignazi, *Dal PCI al PDS*, Bologne, Il Mulino, 1992.

[22] J.-Y. Dormagen, *I comunisti. Dal PCI alla nascita di Rifondazione comunista. Una semiologia politica*, Rome, Koine, 1996.

[23] Thomas Poguntke, "New Politics and Party Systems: The emergence of a new type of party?", *West European Politics*, 17/1,1987, p. 76-88.

[24] H. Kitschelt, "Left-Libertarian Parties: Explaining Innovation in Competitive Party Systems", *World Politics*, 40/2, p. 194-234.

[25] The results are slightly under-valued insofar as the results of Spanish and Portuguese Greens are integrated into those of the Communist left.

[26] P. Mair, "Evaluation des performances politiques des partis verts en Europe", *in* P. Delwit, J.-M. De Waele (ed.), *Les partis verts en Europe*, *op. cit*., p. 23-42.

[27] G. Moschonas, *La social-démocratie de 1945 à nos jours*, Paris, Montchrestien, 1994, p. 52. See also G. Moschonas, *In the Name of Social Democracy. The Great Transformation from 1945 to the Present*, *op. cit*.

[28] The "left" wing of the political scene is no longer an arena virtually without competition, a uniform ground, predominantly governed by Social Democratic law". *Ibid.*, p. 98.

[29] J.-M. De Waele, *L'émergence des partis politiques en Europe centrale*, Brussels, Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 1999.

[30] J. Callaghan, S. Tunney, "The end of Social Democracy?", *Politics*, 21/1, p. 63-72.

[31] G. Moschonas, *La social-démocratie de 1945 à nos jours*, *op. cit*., p. 10.

[32] J. Charlot, "Du parti dominant", *Projet*, 1970.

Ecological Contributions to the European Social Democratic Reform Project

Bruno Villalba

From the outset, Social Democracy wanted to end the confusion of values and basic challenging of solidarity ties; it was necessary to provide an alternative to the capitalist regime of industrial society. To do so, Social Democracy tried to reorganise solidarities, mainly through the establishment of a specific model of societal relations, from which stemmed the core idea of concerning themselves with establishing communities in the shape of supporter, trade union and associative groups [1]. The study of these forms of political representation went along with the will to reform. At ideological level, marked for a long time by the desire to establish a power base within the bourgeois classes, Social Democracy, after the Second World War, but especially at the end of the sixties, gradually turned to a *compromise* between revolutionary myths and reformist practices [2]. As a result, Social Democracy became part of the history and sociology of the workers' movement. This project also took shape within political and trade union organisations that helped build the political forum (establishment of ideological references, combination of political approaches, formation of alliances).

In the meantime, the industrial conflict lost its importance little by little; Social Democratic parties were forced to adapt to a shift in production relations, in which social antagonisms largely exceeded the pay issue alone. Consequently, it became necessary for Social Democracy to carry out a reorganisation of its relationship with its voters (working classes but also increasingly going towards middle classes) and its political partners. The defence of employee interests was no longer the decisive springboard for working out a united election strategy or for assuring a governmental project.

At the same time, Social Democracy had to contend with the weakening of most historical cleavages (exploited/exploiter, production/sharing …). New divides emerged: changes in values; rise of new social movements and new parties (Greens in

particular); increase in the individualisation process (different relationships of general public to the various spheres of societal life: political, work, religion, etc.) [3]. The adoption of the values of individual self-fulfilment created new political relationships, but also created new relations between individuals and the representative system.

Finally, the Social Democratic parties too often had to cope with the constraints of political power management. They were committed to showing their ideological dissimilarity [4], as well as to establishing a political synthesis assembling a plurality of voters, which caused never-ending theoretical debates [5]. Mainly at the start of the sixties, the arrival of the materialism/post-materialism cleavage highlighted the gap between Social Democratic parties and a section of their electorate. The educated stratum of the population and a part of the youth have distanced themselves from a too technological and economic concept of regulatory systems set up by the Social Democrats. These parties had to simultaneously take on the responsibility of the capitalist management of a globalised economy, but while distinguishing themselves from the Liberals. They had to manage the years of economic prosperity, neo-liberalism influence and change in the middle classes. They adapted themselves to this new historic context, achieving a compromise between *State* and *market* and between *capital* and *labour.* The crisis years that followed this period of prosperity also forced Social Democracy to a new attempt at programmatic reconstruction [6].

Their main difficulty was to devise the continuity of the Social Democratic project with the appearance of challenges to the societal model they were more or less advocating; in other words to the industrial and productivist society. The signs of a slowdown in the growth mechanism went together with a confidence crisis in the technological progress model. From then on, the idea according to which the material progress principle would go together with social progress, started to be called into question.

At the end of the sixties, a few voices were heard, minority of course and mainly outside the Social Democratic parties. At Western European level, Green parties emerged in this context [7]. Their first appearance on the political stage, mainly in Western European countries, now dates back thirty years. They obtained their first elected representatives in Switzerland in 1979, in Belgium in 1981, in Germany and Finland in 1983 and then Austria in 1986 and France and Italy in 1989. But nowhere did they have the benefit of any broad electoral core [8]. It was not until the mid-nineties that political ecology became a governmental power. It obtained ministries in the national governments of five European countries [9]. The context was not the same in all these countries and nor were the coalitions that accepted cooperation with the Greens. Other ecological movement remained very far from power, such as those in England [10], Spain, Portugal, Greece, Norway or Denmark. Consequently one is far from the same situation of Green parties in the Western European landscape [11].

By virtue of their activists and voters' origin, their ideological project and their will to enter the political scene, the Green parties represented a problem for Social Democratic parties. Not only did they help upset the balance between parties of the Social Democratic coalition, but the issues they defended forced Social Democracy to re-examine its positions on issues such as the environment, minority rights, European

defence or North-South relations… For the Social Democratic parties, the Ecologist parties were as much an enigma as they were an election issue.

What contribution(s) did the Ecologist parties make to the progress of the Social Democratic project?

This contribution has three complementary phases. The first one tries to understand the historical connection between Social Democracy and political ecology. The second is to grasp the logic of the make-up and action of Ecologist parties in a Social Democratic political system. Finally based on the French case, the limits of this twofold global approach are underlined.

1. A Project Compatible with Social Democracy?

Let us start with a common historical fact. Political ecology has only been slightly concerned by the major historical issues that shaped the Social Democratic model. When this trend emerged in the European political arena, it became part of a political system in the midst of reconstruction. The political cleavages have moved away from the most radical forms of left/right or conservative/reformer conflict. As we have seen, the Social Democratic model itself is less and less an ideological reference of one class vis-à-vis the other, instead it has become a program of action more or less shared by the main political families [12]. From now on, the issue of Social Democracy no longer constituted a source of major conflict within political parties [13]. Political ecology therefore *benefited from a relatively cognitive opening*. Critics of the Communist model challenged the idea that it can represent a credible alternative to the capitalist model. But critics did not spare the Fordist model either [14]. The supremacy of traditional right-wing and left-wing ideologies started to fade away.

A. Programmatic Independence

At theoretical level, political ecology considered itself liberated from Marxist or liberal influence. Ecosocialist studies (Gorz,…) [15], eco-anarchists (Bookchin…) or eco-liberals (de Jouvenel…) also formed. But they only had a limited audience in activist circles. In the early sixties, political ecology became more embedded in a scientific study of the natural consequences of industrial development and mainly drew on a pragmatic approach to environment (like the action of nature protection movements).

By progressively expanding its fields of interest, political ecology has incorporated and arranged more or less elaborate thematic links between environmental and social issues (minority rights and domination relations, right to use resources and North-South relations). Each ecologist movement has its own mechanism, in line with the political history of each country. In each European country, ecologists offered a variety of themes that shook up programmes and policy agendas [16].

Such diversity revealed one of the main weaknesses of political ecology: there was no conceptual unity within this movement. Political ecology was far from having created political thought and as the history of European Ecologist parties has shown, it was, on the contrary, necessary to stress national specificities [17].

One can identify a few common structures in this study. The key framework has been built around the idea that one has to end the incoherence of values and deep-

seated inequality of the productivist model [18]. As Alain Lipietz noted, political ecology has sought to achieve *harmony* between individuals, their activity and the (natural or man-made) environment. A set of values ensued from this notion of *harmony* [19], which has been the heart of political ecology: personal autonomy, solidarity and conviviality, responsibility with regard to life on earth and future generations… [20] So political ecology broke with the *idea that human progress would be the triumph of the interests of one class.* Instead it proposed that needs should be organised according to the rights of others, whether they be other people, future generations or their environment (including that of animals).

Let us remember that European Ecologists share a certain number of values such as liberalism, mores, tolerance, anti-racism, rejection of authority, pacifism, third-worldism, and a certain distrust of materialism. These tendencies have been combined and ranked differently depending on the culture of the individual party and likewise varied according to the historical period of each one of them.

Simultaneously relying on social groups and distinct Social Democratic values, political ecology does not have a historical background that would make remembering it an obligation in the sense that it would have to take into account a philosophical tradition and political practice that would now be imposed as an action framework. Naturally, and we are thinking of the German ecologist movements in particular, the international context, still influenced by the effects of the cold war, marked the origins and political priorities of this movement [21]. However we are not in the same intellectual or activist set up, in the sense that all left-wing parties were reliant on the complicated relationship with communism, its criticism and its excess [22]. This did not mean that this context did not have any influence, but political ecology attempted to shift the centre of gravity from issues linked to *mastering the means of production* to the issue of *the usefulness of these production means*. In this sense, criticism did not just touch the communist model, but the capitalist one too, notably by stressing their ontological similarity, each one offering a particular facet of the productivist model. In fact, the ecologist movements wondered about the dominance of economic issues in the organisation of social and political relations.

B. Give Renewed Pre-eminence to the Political Question

But the criticism did not stop there; continuing the study established by Social Democrats on the relation between productive system and representative system, ecologists wondered about the aim of representative democracy. According to them, it would be too easily satisfied with a secondary role serving the economic imperatives of productivity, the salary issue and upward mobility via work. On the contrary, by developing opposition to consumerist values, ecologists wanted to promote a model of participative democracy in which citizens' direct responsibility is organised around key concerns (time, solidarity…) and no longer just market [23].

In the eighties, the movement was stepped up; the questions raised by ecologists took on new scope. The impasses of industrial society were increasingly more apparent, dramatically so (the phenomena of food crises, large-scale pollution…) or underlying (climate changes). Transversally, the ecologist discourse also intensified its message by more visibly articulating the environmental malfunctions and their

interaction with human societies [24]. It was no longer a matter of denouncing violations of the environment – considered for a long time as a regrettable mechanism to be sure, but necessary for progress – but of questioning the aims of the productivist model itself. It could no longer be about building a political link based on references to the productive system and to domination relations that it established, since from then on, everyone was more or less dominated. Post-industrial society has become a "risk society" in which each individual must assume a share of the responsibility for the current state of the planet and at the same time must face the uncertain consequences of the environmental risks and social disturbances this leads to.

C. Reinvent the Party Form

Finally there is a realm in which culture differences can be seen in broad daylight. At organisational level, if one refers to an ideal type of Social Democratic party, in particular in its historical and theoretical foundations [25], there are significant differences between the structure of Social Democratic and Ecologist parties.

First of all, it should be remembered that in terms of structure, Ecologist parties were rarely mass organisations! Their political apparatus was often weak, in activist as well as financial terms (they were often dependent on public financing sources to assure their survival as an organisation [26]). In terms of internal operations, they were far from creating a centralised hierarchical organisation, exercising tight control on its elected representatives and orchestrated by a strong ideological programme. On the contrary, the reference to *grass roots democracy* is omnipresent. For Kris Deschouwer, it is especially in terms of organisation and method of functioning that Ecologist parties have posed a "democratic challenge" to all the pre-existing parties [27]. The comparative analysis enabled the observation that on the whole, Western European Green parties used common principles to structure their organisation. Benoît Rihoux showed the key characteristics, such as the importance given to collective *leadership* by rotation, limitation of the number of positions and mandates, the absence of professionalisation of the leadership elite and the principle of male/female equality [28].

Then, it was rather easy to note the weakness of the world of work inside the structures of European Green parties. Their ties with trade unions have often been weak, with the exception of a few selective relationships with certain minority trade unions. In their sociological make-up, these parties were mainly made up of members that stem from middle and upper classes, with an over-representation of some strata (like teachers). Certainly, its initial objective was never to represent the interests of a particular class. On the contrary, its project was definitely inter-classist, not subjected to the constraint of class struggle relations and therefore for the ecologists, it was not about placing themselves in the electoral race with regard to the situation of a specific class defined by its position in the productive system. The objective therefore was to create political structures more open to social issues, outside of a class scheme.

Finally, their electoral base remained weak. Not only did the ecologists generally lack a large electorate, but it was fickle as well. As a result, they were not able to build a government party alone and could not envisage being the dominant party in the forming of a coalition [29].

This schematic view must not freeze as such the characteristics of Social Democratic parties. They too changed, starting in the eighties in particular [30]. The middle classes strengthened their position in these parties, working class culture weakened, internal power was concentrated in the hands of leaders and experts and finally, the activist structure was less concentrated, likewise the role of bureaucracy. The Green parties in turn were concerned by this sort of professionalisation [31].

2. Contribute to the Redefinition of a Social Democratic Project?

We owe it to ourselves to stress once again the artificial nature of this exercise demands that one looks for coherence in Social Democratic projects. On the contrary, one must emphasise the "diversity of Social Democratic historic destinies, organisational structures and political achievements" [32]. In a way, after such a longevity, it is not surprising to see how difficult it has been to suggest a definition of Social Democracy or even distinguish any historical coherence [33]. The changes in electorate attitudes, the shifts in the balance of power between parties, the influence of new values have all demanded a constant redefinition of these Social Democratic projects. Even more recently, this effort was further complicated by the globalisation process, which seems to be replacing the logic of industrialisation [34].

Consequently, at the same time one witnessed a redefinition of the Social Democratic project by Social Democratic powers themselves, one had to wonder about the influence of the ecologist project in this study. Therefore it was not just about a theoretical contribution but an organisational one as well.

A. What Can the Ecologist Project Contribute?

1. Contribution to a Study on Pluralism

Social Democratic thinking continued to scrutinise its relation to pluralism. This became a key issue in the understanding of its doctrinal (with its opening towards political liberalism) and electoral evolution. In the words of Bergougnioux and Manin, Social Democracy appears "like a form of government. It provides the interior framework with which individuals act (…) and on the other hand, on a group of values and beliefs that make individuals act (…)" [35].

The Social Democratic project wanted to transform parliamentarianism in order to make it more in keeping with the conflicts that run through society. Gradually abandoning the revolutionary principle, the Social Democratic parties turned towards a more pragmatic view of class relations and consequently, electoral alliance strategies. Their concept of the majority principle shifted to the point that they "from then on stopped identifying democracy with the simple rule of the majority (…) it is why Social Democracy gives such an important symbolic role to the choice of coalition (…). The decisive change was concerned with the concept of the relation between rivals within a democracy: a political force placed in a dominant position by universal suffrage was as such not entitled to impose, purely and simply, its will on its rivals, rather, it had to seek a compromise with them" [36]. This passed through a certain concept of party system organisation, but also the composition of political majorities. For that, it wanted to extend proportional voting, which the Social Democratic parties carried out at the time they came to power (like in Sweden, Germany or in Austria).

It was therefore necessary to associate social classes around a voluntaristic political project and give it substance through the management of political institutions. Social Democracy gradually accepted pluralist democracy.

Right from its beginnings, political ecology accepted the pluralist model. But it felt it was necessary to revise in-depth the methods for solving environmental and social problems, which meant a reorganisation of the democratic decision-making model [37]. Representative democracy had to be more in keeping with participative logic [38]. This happened through a more systematic use of the proportional voting system. The stakes were simultaneously strategic – since this voting system enabled them to obtain positions of responsibility – but also ideological since it was supposed to assure renewed democratic ties between the elected representatives and those they represented [39].

Likewise, democracy must presently take minorities more into consideration. A minority is not a deadlock factor in itself and it is suitable to integrate it into the decision-making process, both in the party but also between partners when a political program is being worked out just as much in the very heart of the representative process. Political ecology found one of its main sources of legitimacy around the issue of respecting minorities when working out policies.

2. Contribution to a Study on Social Fairness

Solidarity was the unifying and mobilising issue of the Social Democratic left. At present, this concept of solidarity has to change.

The ideological positioning of ecology in the leftist camp and in particular in the "new left" [40] was accomplished on the basis of an effort to establish fair and impartial relations amongst individuals. But the initial motivation was not in the defence of remuneration for a productive activity. Ecologists vaguely contributed the willingness to take into consideration, besides traditional inequalities, risk-related inequalities (insecurity, precariousness, health and environmental risks) and the inequality of liberties (globalised economic relations). They wanted to establish a new relationship between fundamental principles of liberal democracy and a specific concept of social justice [41].

As a result, it seemed necessary to expand and reorganise the realms of Social Democratic compromise by integrating environmental concerns, but also thinking on the non-market, the economy of solidarity, the third sector [42] by giving whomever the opportunity to join in order to offer a service to society, simultaneously offered on the market and producer of collective well-being; and finally, liberate women within domestic economy. In this way it would be possible to establish social relations outside the dominant economic model, itself creator of new forms of (cultural, sexual, geographic…) domination.

The question of workforce relations was no longer the key issue [43] and it even had to be asked differently: ecology also did not want to maximise the working hours of the employee and his/her purchasing power, but on the contrary wanted to minimise working hours with a purchasing power that would allow him/her to live in a dignified manner and in a way that was sustainable for life on the planet. The objective was to reorganise the aims of economic activity (by monitoring economic activities and tax

incentives [44]) in order to enable the coexistence of several production methods, a vital condition for succeeding in establishing a new planet-wide social justice [45].

3. Contribution to the Redefinition of Internationalism

The ambition was to contribute to renewing the political and economic regulatory mechanisms on an international scale. In view of the trend to market universalization, the possibility of an alternative universalization took shape in timid cooperation attempts of European trade unionism, in the European Marches against unemployment, in citizens' initiatives in favour of the Tobin tax, in acts of solidarity with regard to the Sans Papiers and the "*doubles peines*" (double punishments) in the place taken by the NGOs in the aid to the development of Southern countries.

Moreover, the ecologists demand the establishment of a global environmental authority in view of the present general state of alert to incidents of pollution, demand the reorganisation of international transparency regulations regarding the governance and accounts of enterprises, or international security regulations (in particular on defence and terrorism issues). The trend is clearly towards supra-State control, with a major transfer of State sovereignty to the benefit of international bodies [46].

For all that, the democratic worry has remained a matter of concern. If the State were to lose its strategic importance, ecologists have advocated the creation of intermediary institutions. Europe has represented a constant worry since their beginnings. It must not only gain political autonomy (with a federalist approach on a large number of European topics: tax system, immigration, economy) set up truly democratic institutions (democratisation of the European venue (institutions, participative procedures, transparency…)) but obtain a first rate political position (in particular by defending the voices of the oppressed and *sans-droits* (no rights) of the international community and by becoming a guide in eco-development) [47].

In terms of defence policy, the Greens have wanted global security that must not be just military. The Green policy has been centred around the prevention of armed conflicts, the understanding of the causes of conflicts and the development of means that enable resolving conflicts in a peaceful manner. Nuclear disarmament and the control of European military and nuclear technologies have been priorities.

Even if Social Democracy claimed its attachment to the European aspect, it has remained strongly influenced by a state concept of social change. On the contrary, the ecologist project has attempted to promote, following the socialist self management trend, a restructuring of civil society giving more importance to local authorities and even more by wanting to conduct a strategy of experimentation that one finds in the promotion of local territories. It was more important for it to theorise actions conducted at the "basis" and to respond to new social demands expressed by minorities (women, immigrants…) or new issues (environment, North-South relations…).

We should note that ecologists, like their Social Democratic counterparts, in turn acquired international bodies, commissioned to promote and organise an internationalist ecologist movement (for example, like the European Federation of Green Parties [48]; created in 1983, today it has 27 member parties covering all of Europe from Portugal to Saint Petersburg, from Malta to Finland and from the United Kingdom to Bulgaria). In terms of organisation, the main originality was the

establishment of a European Green party. The latter led the battle during the 2004 European elections, on a common platform that should have been formally ratified by all the leading candidates from European Green parties.

4. Contribution to an Analysis of Political Time

Social Democracy was established around a theory of distribution. Political ecology would be the new management field for production relations by taking into account the time factor, both in the use of non-renewable resources but also the current social equality and that to come (illustrated by the issue of North-South relations). Political ecology contributed thought about the time; it is the time of environment, the one for regional development; in short, the concern for future generations in today's decision-making…. The durability of choices has become a major criterion. It asks the question about the perpetuation of the social contract between generations, where the environmental issue is decisive [49].

These contributions have obviously not been the exclusivity of one ecologist movement. They were carried by numerous social movements (old and new…). The originality of political ecology is to have accepted to carry these discourses to the heart of the representative system by taking them along in the electoral arena but also in the decision-making institutions and to have translated them, more or less successfully, into public policies.

B. How to Contribute to this Redefinition?

As one might imagine, the encounter between Social Democratic parties and ecologist movements was mainly confrontational. By defending hedonist values linked to a degree of materialistic abstinence, political ecology clashed with Social Democratic tradition. The latter was still marked by the search for material security and prosperity. Driven by changing electoral demands, Social Democratic and ecologist parties therefore found themselves faced with the need to turn to negotiations and consequently to reorganise their scale of values in order to be able to reach an acceptable political compromise. In the straight line of its political practice, Social Democracy had to integrate the various trends of ecologist culture into its project if it wanted to maintain its dominant position.

Moreover, by stressing its left-wing roots, political ecology stepped up its pressure on the Social Democratic camp. As Gerassimos Moschonas quite rightly emphasises "the "left-wing" segment of the political scene was no longer a quasi non-competitive venue, a consistent playing field mainly governed by Social Democratic law. From that point on, it was subjected to a dialectic of confrontation, to language of competition (…). With it and its following, its internal unity deteriorated and revealed what it was "hiding": a complex political force that was socially and ideologically extremely diversified, if not to say divided" [50]. The Social Democratic parties were going to phase in various strategies to try to minimise the significance of the ecologist counter-model.

However under the effect of the shift in balance of electoral power and a certain awareness of the interest of environmentalist theories, they became aware of the necessity to adapt their time-honoured compromise strategy with this new player.

Even though they went on to make a few ideological adjustments [51], it was without great conviction that they tried to adapt Green and post-materialist values to their doctrines. They did so all the better when they did not present too great a degree of opposition to their own values. Nevertheless, this integration did depend on the Green election results. But it was done in a rather chaotic manner since the post-materialist and environmentalist playing field remained impervious to Social Democratic party culture (in particular, we are thinking of the difficulty in shaping Social Democratic thinking on the energy or salary issues [52]). So Social Democratic parties remained faithful to a particular concept of the organisation, theory, and conquest of power, which remained rather remote from the libertarian and associationist lines of ecologist movements [53].

As for the ecologists, the coming together of these two parties was not achieved without conflicts or deep-seated rifts. Paul Lucardie suggests a typology consisting of four main types: a marginal position determined either by the domination of a bipartisan system (like in Great Britain for example) or by the presence of another post-materialist type party ("Red-Green") that monopolises this political space; an isolationist stance corresponding to a "neither right nor left" choice, which most of the time only lasts for a short while in the party evolution (it was the case of the French Greens in their "Waechterian" period); a centre-left positioning coming with an alliance to Social Democracy; and a radical or alternative left-wing situation. Paul Lucardie stresses that parties are not confined to one category or the other, but they can go from one to the other according to the periods of their history [54].

Furthermore, talks held prior to the forming of alliances inevitably gave rise to intense debates within the Green parties [55]. The point of tension often emerged from the necessity to proceed to a reorganisation of internal militant culture in order to adapt to new issues. Moving to this realignment was not without consequences to the way militants pictured their future within these coalitions, nor to the priorities to be implemented with their partners. However, it is important to note that if they wanted to influence institutions, Ecologist parties found it necessary to make alliances, a condition for promoting participation in the executive at national, federal or regional level: the Finns in Vihreä Liitto (the Green League) in 1995, then the Italians (Federazione dei Verdi), then the French Greens in 1997, the Germans of Bündnis '90/Die Grünen in 1998 and finally the Belgians (Ecolo and Agalev as from June 1999). The Swedes have also been connected to power, by supporting a minority Social Democratic government since 1998.

It is still too early to draw up a global assessment of this encounter [56]. The necessity to carry out negotiations between Social Democratic values and Green values continued to arise. Generally speaking, when they formed government coalitions with Social Democratic parties, Green parties were from then on linked to assessments of these governmental experiences. Conducted by the Social Democratic parties, they showed a pragmatic acceptance of liberal globalisation and the main benefit of financial markets. Social Democratic parties and their ecologist allies were caught in this contradiction of achieving social reforms by accepting the principles of liberal economic policy. Thus in France, during the campaign for the 1999 European elections, Daniel Cohn-Bendit defined what he called the "third left" [57]. According to

him, "the political situation and especially the ideological situation have changed. The Greens have formed as a political ecological force against a certain right-wing and left-wing ideology. We are making fundamental criticism of the Social Democratic and Communist ideological tradition (…)" [58]. He repeated the ecologist criticisms of Social Democratic tradition. The third left questioned progress, when it was not thought-out, and the *realpolitik* of the traditional left, by integrating ethics and human rights into its concept of politics. It wanted to associate at European level all the movements that for years had demanded social and cultural reforms [59]. This position gave rise to numerous internal debates. For some, there was confusion between ecologist thinking and "a policy that often resembled a social accompaniment of liberalism" [60]. In February 2000, Daniel Cohn-Bendit did it again and presented a text entitled "The third Green left is enduring, thinking and living politics differently" [61]. This text, devised with the help of several prominent personalities, developed Cohn-Bendit's political concepts on Europe, political ecology and the Greens. According to him, this third left had to meet four challenges: to last, go beyond binary politics, enable autonomy for individuals and promote the right to be different. His demonstration drew from discourses of crisis of political representation, of new forms of individualism or concern about equity. He wanted to outline a political perspective that took into account the changes that stemmed from the fall of the Berlin Wall and from economic and financial globalisation [62]. But to do that the liberal policy had to be adjusted: "The productivity logic of market economy must be arranged and structured by precautionary and responsible reasoning". At strategic level, the objective was to assure an expansion of the Green's electorate and to organise a re-balancing of political relations within the *pluralist left.*

For his critics within the Greens themselves, it was only a more "societal" variation of "third way" projects (English) or the "new centre" (German) [63]. But nonetheless, it gave too much importance to the liberal model in its ability to manage environmental and social problems and failures and so to move towards social liberalism.

Consequently, ecologists found themselves in a new situation in their history, which was to accept a track record whose results they did not always share and face a more radical protest movement that they could no longer channel to their advantage.

C. Ecologists and Social Democrats: a Dialogue that still Has to Be Realised?

The dialogue between ecologist and social liberal forces in Europe has essentially centred around the forming of an electoral coalition. But basically, it was easy to note that these strategies remained difficult to implement, since the theoretical foundations of these leanings remained contradictory to the political issues.

The electoral coalitions also remained globally fragile. In Italy too, the Greens left the government. The repeated defeats in the 2002 elections seemed to have ended the social liberal dynamics of the French Greens [64]. The French situation showed the difficulties in reconciling party cultures within the scope of a Social Democratic coalition. It showed that very often, the Social Democratic project was not seen as an incantatory discourse on the importance of State action and submission to liberal globalisation. It also showed how hard it was to manage an alliance between Social Democratic parties firmly rooted in historical tradition, marked less by its ideological

reference points than by its electoral practices. Very often for want of having simultaneously known how to start a fundamental debate on major issues raised by the Greens (like nuclear energy or immigration) and of having been able to offer them major positions of responsibility (for example, the absence of major ministerial reshuffling following the 1999 European elections), the Socialist party was not able to manage until the end of its term the lines of the Social Democratic compromise.

These coalitions did not necessarily end in programmatic changes that were favourable to ecologist ideals. For example, one noted that giving positions of responsibility to Green representatives was generally avoided (like in Ireland). The Swedish Greens (4.6% in the September 2002 legislative elections, i.e. 17 representatives), who assured the victory of the Social Democrats, demanded ministries, which were refused due to their stance on the building of Europe, which was judged too cautious. They did feel however that they obtained significant programmatic progress in social and environmental terms. Germany was an exception [65]. The score of 8.6 % achieved by the Grünen in the September 2002 legislative elections (55 representatives) gave an 11-seat lead to the *Rot-Grün* (Red-Green) coalition, despite a drop of 2 points by the Social Democrats. However they did not obtain any other ministries and kept those they already had (Foreign Affairs, Environment and Agriculture). Nonetheless, one should wonder in this case about the extreme personalisation of the German Green movement around Joschka Fischer, and on their actual capability to manage sensitive dossiers like the shutting down of nuclear power stations.

Finally, the unfinished character of this "ecologized" Social Democratic project, has left the door open for more radical forms. On the left in France, the Revolutionary Communist League wanted to influence the Greens and the other extreme left-wing parties to form a second left-wing pole as replacement of the PCF. Its project was openly to renew Social Democratic thinking by mixing Social Democracy to libertarian and to ecologist on a foundation of social radicality and "alterglobalisation" [66]. In Germany, the latest party congress of the Grünen revealed the necessity to form an "innovative Left"… But the European area has become increasingly more concerned about the presence of a nationalist-populist pole that could also influence how the content of a Social Democratic project will be worked out.

Notes

[1] A. Atkinson, *Principle of Political Ecology*, London, Belhaven Press, 1991.

[2] A. Bergounioux, B. Manin, *La social-démocratie ou le compromis*, Paris, puf, 1979; M. Sadoun, *De la démocratie française. Essai sur le socialisme*, Paris, Gallimard, 1993.

[3] Numerous theories emerged that tried to identify and explain these new cleavages. If one follows the general idea of Inglehart or Kitschelt, under the effect of the modernisation process, profound value changes were purportedly underway in post-industrial societies. According to Abramson and Inglehart, new cultural priorities were gradually being imposed in advanced industrial societies. Structural changes in the post World War II period (economic and technological advances, increased level of education, clear socialisation of post war generations, expansion of means of mass communication) were to bring about a gradual shift of individual materialist values (primarily emphasising physical and economic security) towards so-called post-materialist values (putting the emphasis on "updating oneself" and quality of life). The demonstration, enticing, did have a few limitations however. The post-materialist aspect put forward by Inglehart did not enable to understand the connections with political socialisation, conflicts between generations, and cycles of economic climates. It would be a good idea to add to this list the mechanisms of political changeovers of power, which ended up disrupting a bit further the evolutionist phase of the post-materialist theory.

H. Kitschelt, *The Transformation of European Social Democracy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994; P. Abramson, R. Inglehart, *Value Change in Global Perspective*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1995; D.L. Seiler, "Comment classer les partis verts en Europe?", *in* P. Delwit, J.-M. De Waele (ed.), *Les partis verts en Europe,* Brussels, Complexe, 1999, p. 43-62.

[4] Simply stated, the ideology represented a global societal concept and the values that had to establish it.

[5] H. Rey, F. Subileau, *Les militants socialistes à l'épreuve du pouvoir*, Paris, Presses de la Fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1999.

[6] F. Scharpf, *Crisis and Choice in European Social Democracy*, New York, Cornell University Press, 1991.

[7] D. Richardson, Ch. Rootes (ed.), *The Green Challenge. The Development of Green parties in Europe*, London, New York, Routledge, 1995

[8] J. Vialatte, *Les partis verts en Europe occidentale*, Paris, Economica, 1996.

[9] In 1995, Finnish Greens got into government within a coalition made up of the Socialist party, the Left Alliance, the Swedish minority party, and the conservatives of the National Coalition. Then in 1996, it was the Italian Greens who, following the election win of the centre left coalition, the so-called Olive Tree, were given a ministry. In 1997, the French Greens obtained one in turn in the government headed by the Socialist Lionel Jospin. We should remember that between 1988 and 1992, the Green Brice Lalonde was initially Secretary of State for the Environment in the government headed by Rocard and then in the one headed by Edith Cresson until January 1992. What was new on the other hand was that the French Greens participated as political component in the majority coalition known as the "Gauche Plurielle" (the Socialist party, Communist party, the Mouvement des Citoyens, the Parti Radical de Gauche and the Greens). Finally in 1998, the German Greens (Die Grünen), partners with the Social Democrats of the spd, obtained three ministries in the Schröder government, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. P. Delwit, J.-M. De Waele (ed.)*, Les partis verts en Europe, op. cit*.

[10] F. Faucher, *Les habits verts de la politique*, Paris, Presses de Science Po, 1999.

[11] P. Lucardie, "Comment qualifier et répertorier les partis verts?", *in* P. Delwit, J.-M. De Waele (ed.)*, Les partis verts en Europe, op. cit*.

[12] A. Bergounioux, B. Manin, *Le régime…, op. cit.*

[13] M. Rocard *et alii*, *Qu'est-ce que la social-démocratie?,* Paris, Seuil, 1979.

[14] We are thinking of the revolutionary upheavals of the end of sixties.

[15] One had to wait for the end of the seventies for a greater theoretical attempt to be undertaken to reconcile ecological and Marxist values, for example. A study that is, to a large extent, still underway at present time. See *Contre Temps*, 2002, 4, "Critique de l'écologie politique", Paris, Textuel and A. Gorz, *Capitalisme, socialisme, écologie (désorientations, orientations)*, Paris, Galilée, 1992.

[16] In Germany, the Grünen defended an alternative concept of everyday life (communal housing, organisation of alternative schools, rejection of conventional medicine, etc.), that mobilised public opinion on environment and participated in the anti-nuclear and pacifist struggle; Swiss Greens re-examined community issues etc. W. Rüdig, "Peace and Ecology Movements in Western Europe", *West European Politics*, 11, 1988; S. Hug, "The emergence of the Swiss Ecological Party: A Dynamic Model", *European Journal of Political Research*, 18, 1990, p. 645-670.

[17] Hence the exercise was doubly difficult, because it called for the reduction of the plurality of practices into a single model and then for it to be compared to a model that itself was complicated and mixed and in a word, enigmatic… In a cowardly reaction, we are not going to take up the challenge! Fainthearted, we are going to try to understand the circumstances of a case study by trying – after all, one should not completely flee from one's commitments – to see to what extent this case does not match the French situation.

[18] R. Dumont, *L'écologie ou la mort. La Campagne de René Dumont*, Paris, Pauvert, 1974; A. Lipietz, *Qu'est-ce que l'écologie politique? La Grande Transformation du xxie siècle*, Paris, La découverte, 1999; T. Hayward, *Ecological Thought. An introduction*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1994; A. Atkinson, *Principle of Political Ecology*, *op. cit.*

[19] Labelled as "sustainable development".

[20] A. Lipietz, *Qu'est-ce que..., op. cit*.

[21] H. Siegmann, *The Conflict Between Labor and Environnementalism in the Federal Republic of Germany and the United States,* Aldershot, Gower, 1985; A. Cooper, *Paradoxes of Peace: German Peace Movements Since 1945*, University of Michigan Press, 1996.

[22] In particular, we are particularly thinking of the major ideological work of the French Socialist party in its effort to find its historic legitimacy vis-à-vis the Communist model but also its conversion to the Social Democratic model, see J.M. Donegani, M. Sadoun, *La démocratie imparfaite*, Paris, Gallimard, 1994.

[23] J. Barry, *Rethinking Green Politics: Nature, Virtue and Progress*, London, Sage, 1999.

[24] R. Dumont, *Misère et chômage: libéralisme ou démocratie*, Paris, Seuil, 1994.

[25] A. Pelinka, *Social Democratic Parties in Europe*, New York, Praeger, 1983; G. Moschonas, *La social-démocratie de 1945 à nos jours*, Paris, Montchrestien, 1994, p. 27-47.

[26] For example, the French Greens had to cope with a serious financial crisis following the poor election results in the 2002 general elections.

[27] K. Deschouwer, « The Decline of Consociationalism and the Reluctant Modernization of Belgian Mass Parties », *in* R. S Katz, P. Mair (ed.), *How Parties Organize. Change and Adaptation in Party Organisations in Western Democracies*, London, Sage, p. 80-108.

[28] B. Rihoux, *Les partis politiques: organisations en changement. Le test des écologistes*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2001, p. 231.

[29] P. Delwit, J.-M. De Waele (ed.), *Les partis verts en Europe, op. cit.*; B. Villalba, « Les écologistes à l'heure du pragmatisme », *in* P. Bréchon (ed.), *Les partis politiques français*, Paris, La documentation française, 2001, p. 127-149; B. Rihoux, *Les partis politiques…, op. cit*.

[30] R. Ladrech, Ph. Marlière (ed.), *Social Democratic parties in the European Union, History, Organization, Policies,* London, Macmillan Press, 1999.

[31] B. Rihoux, *Les partis politiques…, op. cit*.

[32] G. Moschonas, *La social-démocratie…, op. cit*

[33] Ch. Pierson, *Hard Choices. Social Democracy in the Twenty-First Century*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2001.

[34] A. Gamble, A. Wright (ed.), *The New Social Democracy*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1999.

[35] A. Bergounioux, B. Manin, *Le régime…, op. cit.*, p. 185.

[36] *Ibid*., p. 44-45.

[37] J. Barry, *Rethinking, op. cit.*; B. Villalba, « Les verts: pour une République girondine », *Pouvoirs locaux*, 51/iv, 2001, p. 59-64.

[38] B. Doherty, M. de Geus (ed.), *Democracy and Green Political Theory: Sustainability, Rights and Citizenship*, London, Routledge, 1996.

[39] B. Villalba, « Les usages politiques du bilan, ou l'intégration assumée des verts », *in* P. Delwit, J.-M. De Waele (éd.), *Les partis verts en Europe*, *op. cit*, p. 85-112.

[40] With the exception of Austria and Switzerland, where conservative green parties have been challenging leftist green parties.

[41] M. O'Neill, *Green Parties and Political Change in Contemporary Europe*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 1997; W. Rüdig, *Green Politics*, Edimburg, Edinburgh University Press, 1990; J. Barry, *Rethinking…, op. cit.*

[42] A. Lipietz, *Pour le tiers secteur. L'économie sociale et solidaire: pourquoi, comment?,* Paris, La découverte – La documentation française, 2001.

[43] A. Gorz, *Métamorphose du travail. Quête de sens. Critique de la raison économique*, Paris, Galilée, 1988; A. Lipietz, *La société en sablier. Le partage du travail contre la déchirure sociale*, Paris, La découverte, 1998.

[44] See B. Rihoux, "Ecotaxes on the Belgian Agenda, 1995 and Beyond: Environment and Economy at the Heart of the Power Struggle", *in* S. Young (ed.), *The Emergence of Environmental Modernisation*, London, Routledge, 2000.

[45] The economic and social strategy of ecologists remained very vague: it still did not present any fundamental differences compared to its rivals (in particular the radical left-wing parties) and it had trouble reconciling moral aspirations of equality and economic efficiency.

[46] M. de Geus, "The ecological Restructuring of the State", *in* B. Doherty, M. de Geus (ed.), *Democracy and Green Political Theory: Sustainability, Rights and Citizenship*, London, Routledge, 1996, p. 188-211.

[47] E. Bomberg, *Green Parties and Politics in the European Union,* London, Routledge, 1998.

[48] C. Van de Walle, "La Fédération européenne des partis verts: une organisation plutôt européenne qu'écologiste", *in* P. Delwit, E. Külahci, C. Van de Walle (ed.), *Les fédérations européennes de partis. Organisation et influence*, Brussels, Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 2001, p. 141-153.

[49] B. Villalba, "Les temps de l'écologie politique", pirev-geode, *Les temps de l'environnement*, Toulouse, Presses Universitaires du Mirail, p. 79-92.

[50] G. Moschonas, *La social-démocratie…*, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

[51] *Ibid*., p. 98-102.

[52] See H. Siegmann, *The Conflict Between…, op. cit*.

[53] H. Kitschelt, "Left libertarian parties: Explaining innovation in competitive party Systems", *World Politics*, 1988, xl, p. 204-209.

[54] P. Lucardie, « Comment qualifier… », *op. cit.*, p. 63-70.

[55] For Belgium see P. Delwit, « Ecolo: les défis du « plus grand » des partis verts en Europe », *in* P. Delwit, J.-M. De Waele (ed.), *Les partis verts en Europe, op. cit*, p. 113-138.

[56] Made even more difficult by the comparative approach. The prospects look uncertain in fact. The coalitions ended in Italy and France; they remained in the minority in Ireland… On the other hand, they enabled Schröder's Social Democratic party to stay in power. We should mention the case of Finland that was an exception since the Greens integrated into a government coalition that included at least one right-wing partner.

[57] The "second left" was launched by Michel Rocard to demonstrate his difference with the traditional left. At the start, this political movement that included, besides the Rocardians of the Socialist party, the leadership circles of the CFDT (in the Edmond Maire era), claimed to privilege negotiation on law and civil society over the State. See J.M. Bockel, *La 3e gauche: petit manifeste social-libéral*, L'Archer, 1999.

[58] D. Cohn-Bendit, "L'Europe vaut plus qu'une campagne...", *Vert-Infos*, Spécial AG, 21-27 novembre 1998, 517.

[59] D. Cohn-Bendit, *Une envie de politique*, Paris, La Découverte, 1999.

[60] J.-P. Lemaire, "L'écologie n'est pas soluble dans la social-démocratie", *Vert-Infos*, Spécial AG, 517, 21-27 novembre 1998.

[61] Published in the newspaper *Libération* of February the 22nd 2000 and presented the 26th of February at the Etats généraux de l'écologie politique.

[62] During the General Meeting in Toulouse, on 11 and 12 November 2000, Daniel Cohn-Bendit represented the "TGV" ("*troisième gauche verte*" – third green left) sensibility. The text was more intended to create debate than to define a line of direction in the Green leadership

[63] A. Lipietz, "Pour une troisième gauche qui ne glisse pas vers la deuxième", *Mouvements*, 2000, 9.

[64] In the 2002 presidential election, the Socialist party lost nearly 2.5 million votes compared with 1995 and with 16.2 %, suffered a historic defeat. The PC candidacy with its 3.4% constituted a new dramatic record in the disintegration of this once so powerful party of the French working class. At the same time, candidates from the Trotskyist tradition (Arlette Laguiller, Olivier Besancenot, and Daniel Gluckstein) totalled more than 10% of votes. S. Viellard-Coffre, B. Villalba, "The Greens: from idealism to pragmatism (1984-2002)", *in* J. Evans (ed.), *French Politcs*, Manchester University Press, 2003.

[65] In 1983, the Grünen entered the Bundestag and remained there until 1990, when they suffered the consequences of a major electoral defeat, since they dropped below the 5% threshold.

[66] Ph. Corcuff, "Social-libéralisme ou social-démocratie libertaire?", *Mouvements*, 2000, p. 910.

Social Democracy and the Choice of Alliances and Coalitions
Assessment and Perspectives

Daniel-Louis SEILER

"*Nous sommes et nous devons être du côté du monde du travail*"
Laurent FABIUS, "Les nouveaux marqueurs de la gauche", *Le Monde*, Thursday, August 29th 2002

From the very beginning, Social Democracy had to face the issue of alliances. Indeed, if at first it was a revolutionary force, if not in means at least in purpose, time and electoral success made it necessary to calm the expectations of its followers. Social Democrats had to reach a compromise between the necessities of day-to-day politics and taking part in governments along with political parties they themselves called bourgeois or clerical. This historical situation is not unlike that of the first Christians who, while waiting for the second coming of Christ, organized themselves over time and dealt with daily matters… After the Russian revolution, the Social Democrats were faced with problems stemming from both the disunity of the working class and the presence of an often strong communist party wishing to replace them in the political mediation of workers' interests. The Social Democrats had then to face the difficulty of reconciling their nostalgia for lost unity with, on the one hand, their opposition to Soviet hegemony and on the other hand, their position within their national party system.

This is a traditional problem for any reformist or radical party, especially if it aims to change social and economical relations. The question is how to reconcile the purity of the founding project at the basis of these parties and the requirements of government participation along with the compromises it entails. The Greens know something about this today. It was once a problem faced by the Social Democrats. Even if today many consider Social Democracy to be in a crisis, it has fairly well gotten over this dilemma, since it is still attractive to many parties which are trying to join the International Socialist and who are only Social Democrat in name…

Confronting the partisan ideal with the realities of power happens at one time or another for any political party with a certain number of voters. This confrontation depends entirely on the party system. Whether Social Democracy has a majoritarian

capacity or not, it will or will not be faced with the need to choose its allies in order to take part in a government with other, more or less respectable parties… This of course may mean contradictions or renunciations! Social Democracy, often moralizing, never chose its partners by chance. Thus, the choice of partners hardly ever was in keeping with coalitions theory's theorems. Transgressions are sanctioned by voters, as was the case for the Portuguese PS after its all too-realist alliance with the small right wing CDS party [1]. The requirements that any party faces as a consequence of its becoming *koalitionsfähig*, can not hide the fact that all parties must reconcile them with other demands stemming from their specific historical and ideological identities. First of all, this article deals with the specificity of Social Democracy in regards to the issue of alliances. Secondly, I try to gauge the position of the Social Democrats in the polygon of political forces as it appears today in different party systems in Europe and as it rules their means of governing.

1. Social Democracy and the Alliance Issue

All parties are not interchangeable in the face of the alliance issue: a political party can not make a deal without taking into account the will of its members or anticipating its voters' reactions. Despite what certain versions of the coalition theory or of the "political market" theory claim, i.e., that the partisan phenomenon springs from business considerations and the will to share positions and sinecures, the range of coalitions is very structured. Social Democracy has a nodal, clearly identifiable position within the structure characteristic of the matrix of governmental coalitions. This is partly due to the particular history of Social Democratic parties, to their idiosyncrasies and partly due to their links with "the constellation of conflicts and political divides" that structures party systems in Central and Western Europe, where Social Democracy was born. Thus, I touch upon the issue of alliances by going from the specific to the generic and from the particular to the general.

A. The Social Democratic Specificity

In order to speak of the specificity of Social Democracy, it is necessary to define the latter, at least *a minima.* This word, as all other partisan denominations, does not broach any tangible, massive and unambiguous reality that enforces itself as an evidence upon the observer. The term "Social Democrat" has multiple meanings, and forgetting this would lead to *Conceptual Stretching*. Giovanni Sartori has tracked down this gross methodological error in many comparative studies. Unfortunately, it is quite common in studies dealing with "europarties" as well as with political groups within the European Parliament. It sometimes seems that the federalist enthusiasm of many specialists of European integration leads them to analyze the EU as they would a national system and thus to neglect the most basic methodological precautions of comparative politics!

A double analysis, historical and comparative, shows that Social Democracy is a historical, political and cultural experience within the labor movement that a certain number of current political parties can claim heritage to. That is to say, part of the labor movement, only part of it, not the whole of it! For communist parties – another part of the labor movement – the word *Social Democrat* was long a stigma, on the

same grounds as *revisionist* or *reformist.* The word stood for the political parties that had refused to agree to the XXI theories of the *Komintern.* Nevertheless, some of the political factions thus stigmatized refused such a name. This was the case for the "Latin socialism" that the French socialist party wished to represent at the Epinay Congress when the party had to face the difficulties of the "tournant de la rigueur" under the government of Pierre Mauroy. At that time, Michel Rocard, in a subtle and penetrating study, reversed the communist analysis, and suggested that the big Communist Parties were in fact much closer to the Social Democratic model than, for example, the French socialists [2]. As well as from a historical point of view, as from the taxonomy, this observation seems valid, and I fully subscribe to it. I consider the reference category, the political family, to include all political parties rooted in the labor movement. We can nevertheless distinguish different variants within it. Gérard Grunberg and Alain Bergougnioux draw a distinction between different cultures, charter or labor, Democrat-Socialist or Social Democrat, of which the main parties are the Labour*,* the PS and the SPD. The Social Democratic variant, hegemonic within the 2nd International, encompasses, aside from the main core, several cultural sprigs such as the consociationalism Social Democracy (PS and SP in Belgium) or ideo-organizational like the Communist parties [3]. The historical proximity between Communism and Social Democracy, shown by Georges Goriely and rediscovered by Michel Rocard – both *in illo tempore non suspecto* – accounts for the ease with which the Italian and Hungarian communist parties later rallied.

While avoiding the temptation of conceptual laxness pointed out by Sartori, for the use of this study – the main object of which being coalitions and not Social Democracy, even though both are linked – I adopt a larger category than the one usually used to define Social Democracy. Hence, I consider Social Democracy to cover all political parties that stem from the reformist faction of the labor parties. This faction was under the historical cultural and organizational hegemony of the SPD. Thus, I encompass in one whole the political formations that were able to successfully implement the German model – with some adaptation to the local culture as was the case of the Social Democrats of the Benelux –, those that tried to but missed their mark, the "socialists" and the communist parties that chose to take on the reformism they were already employing *in petto*. This choice of grouping removes the revolutionary fraction of the labor movement, that is besides becoming smaller and smaller – Italian PRC, troskysts – as well as, on the reformist side, labor – the British Labour*,* well served by the voting for a single candidate, is not concerned with coalitions – with the exception of the Irish, who are not Social Democrats, but that I will bring up if need be in the second part of this article.

Marxism was a basic component of the Social Democratic model the SPD spread through the 2nd International. Its acceptance by fellow parties proved to be extremely diverse. Sometimes it gave way to a rich and fertile doctrinal debate as in Germany or Austria, sometimes being solely a rather religious ritual: as an example, Jaurès had to use all his intellectual skills in order to convince himself, as for Vandervelde, he was as great a leader and organizer as he was a poor theoretician… The Swedish SAP, the great Social Democratic party founded and headed by Hjalmar Branting had already forgone the Marxist doctrine. Nevertheless, Marxist influence on Social Democratic

parties, however superficial and limited to a simple vulgate – where the *Manifesto* and other polemical declarations often outstripped *The Capital*, Karl Marx's scientific work – was considerable.

This vulgate has often been misinterpreted and taken out of its editorial context by clueless epigones. The issue of political alliances occupies a central place within it. As it appears from reading the *Manifesto*, political forces mirror the power struggle between social classes. Hence, historical necessity will lead to the bourgeoisie defeating the nobility and the proletarian revolution following the bourgeois revolution. Therefore, proletarian organizations will first of all back the advent of capitalism and of bourgeois democracy, failing which the proletarian revolution would be in vain and the establishment of socialism impossible. If Lenin had literally followed the Marxist doctrine instead of inventing his theory of the weakest link, contemporary Russia would be in a much better situation… On the other hand, Social Democratic parties employed it word for word, until the World War I that is. As a consequence, the "text" only allowed the "bourgeois democrats" as possible allies of the Social Democrats. That is to say, for Marx and Engels, writing in 1848 let us not forget, the French friends of Ledru-Rollin and the liberal democrats of 1848 in Germany. But any alliance with the conservative right wing parties was unthinkable because it went against the grain. Religious socialism was also dismissed even though it was quite active in the revolutionary process in 1848 in France. The latter legitimizes socialism in the name of justice and not as the result of the unavoidable historical evolution, this ethical reference causes it to be the worst form of utopian socialism…The worse indeed as it intends to replace class hatred by love and to transform the superstructure done in by the evolution of production relations into the founding body of socialism. Along those same lines, any alliance with forces representing peasantry was *a priori* out of the question. Marx and Engels see the future in the urban and industrial world, hope lies in science and technology. All progress was born in cities, where the air "makes one free", farming is reactionary as long as it is not submitted to capitalist and then socialist economy.

Even though this text was the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* it had considerable influence on the Social Democrats. For better understanding, it is necessary to place it in its specific context, that of a political situation marked by the rarity of bourgeois democracies. At that time, only France and Switzerland had set up universal male suffrage, along with the northern American states that had already been using it for a while. The central empires were still marked by royal absolutism, even though it was abated by the state of law and an elected representative assembly. As far as the Scandinavian monarchies were concerned, they remained characterized by absolutism mingled with assemblies of states or orders. In Great Britain and Belgium, industrially the most "advanced" countries, where capitalism was strongest, the "orléaniste" oligarchic system founded on voting based on tax qualification dominated as the pure bourgeois power. Other, less advanced capitalist countries such as Italy or the Netherlands followed suit. In the power struggle in which the most basic democracy remained to be won, the "bourgeois democrats" were obviously the best allies in the fight for pure and simple universal suffrage.

These strategic considerations were not unanimously accepted by the Social Democrats, and even though they were quite clear – once set in their political context – even the ultra-left felt at times vague temptations of alliances with conservative, authoritarian or clerical forces. Thus, Marx and Engels had to fight vigorously against Lasalle, the flamboyant, charismatic and unpredictable leader of the German labor movement, who was the advocate of a political deal with Bismarck. The later represented the interests of the Prussian *Junkers,* i.e. the "feudal reaction" in the eyes of Marx and Engels. By setting aside the particularities of this likely manic-depressive character whose fascination for nobility cost him his life, it is understandable why the British trade unions wondered about the rightfulness of backing the liberals. In fact, they were daily hitting up against the relentless bourgeoisie while the *Tories* offered a social program much closer to the unions' demands and the conservative Prime Minister Benjamin Disraëli had just brought about the biggest electoral reform before the establishment of universal suffrage in 1918, thus allowing many workers to vote. These hesitations help explain the long paragraphs dealing with "feudal socialism" – that is the social or socialist-leaning and anti-capitalist wings of French legitimism and British conservatism – in the *Manifesto*. Because they were certain that history had a direction, Marx and Engels, refused all possibility of an alliance between all the social classes struggling against the bourgeoisie: orders were to back the bourgeoisie in order to help it remove the aristocracy, then face it in the "final struggle".

If texts remain, contexts change. Besides, if Marx and Engels knew Germany, France and the United Kingdom very well, there are doubts about how well they knew the Benelux, Scandinavia and Italy. How was it possible to recognize bourgeois democrats in different cultural environments? Belgium is a good example of such a difficulty. Continental Europe's most advanced country was entirely dominated by the bourgeoisie after the nobility – Saint Empire nobility – had more or less voluntarily quit the political game. Choosing between the secular oligarchs of the liberal party and the clerical oligarchs of the catholic party equaled finding oneself between a rock and a hard place. How was it possible to identify the "democrats" within those parties, both bourgeois, both dedicated to Manchesterian liberalism, both blind to the working classes distress, and were one's philanthropy answered the other's charity? The Belgian socialists were quite solitary in their struggle for universal voting and thus for democracy. Subsequently other forces rallied the democratic principle but both in the secular camp with Paul Janson and on the clerical side with Georges Helleput's Belgium democratic league. Applying the *Manifesto*-inspired doctrine could only lead to the POB seeking an alliance with the former and being suspicious of the latter. As the unequalled development of catholic labor movements latter showed (nowhere in Europe were they stronger, except Poland), this was not the best option possible. However the catholic party's hegemony left Belgian Social Democracy no choice: it had to find electoral agreements with the whole of the liberal party. Thus it found itself stuck in a secular "pillar" where it quickly became hegemonic. But the sociological boundaries of such a pillar was detrimental to the Social Democracy's expansion in the work place. After 1918, first the POB, then the PSB, the PS and SP finally, all held the Christian Democrats as favored allies, but the political divide, even in the power

struggle between Social and Christian Democrats, was frozen for the rest of the XXth century.

The religious issue – or, to be more precise, the progressive emergence of political parties strictly devoted to defending religion, and who were not "feudal" or monarchists – was, where it happened, quite a stumbling bloc in the development of the Social Democrats' strategy. All the more because the confessional parties were endowed with well established mass-organizations within the working class. These parties stood up for social-economic programs that were not very different from those backed by Social Democrats who had converted to reformism (with Engels' approval) and were on their way to doctrinal revision (even though they denied this). As a matter of fact, the SPD itself cooperated with the catholic Zentrum under the Weimar republic while at the same time refusing all agreement with the communist KPD (the animosity was quite shared) [4].

The *Manifesto*-inspired strategy broke on another great historic and cultural reality: peasantry. Scandinavia remained largely free of the feudal system and the peasantry was an autonomous class [5]. The agrarians became the favored partners of the Social Democrats in Sweden in a "green-red" alliance that lasted twenty years and shaped the Swedish social model. But the SAP had been the first party to move away from the Marxist-inspired doctrine, and its Norwegian fellow party who had joined the IIIrd International followed suited a few years latter.

Marx and Engels' simplest texts, the abridged versions and other dogmas that were aimed at presenting them to militants were a doctrinal vulgate that Social Democratic parties took on as they subscribed to Marxism. These texts solved the alliance issue but only as it emerged after the fiasco of the Proletarian Revolution of 1848 and the "Peoples' Spring" in Central Europe. That is, after absolutism was everywhere triumphant, except for the two most capitalist countries that had stayed aside from the phenomenon, i.e. Great Britain and Belgium. As it happened, the XIXth century ended on a very different political landscape. Everywhere, except for the Spanish peninsula, the partisan phenomenon had massively spread as well as representative assemblies, even with little power. The generalization of male universal suffrage in 1918 gave way to the establishment of party systems in the whole of Central and Western Europe, even if fascism's temporary victories put a provisional end to that.

B. Political Cleavages and Governmental Coalitions

Even if the balance of power between parties was profoundly modified, the constellation of conflicts and cleavages that was institutionalized after 1918 largely remained the same after 1945. It is utterly impossible to analyze it with the tools that were valid in 1860. A sociological approach is necessary. Nevertheless the national Social Democratic parties very quickly acquired an intuitive understanding of the new situation. I will underline some heavy historical errors: the SFIO refusing the labor project backed by Léon Blum by favoring doctrinal orthodoxy in measure with their practical opportunism and thus choosing Guy Mollet over Daniel Mayer. The same mistake happened in Belgium were the labor project was suggested by Christian Democrats who were at the time much weaker than their French counterparts, yet, at least in the short term, the consequences less dire.

Stein Rokkan's model of four political cleavages is a "*grille de lecture*" that helps to understand the choices made by political parties, as long as they remember the social conflicts that produced them. This understanding was not permitted by the one-dimensional perception of political parties found in the "communist *Manifesto*". This was outdated by the irruption of political parties, many of whom were "interclassist". Rokkan's classical theories are much too well known to be presented here. Let us simply remember that if parties stem from a cleavage, they are crossed by lines of fracture and that coalitions are not brought about as a matter of circumstance or opportunity but are also the result of a political divide. This means that, if a party is at a precise pole of cleavage *a*, it is centrist in cleavages *b, c* or *d.* However, this combination is moderated either by the cultural or social-economical roots of the cleavage: thus autonomists and Christian Democrats have electoral affinities, as well as Social Democrats and greens, etc.

Social Democracy's position in the cleavages system is simple: as a partisan fruit of the labor movement, it evidently stems from the "Possessors/Workers" cleavage, in Rokkan's framework, this matches Marx's class struggle. From this angle, the only absurd coalition for the Social Democrats seems to be the one with the liberal or conservative Right, whereas an alliance with the "social-liberals" – heirs of the "bourgeois democrats" – proves possible as long as there is a right wing conservative force. On the other hand, governments made up of parties resulting from other cleavages should be favored, at the notable exception of nationalist, authoritarian, fascist, neo-fascist, xenophobic and other such parties with whom any coalition is strictly banned. The exceptions to this rule – Finland, Belgium and The Netherlands – are all to be found in the last decade of the XXth century and their motives will be broached at a latter stage.

The range of objective possibilities for forming a government that the Social Democrats can pick from is not reduced to the agreement that favors parties that are not close to the "wealthy" pole of the social-economical cleavage. In fact, when the electoral arithmetic allows a large number of governmental combinations, they are formed along the axis of the significant fundamental cleavages particular to each country. If the model of the four cleavages is used to analyze all the governments that were formed in Western Europe since 1918, in democracies and aside from periods of national union, the result is eloquent, the "Owners/Workers" cleavage largely prevails. This cleavage already explains the birth of a large number of political parties, but its predominance becomes clearer if we take governmental coalitions into consideration. This is true to such an extent that it seems necessary to consider this cleavage as the rule, and all other governmental alliances as an exception. Accordingly, European political life is made up of the more or less regular alternation of center right and center left governments. The Republic of Ireland, and at a sub-state level, Euskadi, are the only examples where, contrarily to the other countries and for the same reasons, the "Center/Periphery" cleavage is massively favored. Albeit Ireland seems to be normalizing as it currently has a center right government. Belgium, another country marked by the crisscrossing of cleavages, experienced a few years of governments formed along the "Church/State" divide between 1945 and 1999. One of those governments lasted for a whole legislative term at the time when the "school

issue" was still rampant (1954-1958). The country also went through two short lived "unitarian" – i.e. centralist-coalitions.

The Irish and Basque situations are the worst shape of things for Social Democracy. It is weakened and plays a supporting role for the centralists or the separatists. The Irish Labor enjoyed a pivotal position as a Junior partner but it is now disputed by the more fashionable ultra-liberal Progressive Democrats. In the Basque Country, the socialists have given up all attempts to be a "hinge party" by rallying the conservative party. The position thus forsaken has been filled by the united Left lead by the Communist Party.

In other countries and as a rule, the bipolar system – along the axis of the "Owners/Workers" cleavage – turned the Social Democrats into one of the two major political actors in political alternation. This system allowed them to be a majority party, with the help of the electoral system in the United Kingdom, and without such help in Spain, Portugal, Sweden, and in to a lesser extent in Norway. As a consequence they can often govern alone, or, if not, at least play an important role in a governmental coalition.

2. Social Democracy and the Matrix of Coalitions

After the First World War and the establishment of universal suffrage, Social Democratic parties, at the exception of Switzerland, became *koalitionsfähig*. Their accession to governmental office happened in a context marked by the consequences of the October Revolution on the European Left, and particularly by the split in the unity of the labor movement. Thus, Social Democracy defined itself negatively by refusing the Leninist model and, implicitly, by rejoining the bourgeois representative democracy. This choice implied looking for alliances on the right and refusing, in practice if not in theory, to act in unison with the communists. Some parties, chiefly the French SFIO and the Spanish PSOE rejected this dilemma in order to fight on both fronts, and undertake the "Popular Front" experiences under fascist threat. Nevertheless, the strongest Social Democratic parties joined the coalition game with the "center" and "right wing" parties. This sometimes was their misfortune, as in the case of the Austrian SPÖ. However, following the SPD's example, most Social Democratic parties remained fixed to a Marxist-inspired doctrine, with the notable exception of the Swedish SAP.

Many observers followed the communist criticism. It highlighted the Social Democrats antinomies and even their betrayal, owing to the contradiction between theoretical radicalism – often still revolutionary – and practical opportunism expressed by lukewarm reformism and day-to-day politics. And yet, such a sentence is unfair. From the thirties to the end of the Reconstruction, the Social Democrats were spurred on by a purpose that comparative analysis enlightens. To a large extent they achieved their goals, when and how it was possible, with the help of partners that were not randomly chosen. On the other hand, over the last two decades of the last century, the facts seem to have been completely turned around, as far as both the project and coalition choices are involved. There is a deep contrast between a clear and structured assessment, and vague and uncertain perspectives.

Assessment

Lipset and Rokkan defined political parties as agents of conflicts and tools of their integration. Social Democracy does not elude this rule, quite to the contrary its history exemplifies it almost too perfectly. In the past, in a book marked by structural Marxism, I had applied this conception of political parties in a theory of the stages of conflict integration. I distinguished between four successive stages resulting from the contradictions of global society: struggles, conflicts *sensu stricto*, cleavages and consensus. Struggles meant sporadic and unorganized violence, conflicts amounted to the organizational and strategic stage, whereas, once the threshold of institutionalization is crossed, cleavages express stable social cultural and ideological oppositions. The latter are marked by the animosity felt at the ground-roots level on each side that is tempered by the constant top-level negotiations between the respective partisan elite. The consensus stage is the temporary end of the integration process that culminates in a fierce competition between twin parties for the prebends of power. This stage is threatened by a resurgence of the struggles and conflicts. I had concluded *in tempore non suspecto* that, in the alliance of Western nations, the United States were the only ones to have reached the consensus stage [6].

European countries were at the time striking examples of cleavages marked by class opposition crisscrossed by one or the other of the other three defined by Rokkan. In such a configuration parties protecting workers' rights, i.e. Social Democracy, were a dominant pole. The major difference between the European and the American party system lies in the latter's ignorance of Social Democratic parties [7]. The fact of raising the issue of party coalitions first of all, then the issue of governmental coalition reveals the institutionalization of these parties. They are from then on *incorporated* in the party system and have relinquished all revolutionary ambition. Social Democracy was the main, and until 1918, the only partisan expression of the labor movement, and for a century was a major challenge to the capitalist order. In the 1980s various parties, of whom the French PS but mostly the British Labour still meant to deeply change production and trade relations in a way more favorable to the workers.

The labor movement and particularly Social Democracy, the main opposition to the market, are historically characterized by their strong will to theorize the strategy they use to get into power. For a long time, this theorization took place in the international bodies of the movement, and when it was not, it was copied by the different national parties. This fact gives a great coherence to the set of alliances that were concluded. This peculiarity is a godsend for historians as well as for political scientists because it allows them to study a European political space. Therefore, three main evolutionary phases can be found in the system of governmental coalitions in which the Social Democrats took part: the sacred union and the opportunistic coalitions after the First World War, the "European New Deal" and the Reconstruction.

Let us note, in the first place, that the first wave of Social Democratic governmental participation follows the first and very heavy fiasco of the international labor movement: the First World War. The Workers' International had not been able to prevent the conflict, nor had it been transformed into a socialist revolution. Worst of all, the Bolchevik Revolution happened in a pre-capitalist country, led by authoritarian rule, agrarian and industrially backward. This accidental revolution,

contrary to the Marxist model, presumably interesting for nations that will later be called "underdeveloped", will nevertheless be set up as a universal model, thus completing the split in the labor movement that will last over half a century. Social Democracy's participation in "Sacred Union" governments played quite an important role in the birth of Communist Parties that will put their hopes in the USSR's success. It also had an influence on the legitimacy of reformist parties and their "bourgeois respectability" since these political formations were thus integrated in the game of governmental coalitions.

There is no doubt that Social Democracy's problem at the beginning of the XXth century remains the fact that its coming to power happened in an unexpected way, far from all the elaborate strategies. Quite an important paradox is that the Social Democrats were taking part in the rationalization of capitalism and in the process of *Recasting Bourgeois Europe*, as described by Charly Maier [8]. As a matter of fact, this participation in the rescue of the "established disorder" was not felt by the actors or the organizations – apart from the future communists – as a shift in the International's strategy, but rather as a confirmation of it. This strategy aimed to help the bourgeois Revolution and liberal democracy because they were prerequisites to any socialist social and economic transformation. It is worthwhile to note that, with the exception of France, Switzerland and then Italy (the latter having voted on the principle), no European country had experienced representative democracy based on universal, if masculine, suffrage [9]. Most of the nations of the Old Continent were ruled by a census oligarchy along the lines of the Westminster Model, while the central Empires, followed by Sweden in 1909, used universal suffrage without democracy as the government remained dependent on the Monarch. Accordingly *One Man, One Vote* and representative government became, increasingly, the labor movement's main objective.

This prospect was far from outdating the strategic imperative required by the *Manifesto*: assistance and alliance with the bourgeois democrats whose help was sought out. However, in the first three decades of the twentieth century, what could be the point of a notion drafted in 1848, in the heat of the battle by Marx and Engels? Its concrete expression was the backing of liberal governments in Sweden, the constitution of electoral cartels as in Belgium before 1914 or coalition governments like the one headed by Ramsay Mac Donald in Great Britain (1929-1931). However, as I have often mentioned, the word "liberal" has many meanings. Thus, the clear identification of the liberal democrat or of the bourgeois democrat was far from obvious. Many liberals had untiringly battled against the principle of universal suffrage whereas the clerics of Christian Democracy preached it [10]. Moreover, the same Christian Democrats fought for the material and moral interests of the working class, while many liberals saw those interests as a threat to the freedom of enterprise. Once representative democracy was established, these contradictions between theory and social reality became painfully obvious. Often, as in Belgium, potential partners only accepted an alliance with the socialists in the framework of a tripartite national union (liberals, Catholics and Belgian workers' party). A few parties rejected any participation in a "bourgeois" government, like the SFIO who did not risk itself further than supporting without participating. Nevertheless, this support was part of

electoral deals, as in the case of the "cartel of the Lefts", Herriot's government that went to pieces against the "Wall of money". At the same time, the Belgian Poullet-Vandervelde government had the same fate but its composition was different from the classic structure of the time. It actually rested upon the alliance between the Social Democrats and the left wing of the Christian Democrats, backed by the socialist (CGTB) and Christian (CSC) trade unions. It is true to say that the SPD, the leading light of the International Socialist, paved the way by interpreting the notion of "bourgeois democrats" in a very flexible way. It took part in governmental coalitions that were the result of a compromise between the party and the other strong opposition force under the Empire: the Zentrum, the very clerical center. This "Weimar coalition" was also made up of the DVP (German popular party) that had once been, as a national-liberal party, one of the supporters of the imperial governments. The only liberal-democrats to be found are the DDP (Democratic Party), what is more, a minor partner in the coalition. Yet, this coalition aimed at defending the Republic and strengthening democracy had to count on the unwilling support of parts of the Zentrum and of the DVP that remained strongly attached to the Monarchy, and where politicians that disliked democracy such as Von Papen raged.

The same ambiguity burdened the beginning of the Austrian First Republic. The latter in fact started under the auspices of the large coalition encompassing Ignaz Seipel's Christian social party, nostalgic of the Habsbourg and more social than really democratic. This government lead by an eminent Social Democrat intellectual, Karl Renner, harshly repressed the Communists revolutionary attempts. Therefore the bone of contention became still more serious between both ramifications (Social Democrat and communist) of the labor movement. In Berlin also, the *spartakisme* was crushed with the blessing of a Social Democrat-led government. In Finland, as the country was torn apart in a civil war between the "whites" and the "reds", the reformists chose to join forces with the former. As a result, and without wishing to pass judgement on anyone's reasons or on the Komintern's strategy regarding the Social Democrats, when the communist party had a parliamentary representation, the Social Democrats had to make do without its help, not even electoral, for that matter rarely requested. The Social Democrats leeway was thus reduced, sometimes drastically as in Austria after 1918 when the choice was between the clerical authoritarian Charybdis and the Pan German proto-totalitarian Scylla… A political double bind that the SPÖ refused, being *de facto* locked in a logic of civil war, that was lost for that matter and that consummated the country's end in 1938.

Part of the "International two and a half", the Austrian Social Democracy, following Léon Blum's SFIO's example, adopted a twofold position: rejection of communism, refusal to take part in "bourgeois governments" once the era of the "Sacred union" was over. Along with the French and Austrian parties, their Dutch and Swiss counterparts also stayed away from governmental practice. Switzerland did not resort to the parliamentarian model and where the main parties are traditionally in power, the "bourgeois" agreed for a long time to keep the socialist representation out of the federal executive power. In the Netherlands, that had stayed neutral in 1914-1918, the Social Democrats – SDAP – took part in the *Grote Pacificatie*, the consociative compromise that instated the universal suffrage as well as equality

between public schools and the networks of confessional teaching. But the SDAP's leader, P.J. Troelstra's awkward statement (because it was not followed by actual facts) that the German revolution of 1918 would not "stop at the Dutch border" sparked a wave of popular feeling and support for Queen Wilhelmine as well as doubts in the ranks of some centrist parties. Let me add, to be complete and for the sake of anecdote, that the Norwegian Labour party – very left wing like their French and Austrian comrades – agreed to form a government after winning the 1927 elections and after the King asked them, but they presented themselves on an entirely socialist program, advocating collectivizing the means of production; the Cabinet did not get the Parliaments investiture and the party lost the next elections.

Elsewhere in Western Europe, i.e. in Sweden as early as 1917, in Germany and Belgium, in Denmark in 1924, in the United Kingdom, in Czechoslovakia, the Social Democrats took part with variable success in the political game of majority and opposition. As regards to the long term exercise of power, only the 1924 Danish Social Democrat experience lead by Thorwald Stauning was conclusive, thus confirming the theory of the alliance with the "bourgeois democrats". In fact, the coalition combined the Social Democrats and the Radikale Venstre, – left-wing radicals –, who were social liberals and very hostile towards the conservatives. A similar situation was not found in Sweden, where, once political democracy was established in 1917, the liberal-socialist government was paralyzed, as were both minority governments headed by Sweden's historical Social Democratic leader, Hjalmar Branting (1921-23 and 1924-26). Neither was it found in Germany where the SPD played an important role, nor in Great Britain, marked by the failure of both Lab-Lib coalitions led by Ramsay Mac Donald. In Belgium and in Czechoslovakia, the Social Democratic parties took part in consociative processes, tripartite governments in the first case, and in the second, participation in the *Petka,* a complex deal among five partners – the national socialists (anti-clerical left-wing nationalists headed by Edvard Beneš), the Christian Democrats, the agrarians, the Czech right-wing and Social Democracy – that upheld a state threatened as well by its minorities as by Pan German feelings.

The outcomes of this periodic governmental participation were important. They were marked by the victory of Fascism in Italy and authoritarian *coups de force* in Central Europe, and finally by economical instability. Despite this, progress was made in social legislation – the most important being the eight-hour workday – combined with economic and financial policies marked by orthodox liberalism. These were deflation measures as soon as the 1929 crisis arose. Where the shoe pinches is that these governments practices involved not liberal but Marxist doctrinal orthodoxy, socialism was pushed off into a distant but radiant future. Léon Blum's famous *distinguo* setting the exercise of power – in the capitalist framework within a bourgeois society – against the conquest of power, summarizes perfectly the Social Democrat labor movement's phraseology between 1918 and 1933-35.

Except for Denmark, where Social Democracy was established as a dominant political force for the rest of the twentieth century, the labor parties policy of alliances between 1917 and 1933 was a failure. Electoral stagnation in the Benelux, Czechoslovakia and Sweden, internal crisis and defeat in Great Britain, victory of anti-democratic forces in Germany, Austria and Italy. Partners often became evasive

or dictated their conceptions first of budgetary balance then of deflation. The economic crisis but mostly the devastation of the SPD, the leading party of international Social Democracy, gave way as soon as 1933 to heavy threats to the democratic regime and brought about a theoretical renewal. The aim was to conciliate the Social Democratic practice and its theory, this meant, among other things, bringing up again the issue of governmental alliances, and thus, (in France and in Norway) breaking with the "wait and see" attitude that lead to the ruin of the SPÖ and that the fascist threat made obsolete.

1933 marked the beginning of a new phase in the process of alliances between the Social Democrats and parties that were not a part of the labor movement. This phase is characterized by a global change in orientation on two main points. On the one hand, the new "theory of practice" triumphs, a Social Democratic phraseology that is resolutely set in dealing with the consequences of the 1929 economic crisis and Hitler's rise to power. On the other hand, and as a corollary, the "how" question is from now on asked after the "why" question. The alliances are thus thought in direct relation with the program and justified by practical achievements. Public policies and new coalitions mark the assertion of Social Democratic parties in a political context characterized by the end of classical economic liberalism's hegemonic status. The World War I victors' optimism caving in, along with the banishment of the USSR, leaving way to an economic science that has doubts on the rightfulness of deflation policies, while the political scene is restructuring around the bipolar opposition between democrats and fascists. On the other hand, if socialists and liberals remain attached, even in a critical way, to their original *credo*, most of the parties stemming from one of the three other cleavages other than the one dealing with the opposition between Owners/Workers, join the twenty year search for a "third way". As Social Democracy simultaneously went through an intense job of revisionism, up to then unsuspected convergences came to light in programs of political parties that the socialist *doxa* had until then labeled as reactionary because they were clerical or agrarian, i.e. condemned by History's unrelenting progress.

As far as doctrines and their implementation are concerned, the thirties show a historical rupture analyzed by Karl Polanyi. Polanyi developed his thinking over the long term, the thirties accomplished the *Grande transformation* that took place with the post-war Reconstruction and set up the prosperity of the golden years that we remember as the *Trente glorieuses* [11]. A time when the capitalist West was truly an "Affluent Society"! In the thirties, the Social Democrats' non-conformist state of mind was expressed by a vigorous system of public policies, that Mario Telò called the European New Deal [12]. According to him, Europe experienced its own specific *nouvelle donne* in the face of the economic crisis of the thirties, Roosevelt's successful New Deal on the one hand, and the nazis' authoritarian military and industrial economic recovery. Social Democracy played a predominant role in this effort to upturn the economy and curb unemployment. This effort was characterized by the massive return of the state on the economic and financial front. Public initiative in the field of public equipment – the great works –, the establishment of a social insurance system, the implementation of fiscal redistribution policies in order to enhance consumption by the popular masses were also means of setting up parts of what Bergounioux and

Manin call the “Social Democratic compromise”: political democracy + Welfare State + Keynesianism + neo-corporatism [13]. This new strategy, this European Social Democratic New deal had two different occurrences: high and low, whose effects will intertwine during the reconstruction following the Liberation.

The strong option was put forward by planned-economy socialism that invented the theory that was going to influence the economical ideas of the Resistance, the French Social and Economical Council, and later on Bruno Trentin’s and the CGIL’s revolutionary reformism. This kind of thinking started in the intellectual circles close to the SPD at the beginning of the 1930s. The intellectual leader was Henri de Man, a Belgian but German-educated sociologist and economist, who came home after the advent of the nazis and followed a meteoric fate from the head of the POB to ruin by war and occupation [14]. De Man appears to be, along with Gramsci, one of the greatest socialist thinker of the XXth century. He combined Marx and Proudhon with a *sui generis* contribution and invented a kind of socialism that ruled out state-control as well as social-liberalism. He advocated a transition strategy based on structural reforms, and thus went beyond the sterile opposition between reform and revolution. Planning quickly became essential in the Social Democratic states of the Benelux – Belgian socialism speedily dismissed it to fall back under the influence of its opportunistic Demon –, it also stimulated the *Révolution constructive* tendency in the CGT and had a deferred but lasting influence in France thanks to André Philip. It also influenced the Resistance’s economic thinking, as well as *mendésisme* and the PSU; while its effects spread to the Labour Party with the help of Stafford-Cripps, making Clement Attlee, a Post-War Prime Minister a moderate planner [15].

Henri de Man’s strategy, embodied in the *Plan du Travail*, adopted at the end of 1933 by the POB, is based on establishing an anti-monopolistic bloc made up of the proletariat and the middle classes (independents, artisans, peasants) that are threatened by proletarianization [16]. This “economic majority” should result in a parliamentary majority whose partisan components vary according to the different national cases. Christian Democracy, where it exists, is a necessary and favored partner in the implementation of structural reforms, or in any case in founding a *rapport de force* conducive to the struggle against monopolies. As says Mario Telò, de Man “consequently accepts the policy of governmental coalition and encourages innovation in regards to social alliances. When, old and defeated, he analyzes the experience of governmental coalitions headed by the Christian Democrat Van Zeeland, his critical observation will not question the political choice of collaborating with the Catholics, nor the faith entrusted in the possibility of engaging his movement as well as the catholic party in a policy against monopolies and for social transformation, beyond the purely antifascist struggle, that had become the common denominator of joint policies after Nazism victory in Germany” [17]. As a fact, as it existed in the Benelux and in post-war Italy, Christian Democracy suited perfectly the political accomplishment of planned-economy-socialism; at least where the Social Democrats didn’t have a majority. By its links with the Christian Unions, it enabled them to combine the objective of proletarian unity with that of the alliance with the peasants that were controlled by organizations that had ties with the Christian Democrats.

Dutch socialism – and not the Belgian one, despite the fact that it was Henri de Man's country – was the most deeply changed by planned-economy-socialism. As early as 1935, the SDAP issued a *Plan van de Arbeid* (Labor Plan) that in 1945 gave its name to the renewed Social Democratic party: *Partij van de Arbeid* (PVDA). This name can be translated as the labor party, in reference to the British experience, or as the party of labor in de Man's honor. The party recreated after the war in Belgium refused the planning theories that, in some sort, found shelter with the right wing of the Christian Democrats [18]. The French Popular Front answered the Communist Party's strategy that Léon Blum's SFIO rallied. In this respect, it embodied the antifascist movement safeguarding democracy, in which, with all due respect to the right wing propaganda, the Left was quite mellow. Even if the SFIO remained closed to planned-economy, some minority members of the party such as André Philip campaigned for socialist planning. Mostly the "néo-socialistes" of the Socialist Republican Union espoused it, particularly Paul Ramadier as well as some parts of the left wing of the radical party such as Pierre Cot [19]. The socialists were forced to abandon structural reforms, stuck as they were between liberal economy cherished by most of the radicals and moderation imposed by the Communists who wished to maintain the largest anti-fascist front possible. The Popular Front's experience failed despite the strong emotional charge that was invested in it by the labor movement, and in the long term, after all it left the most positive impression in France. As Maurice Thorez, the head of the PCF, said "All is not possible" and inspired by Roosevelt's *New Deal*, comparison brings us to consider Blum's government in the same category as Muller's government in Germany in 1931: a 1920's left-wing government broken by the economic crisis but who had nevertheless fiddled a few recipes – great works – borrowed from the new policy of planned economy.

In fact the low option, that one could call reallocation was successfully implemented by the Swedish Social Democrats. While sharing certain aspects with planned-economy, and even more so with policies conducted in Belgium by the first van Zeeland government – anti-crisis policy, reflation by consumption, voluntary social policy, deliberation and social dialogue, rupture with Marxism, etc. – "the Swedish model" stands out by refusing structural reforms. To be more precise, they are dismissed to a second phase that should be dedicated to building an industrial democracy. The first phase consists of the substantial improvement of salaries and working conditions in companies, which guarantees lasting social peace, and in the implementation of the Welfare State for the benefit of all. All of the above are funded by taxes that soon act as reallocations [20]. The success story based on applying Keynesian formulas – or according to Gunnar Myrdal, ideas close to the theory latter developed by J.M. Keynes – the Welfare State and neo-corporatism, lasted from 1932 to 1976.

Just as planned-economy socialism, the Social Democratic compromise does not happen by chance or improvisation, nor the practical opportunism that marked the labor movement's first governmental experiences. This new practice stems from a theory. Its contents were carefully thought out by Ernst Wigforss who became Finance Minister in 1932 and Gunnar Myrdal – Nobel prize for economy in 1974 – economical adviser for the SAP, who headed the Plan Committee, and whose wife Alva

held various ministerial posts. The contents nevertheless implied a strategy of social and political alliances. This was theorized by the head of the party Per Albin Hanson, who was also the statesman that asserted himself as the craftsman and driving force of the "Swedish model". He was Prime Minister from 1932 until his death in October of 1946, except for an agrarian interlude in 1936. Scandinavia being culturally religious and, in the 1930s, its class structure being quite different from the one in the Benelux, the alliance strategy was quite different from the one recommended by de Man. Social Democracy, by its capacity to mediate the proletarian political will, was able to call on the creation of a class bloc between employees and peasants, both victims of the crisis and free exchange. This is all the truer because Sweden had no Christian Democrat party capable of enlisting some parts of the proletariat, but had an agrarian party, the *Bondeförbundet*, who was the peasants' favored political interlocutor, and as such a class-party. On the other hand, the SAP broke off with the liberal party with whom he had conquered representative democracy, that had been acquired late in Sweden (1909-17), but their social interests and economic policies were now divergent.

The choice of the new partner – the centrist party to be – was not only theoretically grounded but also tactically skillful. In fact, according to Mario Telò, the "centrist party is ready to leave the right-wing coalition, to back full employment policies and the Social Democratic lead in government provided that the measures aiming to protect the internal agricultural market are maintained and that the peasants are granted important aids. This division of the conservative bloc is, especially if compared to other contemporary national scenarios, a powerful factor of democratic stability. Substituting the party that represents the peasants to the liberal party, as a partner of the Social Democratic governments, gave rise to the relinquishment of free trade, that gave way to elements typical of "economical nationalism"" [21]. Thus was created in 1936 the "red-green coalition" thanks to which Sweden became a model and where the agrarian were a supplemental force at times strong-minded – they went back into opposition between 1945 and 1951. This coalition lasted until it broke over the pension issue in 1957. Social Democracy's and agrarians' mixed destinies were separate from then on, until today at least.

The Norwegian labor party also set up a red-green coalition in 1935 aligning themselves on the SAP while the Danish Social Democrats found in their Swedish comrades policies the program they lacked and the means to stay at the country's head. The agrarians were not part of the Danish political scene and the necessary backing was supplied to the Social Democrats by the left-wing radicals. In these three countries, Social Democracy was able to reach a majority by mobilizing the proletarian votes. On the other hand, in Finland and Island, the split in the labor movement between a strong communist party and the Social Democrats, will prevent the latter from being a predominant force and force them to compromise with the agrarian who will be the axis of coalitions, and in Island the Social Democrats will at times get together with the nationalists. The national issue, along with the problem of the USSR's proximity in Finland, as well as fascism created particular conditions in both countries.

The relations between the Social Democrats and the agrarians as axis of all the coalitions in Finland are similar to those between the Social Democrats and the

Christian Democrats in the Benelux countries. Anyhow, as well the "Red-Green" coalition as the "Red-Roman" coalition impelled the Social Democrats to deal with the religious issue and thus to refocus on social and economical stakes and class interest, that is on their *raison d'être*. Almost everywhere in Europe, peasantry was lastingly characterized by a higher level of religiosity than urban populations. This phenomenon was electorally expressed by a marked backing of the Christian Democrats in catholic countries, while in the protestant part of Europe, the agrarian parties were strongly attached to the Church and its values, and were sometimes even receptive to revivalist theories. In the eyes of most of the believers, Social Democracy was a scarecrow, and this perception was adroitly used by the right-wing forces. The Social Democrats opposition to the Church had a dual source of inspiration. On the one hand, Marxism simplified religion into a superstructure, born from the suffering and alienation of the people for whom the belief in hereafter is the only consolation ("people's opium"). The catholic Church's, or rather its magisterium's, policy of backing the monarchical reaction, or as in England and in other Lutheran countries like Prussia, Denmark and Sweden, the Church's deep submission to the Crown's often antidemocratic positions, on the other hand [22]. Let me also add the influence of the anarchist's militant anti-religious stance on the middle-ranking executives of the labor movement.

In countries of protestant culture, aside from the United Kingdom where anticlericalism remained a marginal movement, and especially in countries where Marxist influence was strong, the anti-religious struggle became very quickly considered by the big Social Democratic parties as disastrous for the labor movement's expansion. What need was there to bring about futile splits among their ranks on the subject of theological convictions that were condemned by History's inexorable progress? The fall of Capitalism and the implementation of Socialism will bring about the disappearance of religions. As a consequence the Danes, Norwegians and Dutch will be indifferent and neutral in the quarrels about the de-establishment of the State Church, or, like the Dutch SAP, will refuse to take part in the "*question scolaire*". The SAP was the first Social Democracy to accept public financing of confessional schools in 1917. From the XIXth century, believers had not remained indifferent to the misery of proletarians, nor had they remained deaf to the political demands for social justice. For Catholics anxious to avoid parting with the Church, this meant joining the Christian Democrats in order to champion crypto-socialist conceptions. For Protestants on the other hand, free from any threat of excommunication, the most frequent option was to join the Social Democrat party in order to back Christian socialist theories. This movement was particularly strong in Sweden. In the 1920s, a "working community of Christian socialists" was created within the SAP and the idea spread to all of Scandinavia, as well as the Netherlands with European ramifications. As soon as they had resolved to "go beyond Marxism", Social Democrat leaders had no doctrinal reason to combat religion and many practical reasons to make up with the Churches, or at least to expect of them a certain neutrality. In a memorandum addressed to the party's leadership in 1938, the SDAP leader in the Netherlands, J.W. Albarda, presented anticlericalism as "a liberal prejudice in Marxist disguise". This memorandum that sets the Social Democratic tactic and strategy in a setting where religious forces

remain dominant. Albarda aimed to take part in government alongside confessional parties, "a bridge will thus be built between the socialist and religious sectors of the nation", opening a path for "a new expansion of our movement, an expansion that will be difficult to halt. The vote of the religious masses, unattainable until now, will become potentially winnable" [23].

In countries of Latin and catholic Europe, socialist parties were at the time unable to distinguish between catholic masses and their hierarchy, and thus developed violent anti-catholic resentment. It is true that, as much with the PSOE as with the SFIO, Marxism had not engendered eminent theoreticians and remained essentially votive, like some kind of polish over republicanism that was reinforced by the agreement between with Dalladier's or Azaña's radicals. Consequently, the religious issue was brought up only by the Communists. During the Spanish *Frente popular* only the PC opposed, to the best of its possibilities, the violences committed by the anarchists against nuns, churches or convents, while the socialists let live and protested meekly. During the 1936 elections, the "materialist" communist leader Maurice Thorez was the one to say on the radio "We reach out our hand to you, catholic, worker, employee, craftsman, peasant, we who are secular, because you are our brother" and not the "socialist humanist" Léon Blum [24]. The Second World War ruined Henri de Man's efforts to have the Belgian POB, whose leader, the internationally renowned Emile Vandervelde, preached Marxist orthodoxy in the footsteps of Kautsky, accept the planist and pluralist principles. Thus, Walloon socialism kept until the end of the XXth century the same conception and idea of secularism as the SFIO [25].

In this case in point, the SFIO and the PSB – rebuilt by the leadership of the POB – are an exception in the context of the Liberation marked by the reconstruction of the economy under the aegis of planning, of the opening up to believers and the triumph of the Welfare State invented, ten years earlier by the Swedish SAP. This last phase, so-called reconstruction phase, is quite similar to the spirit of the 1930s. In fact, the latter triumphs in public policies as a reflection of the Social Democratic hegemony, whose programs spread even to countries where Social Democracy is not a dominant force, such as Austria, Belgium, France or the Netherlands, and even were its divisions confine it to an inferior role. The capitalist bourgeoisie, besides the scars of the crisis of 1929, must carry the load of collaborating at the worst, or at the best its equivocal attitude towards the Axis. Thus, the reconstructed economic system is not in step with capitalist standards: Welfare State, planned economy, state intervention, nationalization. Henceforth, new concepts are needed to name it: neo-capitalism or, for the Communists, State monopoly capitalism, that will be used by the *Jusos* and the left of the SPD under the name *Stamokap* [26].

In a time where industrial infrastructures had been maimed or destroyed by war, only state-led economy and the protective state seemed convincing, and even the *Tories* are Keynesian: Macmillan, Butler and mostly, Reginald Maudling. As the consolidation of the "Swedish model" takes place in Scandinavia, a second, more state-run Social Democratic experience is under way. It is based on the nationalization of large parts of the economy, as well in production – mining and the steel industry – as in trade – not only in the railroads but also long-distance lorry transportation – and was embodied in Attlee's government. The British Labor's experience paradoxically

had particular repercussions in catholic countries. This success had nothing to do with the "*Clause four*" but all to do with the fact that the Labor party had avoided the condemnation and anathema of the papal encyclical from *Rerum Novarum* to *Quadragesimo Anno*, thus showing the face of a workers' party respectful of all beliefs and spiritual belongings, a party where Catholics would find their place. The Labor party had already largely contributed to the economical organization of the war effort when they were part of the British national union government. The exiled governments of the European Democracies that had taken refuge in London along with a number of Social Democratic, Christian Democratic and radical leaders were able to meditate on the merits of a large pluralist left wing party. Also, in the Resistance to Nazism, Social Democrats, Christian Democrats and communists cooperated and shared the hopes of a *Libération* that was not only the defeat of the Wehrmacht and the return of the *statu quo ante*.

Social Democracy was faced with the issue of alliances in terms of a possible unity between non-communist sectors of the working forces. This meant, in countries of catholic culture a union with Christian Democrats within a Labor party with majoritarian ambitions, made necessary by the growing power of the Communist parties. This was all the more imaginable if considered from a doctrinal point of view. The aim was to reunite two schools – if need be broadened to encompass the left-wing Radical party – that had rallied Keynesianim, economical interventionism and institutionalized social dialogue, i.e. the search for a third way between the American and soviet model. The impetus came from the Christian Democratic Left, helped by independent secularists, both coming from the Resistance movements. This was true in most cases but not in the Netherlands, where the SDAP, planist since the 1930s, put its words into action. In France, parts of the MLN organized themselves in the MRP for the first, or in the UDSR for the second. In Great Britain, native land of the labor party, and in Scandinavia where Social Democratic parties had a majoritarian ambition, the issue was not raised and the alliance strategy stayed unchanged.

The refusal of the Labor doctrine happened in two acts. In the first place, the SFIO reconstructed itself identically and rejected the idea of a labor party combining the resistance forces organized within the MLN (National Liberation Movement), as a result the Christian Democrats set up the MRP (November 1944). "From its congress of November 1944, the SFIO had brought up the question of secularism: there are many teachers within its ranks", René Rémond wrote [27]. This was the stumbling bloc, the second being the links with the PCF, the axis of the *Front national*, the other organization of *résistants*. The direction of the SFIO, coming from clandestine organizations, and most of all the secretary general Daniel Mayer, Vincent Auriol and the party's historical leader, Léon Blum wanted to open up to left-wing Christians as well as to other progressive forces in the *Résistance*, under the banner of humanist socialism. At the Congress of August 1946, a *coup de théâtre* happened: Daniel Mayer's report was rejected and the direction was replaced by the one lead by Guy Mollet in the name of secularism, workers' unity and a fairly conservative outlook on Marxism. Léon Blum who had headed the *Front populaire* government and was covered by the aura of the Riom trial and his captivity had put all his weight in the scales but to no use. In Belgium, Paul-Henri Spaak, who had joined de Man before

the war and had rallied labor doctrine in exile in London, was not so determined and capitulated without a fight. Tetanized by de Man's attitude during the war and strongly attached to the secular pillar, the socialists did not wish to sever those links and so modernized *a minima*. The Christian Democratic Left, confined to its Walloon part, was only able to count on the small help of radicals that had likewise come from Resistance's movements. The Belgian Democratic Union was strongly defeated in the 1946 elections [28].

Nonetheless, the catholic Church's hierarchy did not wish for the disappearance or the weakening of the confessional party anymore than the socialist leaders. In the Netherlands the initiative for a labor party came from the SDAP who merged with the left-wing radicals and a small Christian Democratic party in order to form the current Labor Party (PVDA). However, the Catholic Party rebuilt itself on new grounds and as the MRP, had a much more left-leaning and socialist program than its predecessor. The pope Pie XII, previously in favor of the right, wished for a Christian-inspired party capable of insuring the Catholics' political unity and a safeguard against Communism in Italy. The resistance to Nazism and the Soviet occupation of a big part of the country in Austria allowed the conciliation of former civil-war foes, who then collaborated until 1966.

The Communist parties were a complicating factor for the Social Democrats faced with the issue of alliances and coalitions. On the one hand, they offered their "reformist" partners the prospective of the labor movement's unity and condemned any deal the Social Democrats could have with the Christian Democrats. The will to avoid a split with the Communist party was the socialist left's ambition and the perfect alibi for those who preached immobility – Guy Mollet or Max Buset in Belgium – to avoid changing anything, because their dogmatism hid a fierce anti-communism. On the other hand, the Communist parties simultaneously wanted to maintain the "patriotic" or "national" fronts that included all the anti-fascist formation, including the radicals or the nationalists, thus encouraging the identity chock reaction in allied parties.

In the final analysis, the coalitions that ruled the Liberation years and the beginning of reconstruction were tripartite: communist, socialist and Christian Democrat. To those, it is necessary to add sometimes small parties made up of resistance fighters, such as the UDSR in France – with François Mitterrand – or the *Partito d'Azione* in Italie. In Belgium, the old secular party, the Parti libéral, was also invited. Only in defeated Germany do we find a different configuration. Where Christian Democratic parties exist, a collaboration and cohabitation are set up with the SPD, in occupied zones and reconstituted Länder. The decade of nazi totalitarianism had not changed the party's doctrinal and strategic outlook and it persisted on mixing Marxist dogmatism and anti-communism under Kurt Schumacher's – who had survived concentration camps – leadership. Consequently, the party did not take part in the process of reconstruction lead by the CDU-CSU and Konrad Adenauer under the aegis of the *Sozialmarkwitschaft*. Meanwhile, the CDU-CSU started a 180° turnaround and went from *Christlich Sozialismus* to Liberal Conservatism, thus grouping in a single party catholic and protestant conservatives. This change of course freed political space at

the center-left that the Social Democrats could fill. This happened with the change brought about at the Congress of Bad Godesberg in 1959.

Apart from its formal and synthesis qualities, the Bad Godesberg program is not, from a doctrinal point of view, the "Copernician Revolution" of European Social Democracy. It marks the rallying of the SPD, one year after the Austrian SPÖ, to the "European New Deal" theories as the Swedish SAP expressed them in the 1930s. Its interest lies in the fact that it is the program of the historically most emblematic Social Democratic party, that amongst other things opened up to believers. This allowed Helmut Schmidt, a committed Lutheran to become Chancellor, and the catholic Hans Jochen Vogel, to be the SPD's candidate. German Social Democracy thus reached majoritarian aspiration. The new configuration of the party system in the FRD did not leave the SPD much choice from a coalition's point of view. After a short experience of a "big coalition" with the conservatives, the party turned towards the more centrist liberals. But this brings us to the end of the sixties, reconstruction is finished, it is time to share the fruits of the economic growth of the "*Trente Glorieuses*" that are ending. The "Revolution of the Carnations" in Portugal in 1974 and the Spanish Democratic transition were other differed liberations. In both cases, in countries of deep catholic tradition, the socialists were able to overcome the religious barriers that formerly divided workers and thus prevented the emergence of an Italian-style Christian Democracy that could have reached majoritarian ambitions, like the PS as soon as 1980 [29].

The Welfare State model, from the Reconstruction to the crisis brought on by the "oil shock" was thus at times the work of the Social Democrats – Great Britain and Scandinavia – and at other times that of a coalition between them and the Christian Democrats. The latter alliance had a second breath during the Golden Sixties: it appeared to be more lasting – and more frequent – than governments mixing Social Democrats and agrarians, except in the case of Finland. Nevertheless, it did not enjoy a dominant position, on the contrary the Christian Democrats' longevity allowed them to control the coalitions of which they were the axis. Hence their imprint on the Reconstruction and the Welfare State is just as deep as the one the Social Democrats left. After the "Prague Coup", the Americans imposed on their allies to throw the communists out of all Western governments. This only enhanced the Christian Democrats power, and in Italy it was the DC that brought about the *Miracolo*, they were helped in this by, among others, Giuseppe Saragat's PSDI, a pro-American dissidence of the PSI that had remained allied to the Communist party. The reformist boost that characterized the 1960s and that translated into center-left coalitions – Lefèbvre-Spaak government in Belgium, Moro in Italy, Cals in the Netherlands – stemmed from the Christian Democratic left initiatives. The *apertura a sinistra* in Italy allowed the DC to replace the liberals by the "nennian" socialists who thus broke with the PCI. The *Centro-Sinistro* governmental outcome was important and if the "Historical Compromise" with the communists failed, the responsibility lays with NATO allies and especially the Americans. Even non parliamentary Switzerland saw the Christian Democrats impose upon their bourgeois partners, the socialist participation (1959) in the multipartite executive in order to move the center of gravity over to the left. The late establishment of planification in

Belgium at the beginning of the 1970s by the Eyskens-Cools government mingling socialists and Christian Democrats were the last sparks of planned economy.

The models that appear to be essential after the Reconstruction are in keeping with those that were in fashion in the 1930s. One type of state control on the economy, inspired by planning was established in France and in Austria, largely in Italy; this resulted in an important public sector within the economy. Another type, inspired by the Swedish experience, respected the capitalist equilibrium in terms of the ownership of production means, it was implemented in FRG, Belgium and the Netherlands, who experienced planning but without the nationalization that had happened in France and Austria. Neither model depends on the Christian Democrat partner's influence whose specific imprint was to be found in family and school policies that marked the difference between the countries in which it existed from Lutheran Scandinavia.

3. Perspectives

As early as the 1930s, as a consequence of the economic crisis of 1929 Western Europe went through la *Grande Transformation*, brought on by the volontarist approach of the governments. Social Democracy is the main actor of this European New Deal. After the war, this tendency, already strong in 1939 is confirmed and deepened with the more substantial involvement states in economic policy. The changes came about even more easily because the class power struggle was in favor of the proletariat and the Left had a hegemonic status in a Gramscian sense: political advantage was in the Social Democratic camp. Neither Joseph Laniel, nor Antoine Pinay went back on the existence of a large public sector and if the Tories privatized, they did it in a very moderate way while protecting the Welfare State and Keynesian policies. Is there a need to raise the subject of de Gaulle who reaffirmed "the ardent obligation of the plan"? At that time, the controversy opposed the conservatives who accepted the established social rights but did not wish to go any further, and the Left that dreamed of "breaking with capitalism" and of "cooperative management". In Sweden, under the leadership of Olof Palme, the SAP was preparing the means and ways of the "second phase", of industrial Democracy. Even the communists parties felt won over by Social Democratic hegemony: condemnation of the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia, assertion of national ways towards socialism and of eurocommunism, forsaking leninism and the "proletarian dictatorship" [30].

The Welfare State faced its own crisis after the new world crisis that followed the "oil shocks" of the 1970s whereas the Keynesian policies were inoperative against "stagflation" and unemployment just as the deflation measures taken in the 1930s. From the viewpoint of economic policies the defeat of Keynesianism is not the assertion of a new paradigm but the return to the processes of the 1920s, even of the XIXth century. Thus, theoreticians such as Hayek or Friedman that the liberals thought of as being retrograde were praised to the skies. As a consequence, the return of the liberal orthodox hegemony on economic thought could be noticed as early as the 1980s as well as the successive failures of Social Democratic experiments, including those who were lengthy: the SAP regularly went back into opposition, "bourgeois governments" in Denmark, split of the "small coalition" in Germany. On the contrary, the ultra-liberal Right sorted out the moderates and got to power, often with the help

of a disunited Left: *thatcherism* in the United Kingdom, center-right coalitions in the Benelux, etc. Back in power, the Social Democrats seem to be deprived of any ideas and forced to apply their adversaries recipes while trying to make them more humane. The "*tournant de la rigueur*" was pressed on by the Mauroy government while in 1982, the socialists and Felipe Gonzalez adopted straightaway an "orthodox" policy implemented by Miguel Boyer and Carlos Solchaga. The failure of the "bourgeois coalition" Thorbjörn Fäldïnn in Sweden did not prevent the implementation of liberal measures by successive Finance Ministers such as Kjell Otto Feldt and Göran Persson who gave their names to these reforms. Jacques Delors and mostly Pierre Beregovoy in France exemplified the same kind of politics; the *satisfecit* of the financial circles was a token of their success. Beregovoy and Persson both became Prime Ministers, the Austrian Chancelor used the same economical strategies [31].

The "death of communism" brought about by the implosion of the Soviet Empire, ultimate end to the "short XXth century", occurred in a context of unemployment. The globalization of the capitalist economy, that is to say the triumph of free trade gave the *coup de grâce* to the Social Democrat compromise that had initially been negotiated in the framework of a certain type of economical nationalism that had now been out of fashion for a while because protectionism was now a sign of poverty. Moreover, the deepening of the process of European integration that took form in the Single European Act, the Maastricht Treaty and most of all the "stability pact" was taking place in a political context – Thatcher government, second Chirac government (1986-88), rule of Chancellor Kohl – deeply marked by majorities pursuing a very orthodox liberalism, and sometimes even ultra liberalism. So Jean Monnet or Etienne Hirsch would find it quite difficult to uncover the spirit of the Treaty of Rome in the policies of economical deregulation and of privatization of the public services that were being implemented in the name of free trade and of the opening of markets to competition.

The position of European Social Democracy is thus quite paradoxical. A string of what Marx had predicted has come to pass: concentration and internalization of capital and most of the proletarization of the intermediary classes. In fact, if the concept of social classes is taken in a precise meaning, i.e. as categories defined by the ownership of the means of production and not as a stratification rooted in different levels of revenue – or even worst as cultural entities – it must be admitted that in Western countries workers are the important section of the population. In the midst of this now gigantic, sectored and multiform proletariat, the amount of manual workers has decreased while the service industry has exploded and has diversified, thus increasing the internal contradictions of the working force. A gigantic "*classe en soi*" is thus brought about with its asthenic conscience. Thanks to the global market, multinational companies, by using relocation, can restore the labor market's fluidity and flexibility it had in XIXth century England, etc. These multiple technological and economical changes are inverting the balance of power between Capital and Labor in favor of the former. As it happens, the main support of the "Social Democrat compromise" in 1935 as well as in 1945, was public power, that is to say the state. Hence, the policies and tools of Social Democracy are made inoperative by the fragility of the state whose powers are being passed on to the European Union or who caves in before the tyranny of financial exchange markets. The economical and

financial margins that a state government in Europe has are slim: the social treatment of unemployment or the working poor, inequalities that improve the unemployment statistics; in the final analysis the alternative lies today between orthodox liberalism and social-liberalism.

If voting mirrored the class structure, Social Democracy should today have a majority position. In fact, a historical comparison shows that its electoral base has widened since the pre-war and reconstruction years: elected twice, Tony Blair and Labor are doing better than Harold Winston in the sixties and as well as Attlee in 1945, Schröder gave the SPD back its majority aim it had conquered with Willy Brandt, the Social Democrats keep this status in Sweden as well in Norway whereas they obtained it in Austria with Bruno Kreisky, in France with François Mitterrand, in Spain with Felipe Gonzalez, in Portugal where the PS was created *ex nihilo* after the "Carnation Revolution" with Soarès and then Guterres. In Italy, the former Communist Party came back to the cradle of historical Social Democracy and Central Europe seems to be a favorable to the development of a new Social Democracy.

Nevertheless, if measured by the time that has gone by since the establishment of universal suffrage the majority aim of Social Democracy has improved, it does not mirror its sociological potential. In many countries, they must still negotiate governmental alliances with compatible partners. Now, the main historical ally of the Social Democrats that had backed them at the Liberation, Christian Democracy, is going through an even deeper crisis: it is literately caving in. The "Red-roman" coalitions not only allowed the collaboration of the whole workforce by overcoming its religious divide but also to remove part of the "bourgeois" forces from their natural camp. Such a politically and socially predominant bloc was only conceivable with the help of a Christian Democratic *interclassiste* party. Social Democracy may admittedly take advantage of the collapse of Christian Democracy. The Italian situation is an example of this with "*L'Ulivo*" but it also shows that the Right can take advantage as well, if not even more. Anyhow, when it governed Italy with Prodi, d'Alema or Amato, the Left never reached the electoral weight that a DC-PCI-PSI coalition would have had, such as the one that Aldo Moro was thinking of before his tragic death. This is also true of the agrarians that brought the rural vote in the electoral dowry.

There remains the "Red-Green" new look coalition because the ally was no longer the declining agrarian centrist fastened to the "*bloc bourgeois*", but the ecologist party. The Greens often offer the necessary supplement – in Germany, France, Sweden; maybe Austria – the electoral addition that allows the Social Democrats to constitute a government, or if need be to stay in power. Nevertheless, this coalition is a stopgap and even a "*cache-misère*". Actually, the Green electorate mostly regroups individuals that formerly voted for the Social Democrats: Bartolini and Mair showed the importance of electoral transfers between both set of parties that they see as a single bloc [32].

Contrarily to the alliances formed at the time of the "European New Deal" or of the Reconstruction, the "Pink-Green" rapprochement does not enter in a theorization analog to that of Henri de Man or Per Albin Hanson. Only a few ideas stemming from the post-materialist theory were found in the SPD during the nineties but they cannot be compared to the intellectual production of the pre-war years nor to the Bad Godesberg

program. Worse yet, and this is a real theoretical collapse: the "rainbow" governments combining Right, Left and Greens in Finland or Belgium and the *paars koalitie* in the Netherlands without the latter [33]. In order to grasp the thinking behind such governmental formulas, it is necessary to think about tactical considerations. From a sociological perspective, this phenomenon shows that the dissimilarities between parties are fading and that even the cleavages are vanishing while the "cartelization" of parties is taking place [34]. This means that the main party systems in Western Europe know today the apparent consensus that characterized the USA twenty years ago.

Within the slim margins defined and imposed on national governments by the global economic order, Social Democratic teams try to look after the interests of the labor force as best they can when they are in power. Nevertheless, the latter's formulas historically depend on the state tool, as is the democratic construction. Over several centuries, the edification of the state and of the market economy went abreast, mutually reinforcing each other [35]. The "*Trente Glorieuses*" sealed the fact that the nation-state was outdated and that Europe had become the optimal level of public action in economic matters. It can be wondered today if the globalization of world markets is not going to outdate it in turn. Now the law of markets that currently control national political systems is deeply anti-democratic. The European Union suffers from a democratic deficit as the expression will have it, that seems ludicrous when compared to the oligarchy of the rare institutions meant to regulate the global economic order. Both condemn planned economy and public initiative as well as allocation policies, only deregulation and privatization policies are currently in order. Popular will and choices expressed by voters are of little import.

The representative regime does not fit the size of markets anymore. Thus, the only level where policies dear to the Social Democrats can be drafted is Europe. Nevertheless, between "blairism" and the choices made by the Jospin Government, the options taken by national parties differ and are not in tune. Besides, they do not rest upon a strategic doctrine of alliances since the Christian Democratic partner has sneaked away for various reasons. The green partner whose electoral participation is smaller at times can bring the supplementary votes necessary for victory as is the case in Germany, or can sow trouble as was the case in France where this brought about failure. Both events happened in the course of the year 2002.

Their incapacity to implement traditional Social Democratic policies as well as their inability to defend the Welfare State and public services has lead many Social Democratic governments either to favor cheap "society issues" that both please the greens and are compatible with the market's requirements or to rally the cultural liberalism championed by the greens or the left-wing liberals. And yet, in France, the Netherlands, Scandinavia and in a smaller measure in the GDR, they often took the risk of alienating their electorate, the traditional workers. The latter, less educated, older – many of them are retired – care little about issues such as the gender of words (in France) and are reluctant or even hostile to the PACS, same-sex marriages or the liberalization of certain drugs [36]. On the other hand, they are quite sensitive to the issue of insecurity and of rudeness which they are the first victims of. Cultural liberalism moves the Social Democrats away from what remains of Christian Democracy, thus

bestowing it *a contrario* a life-saver as is the case in the Netherlands, but mostly it pushes large parts of the population to vote for the nationalist extreme right.

Anarchism that existed within the working class during the XIXth century, in the final analysis with the help of the Social Democrats in the course of the XXth century, turned into an attachment to the state. In the beginning of the XXIst century, the figure of the protecting state combines the Welfare State embodied by the social security, the public service – particularly in the field of transportation and energy – and the traditional "Police-state" The right wing can only use this last field of action while the Christian Democrats can use several, as the CDA's success in the Dutch elections of the spring of 2002 shows. Social Democracy must also use this field of action, the choices made by the *New Labour* show that it can also take on the conservatives on the grounds of the "zero tolerance" invented by former Mayor Rudolph Giuliani.

Anyhow, the Social Democrats' main objectives – protecting the interest of the working class against the absolute empire of the capital whatever are the doctrinal orientations that frame them – can only be reached for in a European perspective. This implies, on the one hand, a European community New Deal and on the other hand, a coordination of the parties national strategies. And yet the Social Democratic parties are divided over the issue of the reform of the European institutions. As to the definition of common goals it seems difficult to establish that a "social Europe" has made any progress at the time of the "pink Europe"… Establishing a genuine Social Democratic European strategy would imply that the issue of alliances is discussed at that level, aside from circumstantial discussions. This is far from being the case today [37]… Now, all along its ancient history, Social Democracy as a political and parliamentary translation of the Labor movement, always thought of the alliance issue in a global perspective: an alliance between social forces, in a strategy to reform social relations in a way more advantageous for the working classes.

Social Democracy's theoretical breakdown is due to, amongst other multiple factors, the crisis in the State but also to the rapid decline of its customary partners: the agrarians and Christian Democrats, not to mention the radicals that are only a memory. Worst of all, far from being of any use, the breakdown of Communist parties deprives it of a precious ally for the benefit of the Greens who are rivals and difficult allies. Philippe Corcuff calls them libertarian Social Democrats. The communist torch has been taken up by a "new radical Left", reliable when it stems from a former Communist party – as is the case in Sweden – or, on the contrary, whose only goal seems to be to trip the reformist Left as in Italy and France. The success of the Swedish and German Social Democrats can not hide the European balance of power that favors an offensive liberalism.

In the face of a globalized capitalism, Europe alone can still offer an alternative way that will be favorable to the labor world's interests. But Social Democracy can not have a majority alone, and thus the alliance issue arises again more acutely at this level. As two Italian former heads of government clearly write, it is a matter of lastingly gathering "all the European reformists" in "a meeting place" in order to establish a program. "A place where the socialists would find themselves with the Christian Democrats whose stay within the EPP is increasingly difficult, with the movements most informed of European liberalism and with the culture of environmental advocates" [38].

Notes

[1] The Portuguese CDS – *Centro Democratico e Social* – lead by Diogo Freitas do Amaral, was made up of former "*caétaniste*" salazarites willing to become part of the democratic political game. They had been accepted by the Christian Democrats in the seventies. Today, this party is known under the name *Partido Popular* and is more right wing than its Spanish counterpart. Abroad, it is famous for its eurosceptic and often xenophobic stances.

[2] M. ROCARD, *in* "Faire", *Qu'est-ce que la social-démocratie?*, Paris, Seuil, 1979. From a "political science" point of view, Social Democracy and communism's deep electoral affinities were demonstrated by Georges Goriely. See G. GORIELY, "Un paradoxe historique: la social-démocratie allemande inspiratrice du bolchévisme", *Res publica*, XXI/4, 1979, p. 607-622.

[3] See D.-L. SEILER, *Les partis politiques en Europe*, Paris, PUF, 1996.

[4] The deal between the SPD and the catholic *Zentrum* was the base of the "Weimar Coalition" that held up the Republic. See the precursory work of one of the founding fathers of political parties political science: S. NEUMANN, *Die Parteien der Weimarer Republik*, Stuttgart, Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1973, 3rd edition (1st edition 1932!), p. 20-59.

[5] Only Denmark experienced a feudal system of the same nature as the one in France or the Holy Empire.

[6] At the time, I was deeply reticent to the idea of considering that Europe was in danger of following the same track as the USA which has already been known to happen… D.-L. SEILER, *Partis et familles politiques*, Paris, PUF, 1980. A draft of the project can be found *in* ID., "Clivages, régions et science politique: application d'un schéma d'analyse aux cas de la Belgique et de la Suisse", *Revue canadienne de science politique*, X/3, 1977, p. 447-472 and its development *in* ID., "Sur la genèse des partis politiques en Europe: théorie et taxinomie", *Europa*, *Revue d'études interdisciplinaires*, 2/1, 1978, p. 83-102.

[7] I totally disagree with the tendency of equating the American democrats with Social Democracy. This statement is more and more frequently used in papers since the emergence of *blairism* and the Third Way, but it is absolutely unfounded from a historical, sociological and political point of view.

[8] Ch. S. MAIER, *Recasting Bourgeois Europe*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1975.

[9] Italy decided on the implementation of universal suffrage in 1912, but the party system only emerged in 1919 like everywhere else in Europe – except for the United Kingdom – with the proportional voting system. See S. NOIRET, *La nascita del sistema dei partiti nell'Italia contemporanea*, Mandora, Piero Lacaita Editore, 1994.

[10] D.-L. SEILER, "Le paradoxe libéral: la faiblesse d'une force d'avenir", *in* P. DELWIT (ed.), *Libéralismes et partis libéraux en Europe*, Brussels, Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 2002, p. 37-56. See *in Ibid.*, the articles by Paul MAGNETTE and Nicolas ROUSSELLIER.

[11] K. POLANYI, *La grande transformation*, Paris, Gallimard, 1984, trad.

[12] M. TELÒ, *Le New Deal européen: la pensée et la politique sociales-démocrates face à la crise des années trente*, Brussels, Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 1988.

[13] A. BERGOUGNIOUX, B. MANIN, *La social-démocratie ou le compromis*, Paris, PUF, 1979.

[14] Henri de Man, after having lead the Belgian socialists, had an ambiguous attitude during the first years of the Nazi occupation and created the Union of Manual Workers. However, he did not become a collaborationist like Marcel Déat. He died in Switzerland where he had sought refuge.

[15] André Philip was undoubtedly the most eminent representative of planned economy in France, he was a SFIO militant, and Minister to the Général de Gaulle. He was among the

founders of the PSU. See A. PHILIP, *Henri de Man et la crise doctrinale du socialisme*, Paris, Librairie universitaire J. Gamber, 1928.

[16] See H. DE MAN, *L'idée socialiste*, Paris, Grasset, 1935, Ch. XVII, "La réalisation du socialisme".

[17] M. TELÒ, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

[18] In Belgium, at the opposite of France and the Netherlands, the idea of a planned economy was disliked for a long time. It was introduced under the euphemism "economical programming" by Raymond Scheyven the Economy Minister in 1958 who was also fairly close to financial circles but intellectually linked to the journal *La Relève*.

[19] The "*neos*" have too often been reduced to Marcel Déat, a young and brilliant SFIO member of Parliament that converted to fascism or to Adrien Marquet, deputy-mayor of Bordeaux, notable and "*collabo*". This would imply forgetting that the USR took part in the Popular Front and Maurice Violette was Vice-president of the Blum government in 1936.

[20] Olof Palme tried to translate this second phase into actions in the 1970s with the Meidner Plan.

[21] M. TELÒ, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

[22] "We declare (…) that one can take part in our socialist organization while being a practicing catholic. (…) On the other hand, this incompatibility that we refuse to admit, the Church itself is the one that sets it up. The truth is, and sincerely I deplore it, that the Church – for its misfortune and ours – is an auxiliary and an instrument of the most wrongful forms of social oppression, the most despotic forms of political reaction… I believe that, in their conscience, many catholics deplore this. In any way, we are not the ones that are waging this war". Léon BLUM, speech at the Chambre of deputies, 3 February 1925.

[23] H. M. RUITENBEEK, *Het Onstaan van de Partij van de Arbeid*, Amsterdam, De Arbeiderspers, 1955, quoted *in* H. DAALDER, "The Netherlands: Opposition in a Segmented Society", *in* R. A. DAHL (ed.), *Political Oppositions in Western Democracies*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1965, p. 212.

[24] Electoral speech by Maurice Thorez at Radio Paris on the 17th of April 1936.

[25] It is difficult to tell how Emile Vandervelde, who died before the war, might have reacted in the face of "Labor ideology projects". In religious matters he thought that it was "a private affair" and thus followed Léon Blum and the SFIO on this subject as well as on planned economy From the beginning, his concern was to avoid frightening the religious or philosophical beliefs of believers. Thus, he wrote that "the POB and, generally, the Labour and Socialist International are exclusively on a political, economical and social level, and in philosophical and religious matters they leave full and entire freedom to their members". E. VANDERVELDE, "Préface", *in* MARIE-FRANÇOIS, *Socialiste parce que chrétien*, Brussels, L'Eglantine, 1933, p. 13. His opposition to planned economy rejoined Léon Blum's who rejected all revision. Nothing says that the latter's attitude would not have bent towards "Labor ideology". Nevertheless, Emile Vandervelde's old comrade, Charles de Brouckère who had strongly battled against planned economy, and Henri de Man in particular, refused the Labor project in 1945.

[26] Under the guidance of the Chancelor-to-be Schröder…

[27] R. RÉMOND, *Histoire de France: le XXe siècle*, Paris, Fayard/Le Livre de Poche, 1996, p. 315.

[28] See W. BEERTEN, "L'Union démocratique belge, une expérience avortée", *in* M.-Th. COENEN et S. GOVAERT (ed.), *Le Rassemblement des progressistes (1944-1976)*, Brussels, De Boeck Université, 1999.

[29] Juan Linz simulated in 1967 what the Parliament of a democratic Spain could be like. The outcomes resulted in a situation similar to the one in Italy in the immediate post-war: a "beefy" Right and a strong Communist party, on both sides of a powerful Christian Democracy,

thus reducing the socialists to uselessness. At that time this was the only reasonable prognosis given history and the strength of the forces within the anti-francist movement. The social changes brought about by the "tourist" opening of the country and the effects of the Council of Vatican II changed the situation: the old PSOE was taken over by young people from within and of catholic origin such as Felipe Gonzalez during the Congress of Suresne.

[30] For an overview of European Communist Parties at the end of the XXth century: J. GOTOVITCH, P. DELWIT, J.-M. DE WAELE, *L'Europe des communistes*, Brussels, Complexe, 1992.

[31] Before becoming Chancelor, Franz Vranitsky was the head of a nationalized bank. As to the unfortunate Pierre Bérégovoy, one of the only leaders of the French socialists of working class origin, he was very proud to be considered as "un Pinay de gauche" and showed off – on television – a letter full of his praises written by the Saint-Chamond patriarch!

[32] S. BARTOLINI, P. MAIR, *Identity, Competition and Electoral Availability*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990. See also P. DELWIT, J.-M. DE WAELE (ed.), *Les partis verts en Europe*, Brussels, Complexe, 1999.

[33] The name "rainbow" is unambiguous, as for *paars koalitie* it means "purple coalition", the color obtained from mixing the "red" of the left and the "blue" of the right. In both cases, it is a matter of ending the "life annuity" that the center (agrarians in Finland, Christian Democrats in Belgium and the Netherlands) enjoyed when the ideological battles made them the axis of all governments. These left-right coalitions, including the Greens in Belgium and Finland, give evidence of the evaporation of cleavages and of the fact that numerous European countries have seen their party system become more like that of the United States.

[34] The concept of "cartel-party" was invented by Peter Mair with the help of Dick Katz. For a summary see P. MAIR, *Party System Change*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1997.

[35] Ch. TILLY, *Contrainte et capital dans la formation de l'Europe*, Paris, Aubier, 1990.

[36] It is outdated to think of the cultural liberalism that stems from radical thinking as being inherent or specific to the "left". In Denmark, a conservative Justice Minister authorized the organization of an international fair of pornography in Copenhagen in 1969. A conservative Minister was also the first politician to make use of the Norwegian law allowing same-sex marriages. In Great Britain, Margaret Thatcher was the one to end the holy "*Sunday Closed*" that christianized British social life. We forget too quickly that XIXth-century Christian Europe, be it catholic or protestant, confined Sunday rest to the richer categories of the population.

[37] See the captivating and erudite but controversial book by Eric Dupin: E. DUPIN, *Sortir la gauche du coma*, Paris, Flammarion, 2002.

[38] M. D'ALEMA, G. AMATO, "Une nouvelle maison pour les réformistes", *Le Monde*, Thursday 3rd October 2002.

Alliances and Allies of Social Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe

Petia Gueorguieva

The issue of alliances and allies of Social Democratic parties in Central and Eastern Europe is one privileged way of considering the broader subject of changes in Post-Communist political party systems [1], the evolution of the party cleavages that shape them and the changes and strengthening of party organisations themselves. Through this approach, we mainly consider Social Democratic parties as players acting within a socio-political environment that has been fashioned by the profound changes Post-Communist organisations have undergone during the last fifteen years; the organisation and identity building are only considered as an ancillary issue.

The topic of Social Democratic Party alliances and allies encompasses a vast empirical field that could not be considered in its entirety within the scope of a single article. This is why we do focus on what groupings these parties have formed into in terms of electoral and government alliances. We do not take into account the alliances Social Democratic parties entered into with other socio-political movements such as trade unions or society-based organisations. Nonetheless, it should be underlined that traditional studies on Social Democracy focus in the main on the issue of alliances.

Our analysis is based on a few key questions: what alliances did the family of Socialist parties build in Post-Communist countries? Are there any specific "Post-Communist" alliances? What are the specific factors and parameters of Social Democratic alliance making?

Our key assumption is that the key factor in alliances of Social Democratic parties in Central and Eastern Europe relates to cleavages shaping party systems and that for the alliances, the main cleavage is one that pits the "anti-Communist" political forces against the organisations that are "heirs" to former Communist parties. Another important factor is that alliances formed by Social Democratic parties in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEEC) were made in circumstances of large-scale

economic and social changes that weighed on the options and possibilities to secure partners for alliance.

To avoid any ambiguity in terms, we should explain that the phrase "Social Democratic parties" [2], means political parties of Central and Eastern Europe, which, regardless of their names (Socialist, Social Democratic, Union of the Democratic Left, New Left, etc.) and their origin (parties that "took over" from the former Communist parties or "historical" parties), did accept and take part, during the Post-Communist period:

– In the rules of the game of parliamentary democracy (free elections, political pluralism, prevalence of law, etc.);
– In the shift from a planned socialist economy into the development of a market economy;
– In the principles and values of the Socialist International and the Party of European Socialists (being associated to it).

This broad definition of "Social Democratic parties" is more of a reflection on the current situation, fourteen years after the iron curtain fell, of the parties of this political family (not expanding on the *timing* and the different *Social Democratisation* processes of former Communist parties, for example) and consequently keeps within the most neutral concept possible with regard to norms and philosophy.

1. Which Theoretical References?

A. Application of the Coalition Theory to the Post-Communist Political Environment?

The issue of alliances and coalition and government allies relates to the coalition theory. V. Lemieux gives an extensive definition of the terms: "Coalitions are temporary alliances that are construed even not negotiated between those participating in them. Amongst alliances, there are also associations that are thought out, just like coalitions, but are longer lasting; and converging trends, not concerted as such, yet sustained over time. Coalitions may shift into any one of the three other types of alliances, or even gather or by-pass other types of alliances" [3]. The benefits sought by the participants are at the crux of the coalition theory. It is to gain more than if they were to act on their own, or in a different coalition, that parties seek to form a winning coalition [4].

The coalition experts underline the relevance of various parameters in the formation of coalitions. W.C. Müller and S. Kaare [5] point to four basic features of coalitions: strategic stakes; interplay between political parties [6]; institutional conditioning; the coalition politics are governed by expectations. M.J. Laver and I. Budge focus on the importance of political party programmes as indicators of political options. Electoral platforms evidently have a major impact on coalition politics in Europe [7]. "As often as not, a simple policy-space based on the left-right dimension is the best indicator, suggesting that policy has a relatively simple impact on coalition bargaining" [8].

Some writers concentrate on the distribution of power inside the parties and its level of centralisation or decentralisation to define the main variable that influences

coalition politics [9]. In broad terms H. Back states that: "A number of coalition theories has been presented over the last fifty years, but so far we do not have a good understanding of which theories are superior and which explanatory variables are the most important to include in a coalition model that aims to explain and predict coalition outcomes" [10].

In our opinion, considering Post-Communist transition politics with its numerous changes – economic, social and structural –, it is difficult to assert that the politics conducted by the parties should hinge exclusively on rational and strategic choices [11]. Consequently, the different coalition theories can hardly be of any use in the present situation since they do not reflect the features specific to CEEC features. Economic changes, social restructuring, socio-cultural antagonisms and the more or less successful political programmes of parties in office reveal the actual situation of alliances and coalitions in Central Europe.

B. Factors Specific to Post-Communism Countries

We should recall the main socio-political developments that characterised Post-Communism changes. Firstly, we should bear in mind the instability of party political environments during the first decade of transition. Numerous parties emerged and vanished very quickly. This phenomenon was linked to the "quality" of political party organisations. Even if the general trend points to stability in the region as a whole, consolidation has not yet been achieved and differs from one country to the next. Here, one should point out that Social Democratic parties stand out as the only parties on the political scenes that are consolidated and organised on a long-term basis (with the exception of Slovakia).

Another major feature is the upheaval of the social structure and the ensuing electoral volatility. Major social groups saw their living standard crumble away over time, which led to a rejection of political parties in power. Polls regularly showed a drop in support for government parties as their period in office went on. By way of example, the current Polish government, with the Democratic Left Party as the majority party, reached unprecedented rejection barely two years after winning the September 2001 elections [12].

The heavy agenda parties have to face, with many near impossible tasks due to a drastically hemmed scope for action from external constraints (such as international financial institutions, European integration and the like), entails an almost automatic alternation of parties in government (the Czech Social Democratic Party stands as an exception as it was returned to office following the June 2002 elections) [13].

In such circumstances, even if a party may intend to take a purely rational approach, it is often barred by the versatility of its electorate and the never-ending "alternation" of government parties. As made obvious by the Polish or Romanian right-wing parties, after a given term in government office, a number of political parties are unable to secure any parliamentary representation. Admittedly, the institutional framework – electoral law, thresholds for representation in parliament – has an impact on the setting up of electoral alliances [14]. But in the CEEC, it tends to be designed to stabilise very piecemeal party political scenes. And yet, as underlined by J.-M. De Waele, "the decrease or stabilising of the number of parties represented

in the parliaments does not lead to consolidated and stabilised political scenarios". K. Williams identifies actual *leadership*, cohesiveness of parties in government together with leading party attraction which reduces potential cross-party cooperation, as factors which determine the stability of organisations and party competition [15]. The most clear-cut party strife in the CEEC since the beginning of the transition period has been the cleavage between the "anti-Communist" political forces and the "communist movement inheritors" [16].

This cleavage plays a major role in the setting up of alliances between Social Democratic parties in Central and Eastern Europe. Consequently, the Social Democratic allies or coalition partners in the CEEC are not, most of the time, the closest on political or ideological prospects.

Here, we should recall the appraisal made by A. M. Grzymala-Busse who underlined parliamentary isolation coupled with "parliamentary acceptance" (the extent to which a political party is capable of co-operating with other parties and is considered as a potential government and coalition partner) in inheritor parties [17].

2. Social Democratic Parties

Social Democratic parties have three different origins: the transformation of former Communist parties into Social Democratic parties; the reinstatement of so-called "historical" Social Democratic parties which were influential between the two World Wars, and their creation from anti-Communist society movements [18].

Apart from the Czech Republic where the Communist Party has not re-formed, the "historical" parties have had difficulties asserting their own [19]. The cause for, together with the consequence of, this failure lies in the attempt of the organisations that inherited from former Communist parties to take a Social Democratic stance. In most cases, the Social Democratic parties stem from former Communist parties that have launched into *Social Democratisation* processes (at varying paces). The differences come from diverging traditions, from the differences in the respective Communist regimes and from the experiences of the last two decades under such regimes. So, for instance, in Poland and in Hungary, the former Communist parties split and the reform branch founded the newly born Social Democracy. In Bulgaria and Romania, the timing differed. The former Communist parties were slower reforming and putting on a Social Democratic face.

In spite of differences, the inheritors to the former Communist parties have shown their ability to adapt and face changing facts, which has enabled them to gain recognition as parties with well-trained professional staff. Their socio-political organisations are steady over time and they appear as indispensable major players in the political transition and socio-economic changes. In addition, they also stand as a key feature in the structuring of the political scene and the promoting of European integration.

At the beginning of the Post-Communist period, when the cleavage between anti-Communist parties and inheritor organisations was vivid, the electoral coalitions of Social Democratic parties hinged on alliances with movements from the former regime. In Poland, the Union of the Democratic Left was based on its alliance with the OPZZ trade-union as well as a range of society-based organisations that had taken over from movements of the Communist period.

Social Democratic parties are currently in government office in Poland (SLD in a coalition with the Labour Union), in Hungary (Socialist Party in a coalition with the Free Democrats), in the Czech Republic (Czech Social Democratic Party in a coalition with the Christian Democrats and the Union for Freedom), in Romania, Albania and Lithuania (in a coalition with the Social-Liberals for Lithuania). The Social Democrats are members of the liberal democracy coalition in Slovenia. In November 1993, the Social Democrats lost the legislative elections in Croatia although they were the major party of the outgoing government coalition (a coalition of five parties: Social Democratic Party, Croatian Farmers' Party, Liberal-Democratic Party, Liberal Party and the Croatian People's Party).

The general trend, over the past few years, points to the reunifying and consolidation of left-wing parties in CEEC. This is due to the blurring of the cleavage between anti-Communist and inheritor organisations within left-wing parties. Such a trend is also supported by international socialist organisations (as in the case of the unifying of the Bulgarian left-wing parties) and evidenced by the integration of new fully-fledged members in the Socialist International.

Political parties in CEEC – members of the Socialist International [20]

Country	*Fully-fledged SI members*
Albania	Social Democratic Party Albanian Socialist Party
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Alliance of Independent Social Democrats
Bulgaria	Bulgarian Socialist Party Bulgarian Social Democrats
Croatia	Social Democratic Party
Estonia	Moderate People's Party
Hungary	Hungarian Socialist Party Hungarian Social Democratic Party
Latvia	Social Democratic Workers Party
Lithuania	Lithuanian Social Democratic Party
Poland	Alliance of the Democratic Left Labour Union
Romania	Democratic Party Social Democratic Party
Slovenia	United List of Social Democrats

These movements allow the setting up of alliances on the left of the political scene that had been unthinkable before. In Poland, the inheritor party joined forces with the Labour Union, created by the left wing of Solidarity. In Bulgaria, in 2001, the "century old" enemies – the former Communists and the historical Social Democrats – set up the New Left coalition. In Romania, the PDSR joined in with the long-established PSDR

to form the Social Democratic Party. Last, in Lithuania, the inheritor party (LDDP), and the historical party (PSDL) pooled forces for the 2000 elections under the "Social Democratic Coalition" banner. Reunification of the Left in Post-Communist countries has been strongly supported by the Socialist International.

3. Which are the Main Parameters in the Formation of Alliances between Social Democratic Parties in CEEC? A Few Typical Cases

We have investigated four distinct scenarios that emerge when considering some prerequisites for the setting up of alliances and coalitions:

– The advent of Social Democratic organisation,
– The *timing* of *Social Democratisation*,
– The depth of the cleavage between anti-Communist and inheritor organisations,
– The number of groups on the left of the political spectrum and their main features,
– The "government potential" (the extent to which a party is needed to form a government) and its "coalition coefficient" to use Sartori's terms [21].

A. The Case of Poland

The Polish situation is a case in which the main Social Democratic player happens to be the "inheritor" organisation of the reform fraction of the former Communist Party. They underwent a rapid *Social Democratisation* process. The cleavage between anti-Communists and inheritor organisations prevailed for a long time and set up the party politics scene. In its own stance, the "inheritor" party is not challenged by any other significant left-wing force. The Labour Union – an organisation originating in the left of the anti-Communist spectrum – has not always been represented in parliament or government. The inheritor party had representatives in all the Post-Communist Dietes, which means, considering the prevailing party instability, that it was the most stable player on the Polish political scene. The Social Democracy of the Polish Republic originated in the reform faction of the Polish Unified Workers' Party (PUWP), now disbanded [22]. For the 1991 elections, the SdRP created the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) – "a powerful confederation of political and trade-union groups as well as organisations mainly originating in the pre-1989 legal political structures, subsequently gathered over the Social Democratic concept" [23]. The most prominent element in this coalition, with its thirty-three components, including the OPZZ trade union, was the Social Democratic Party.

In spite of the modernisation and speed at which *Social Democratisation* was achieved in its coalition policy, the SLD suffered from the adverse effects of its "genetic" linkage with the former Communist Party. Getting out of isolation would be arduous.

The 1993 electoral reform set up minimum thresholds, 5% for parties, 8% for coalitions and 7% for any national list [24]. The SLD won 20.41% of the votes with 37.17% of the seats in parliament, followed by the PSL Farmers' Party (15.40% of the votes with 28.69% of the seats), the Democratic Union (10.59% of the votes and 16.08% of the seats). "Although the two major Post-Communist groups were

in a position to form a government on their own, they sought other political action resources, especially from the SLD. In terms of their platform, the Democratic Union was closer, to the SLD" [25], L. Kuk commented. But an alliance with the Democratic Union could not be envisaged due to the cleavage between the anti-Communists and "inheritor" organisations. Consequently, a coalition between the Alliance of the Democratic Left and the PSL was established. It did not originate in political platform convergence but in the historical roots of the two parties involved.

The president of the PSL was designated as Prime Minister due to the isolation of and distrust for the inheritor of the former Communist Party. The SLD-PSL coalition went through numerous crises, either because of interference from the President of the Republic, L. Walesa, or for internal reasons, but it nevertheless held out throughout its elected term of office. A new constitution for Poland was adopted with the support of the Democratic Union and the Labour Union against the Catholic Church parties and those born out of Solidarity [26].

In the subsequent legislative period, the SLD went back into opposition while the other left-wing party, the Labour Union, did not even reach the threshold for parliamentary representation. In 1999, the SLD Alliance became a political party, the Alliance of the Democratic Left. This transformation was due to the wish to overcome the organisation problems the alliance had encountered as well as to the determination of the Social Democratic leader, L. Miller, who considered effectiveness should always prevail. S. Day also underlines the impact of the new 27th June 1997 law on "*Ustawa z dnia 27 czerwca 1997 o partiach politycznych"* [27] which governs the registration, participation in political life, funding and state support for political parties [28]. The SdRP formally disbanded during its June 1999 congress. In July, L. Miller was elected as leader of the SLD, while St. Janasa, from the OPZZ union was appointed Vice-president. "The new SLD is a mere extension of the SdRP but it is now in a position to designate its candidates from the trade unions directly. The homogenisation strategy of the Left in Poland has extended, since then, to the remnants of the Labour Union which (…) was prompted to associate with the SLD" , B. Drweski noted [29].

So, in the September 2001 elections, the SLD stood in an alliance with the Labour Union – SLD-UP – and won 41.05 % of the votes with 46.96 % of the seats in parliament, followed by the Civic Platform (PO) with 12.68 % of votes and 14.13 % of seats, Samooborona – 10.20 % of votes and 11.52 % of seats, Law and Justice (PiS) with 9.50 % of votes and 9.56 % of seats and the Farmers' Party (PSL) – 8.98 % of the votes and 8.26 % of the seats.

The outgoing government lost the elections because "it was weak, divided and ineffective, while the SLD opposition appeared as competent, professional and united" according to F. Millard [30]. He considers that the elections put an end to the historical division between "the heirs of communism and the heirs of Solidarity". Although before the elections the SLD appeared as the unchallenged leader in pre-electoral opinion surveys, it did not secure an absolute majority and had to enter into a new coalition with the Farmers' Party. The SLD-UP-PSL executive was faced with a difficult financial situation and stronger populist forces – Samoobrona and the Polish Families League. At the same time, it successfully steered the integration of the country into Europe [31], in spite of the hostile stance of the populist forces [32]. The difficult relations

and divergences between the partners led to several government crises and to the collapse of the coalition in March 2003 as the PSL left [33].

In Poland, the scope for acceptance potential of the "inheritor" party (in spite of a rapid and successful *Social Democratisation*) has long been hampered by its Communist past. Even though it holds strong government potential, the Democratic Alliance of the Left did not succeed in gaining acceptance from other parliamentary players, however close in terms of programmes and ideology. This was why the government coalitions achieved remained far from the optimum, as their common past was the overriding determinant.

B. The Case of Hungary

The case of Hungary offers its own special feature, one single major player on the left of the political spectrum: the inheritor party, on its way to fast-moving *Social Democratisation*. The cleavage between anti-Communists and the inheritor organisation has had a different impact on the coalition-making process with forces belonging to the anti-Communist spectrum. This may be due to the specific cleavages that shape the Hungarian political scene. "The main feature of the Hungarian political scene is the prevalence of cultural policies, with a traditional facet focussing on national or ethnocentric common destiny on the one hand, and a "turn to the West" attraction which lays emphasis on (…) a rational society, on the other", as G. Markus puts it [34]. The Hungarian Socialist Party is the proponent of modernisation, western looking attitudes and rationalisation for the country. This prevalence of socio-cultural distinctions over divisions relating to the past or merely economic diverging options has been evidenced in other studies [35].

After losing the first free elections, the MSZS Hungarian Socialist Party won the absolute majority in 1994 (54 %) and secured 209 out of 386 seats. The SZDSZ Alliance of Free Democrats received some 20 % of the votes and won 70 seats, while the major party in the outgoing government, the MDF, only had 12 % of the votes and 37 seats. The other coalition partners, the FKGP and the KDNP won 26 and 22 seats respectively. Even though the Socialist party was in a position to form a government on their own, "the opinion polls revealed that the majority of Hungarian people were not favourable to a socialist only government" [36]. This was why the MSZP formed a government together with the Alliance of Free Democrats. The 1994 coalition agreement established a coalition council, responsible for settling any disputes between the partners. In the first half of the legislative term, many conflicts did arise and the council had to hold many meetings [37]. Subsequently, its role decreased. After some time in the opposition, the Socialist Party, in conjunction with the Alliance of Free Democrats, won the 7th and 21st April 2002 elections. The two political forces entered into an alliance in-between the two ballot rounds. The election campaign revolved around the antagonism between the supporters of the outgoing government Prime Minister V. Orban (FIDESZ) and the leader of the Left, P. Medgyessy. "The right monopolised the national symbols during the campaign" indicting the Socialists as poor patriots [38]. In an initial coalition experience between the Socialist Party and the Alliance of Free Democrats, the MSZS enjoyed a "safe majority enabling them to govern the country all on their own". In the 2002 elections, the margin had shrunk. The Socialist Party had

46.1 % of the seats and the Alliance of Free Democrats 5.2 %. Although duly taking into account the handicap of its origin for the Hungarian Socialist Party, especially at the beginning of the Post-Communist era, it would seem obvious that in this case the Social Democratic type party has the best capacity to set up alliances because it is the only one major player on the left, and because the anti-Communists versus inheritor organisations cleavage is mainly due to socio-cultural differences.

C. The Case of the Czech Republic

In the Czech Republic, Social Democracy is embodied by the CSSD (Ceskà strana socialne democratickà), a "historical" party, inheritor from the party that existed between the two World Wars. The CSSD became established as a political player vying on the left with the Communist Party Bohemia-Moravia [39]. No cooperation between the two groups could possibly be acceptable to the Social Democrats. A decision to that effect was made during the 1995 Bohumín congress [40]. The CSSD gradually gained assertion on the political scene and first joined government in 1998.

We should recall that in 1992, the Czechoslovakian Federal Assembly had established electoral thresholds: 5 % for the parties, 7 % for alliances with two to three partners and 10 % for alliances with four parties and more. Consequently, the governments formed in the Czech Republic were to be coalition governments, with the exception of the CSSD minority government team in office from 1998 to 2002.

The Social Democratic Party, under the leadership of M. Zeman, formed its first government in 1998, after winning 32.3 % of the votes. It became the leading party in parliament with 74 seats out of 200. Three right wing organisations – ODS, KDU-CSL and US – held 102 seats together. The fifth party represented in parliament was the KSCM. The US turned down any coalition with the Social Democrats. The Christian Democrats were considered as potential partners for a coalition with the CSSD but their results remained too low [41]. Consequently, following an "opposition agreement" between the major parties – CSSD and ODS –, a minority Social Democratic government was formed [42]. "It was obvious that the partnership established was most unusual, whether it be quantitatively or qualitatively" in so far as it meant cooperation between the two major Czech parties most worlds apart in terms of ideology and policies" M. Klima commented [43]. We should not forget that during the 1997 political crisis, the ODS had remained in office thanks to the support of the CSSD, then an opposition party. "In the interest of the country, the then main opposition party enabled the centre-right coalition to stay in office, without nevertheless supporting the programme of the coalition" [44].

Although it remained an opposition party and in spite of its criticisms of the Social Democrats, the ODS acted as main support to the continuation of Mr Zeman's government. This, together with the "government agreement" enabled Mr Klima to consider that, in practice, there had been a "wide silent coalition". The ODS even signed a pact to that effect with the CSSD [45].

Before the June 2002 parliamentary elections, the Executive Council of the CSSD decided, on 6th April to cancel unilaterally the opposition agreement they had with the ODS. For the Social Democrats, it was unimaginable to enter into another agreement with this party. The objective was to take part in the establishment of a

majority government coalition based on the convergence of political platforms [46]. In the June parliamentary elections, the CSSD, under the leadership of V. Špidla, won 30% of the votes and 70 seats, the Civic Democratic Party secured 24.47% of the votes and 58 seats, the Communist Party 18.51% and 41 seats and the KDU-CSL coalition – The Union for Freedom – 14.27% of the votes and 31 seats. With such results, any combination was theoretically possible. The Communists had implied they were prepared to negotiate and the KDU-CSL coalition had emphasised social concerns in their programme. As underlined before, the CSSD was best prepared to accept alliances and coalitions as it did not originate in the former Communist Party and was not involved in the vivid cleavage between anti-Communists and inheritor organisations. In actual fact, the CSSD, within the left of the political scene, was most clearly positioned on the anti-Communist side. This meant it could be acceptable to parties stemming from the anti-Communist trend. In addition, the CSSD was a left-wing party with a social approach to market economy, which meant it was acceptable to the Communists as well. In 2002, the Social Democrats formed a government coalition with the Christian Democratic Party and with the Union for Freedom. The coalition agreement between the three parties, the *Koalicní smlouva,* was based on a joint approach to "the implementation of the principles of the European social model" [47]. This government soon showed how vulnerable it was. As early as September 2002, a first crisis blew up but it was solved through an addendum to the coalition agreement [48]. Subsequently, the coalition did not succeed in designating a joint candidate for the presidential election. It also failed to get its candidate elected in the third round. Although destabilised and with only a majority of only a single vote, the executive still manages to survive defiance votes for the time being.

D. The Case of Bulgaria

Bulgaria presents four main features. Firstly, the cleavage between anti-Communists and the inheritor party weighs heavily. It has produced an exacerbated bipolar system [49]. This pattern was somewhat shaken by the National Movement of the former Bulgarian Czar Simeon II, who won the 2001 elections [50].

Secondly, the impact of this cleavage and the option to privilege the organisational unit by the reformers of the former Communist Party, have meant much slower *Social Democratisation* and longer identity reappraisal than in Hungary or Poland [51]. Until 1997-98, the identity of the Bulgarian Socialist Party remained ambiguous. The attempt to achieve internal compromise between the diverging ideological trends – ranging from Marxist programme all the way to the Social Democratic union option – prevented it from posting a Social Democratic stance and enticed the party to search for a "third way" with a "modern democratic Left". It was only after the collapse of J. Videnov's socialist government in 1996 and the subsequent leadership of the party by G. Parvanov at the end of 1996 that the Social Democratic identity began to emerge clearly. The success of this approach was first evidenced by the victory of G. Parvanov, the socialist candidate, in the November presidential election and then by the acceptance of the BSP, led by S. Stanichev, as fully-fledged member of the Socialist International in October 2003.

Thirdly, holding "monopoly" of the Bulgarian Left in the beginning of the transition, the BSP found itself in increasing competition with several political organisations: the historical Social Democratic Party – the foundation of the anti-Communist front –, and the Union of Democratic Forces (SDS), which, in spite of programme convergences stood as opponent, with anti-communism as their main motivation. In 1997, the Euroleft Party was established, regrouping the reformers and the Social Democrats of the Bulgarian Socialist Party. In the same year, the United Labour Block was founded, following the concept of the new Labour movement. All these competitors to the inheritor party were to fragment the left-wing voting resources, reducing support for the BSP, while not actually threatening its overall posture. The BSP remains by and large a mass party, and in the wake of the destabilising of the Bulgarian right, the only sturdy party.

The fourth feature relates to what we could term "Bulgarian paradoxes" which are linked to the governing potential of the inheritor party. On two occasions, either on its own or in conjunction with barely existing parties, the party won parliamentary elections with an absolute majority – in 1990 and in 1994. And yet, this was the inheritor party that had the shortest life span in office. In 1990, when the government was formed, A. Loukanov, the Socialist Prime Minister, launched an appeal for the setting up of a broad national coalition capable of carrying through the economic, social and financial changes. At that time, it was in the interest of the inheritor party to share power with other political forces so as to gain democratic legitimacy. This appeal was rejected by the opposition. The second paradox is that, in a way, the more the party modernised and opened up, the more its alliance potential with the other Social Democratic players extended and the more it became acceptable to international Socialist organisations. In 2001, it was to act as a pivot for the reunifying of the Bulgarian Left, split up into coalition arrangements: the *Nova Levitza* – New Left (BSP, a Social Democratic Party, the Social Democratic Political Movements, the United Labour Block, and in 2003 the Movement for Social Humanism). The coalition was to be turned into an electoral alliance, "For Bulgaria" encompassing other and minor organisations. And yet, at the same time, its government potential dwindled insofar as the Bulgarian Socialist Party had been in the opposition since 1997 and even stood as only third parliamentary force after the 2001 election. This is mainly due to the resentment accumulated over the second Socialist government term in office. However, the trend is improving. The Socialist candidate has won the presidential elections, and for months now, the Socialist Party together with its coalition have been leaders in opinion polls, in spite of a deep and widespread disregard for the Simeon government.

For the Bulgarian Socialist Party, there is a potential and "strategic" partner, the movement for Rights and Freedom (DPS), the party of Bulgarian Turks which, ever since the latter half of the nineties, have claimed to be a liberal party. The low standard of living of their community voters had led the DPS to give their programme social colours that brought them closer to the BSP.

In the case of Bulgaria, we can note a low coalition potential and poor acceptance in spite of sizeable parliamentary clout as well as a reversal of trend over the past few years – increasing acceptance accompanied by a dwindling of government potential.

The situation mainly relates to the underlying influence of the cleavage between anti-Communists and inheritor organisations. This opposition has prevented any cooperation between the inheritor party and the Social Democrats for a long time, even though their positions on economic and social policies were rather close [52]. But it is also rooted in the slow *Social Democratisation* process, which produced the fragmentation of the Bulgarian Left in the latter part of the nineties and in the political failure of the Socialist governments. And yet, the inheritor party has proved capable of modernising and adapting. It remains the main player in the Bulgarian Left, the basis for government and coalition potential.

4. Conclusion

The picture of coalitions and alliances for Social Democratic parties in countries from Central and Eastern Europe is varied. Any attempt to set up an overall pattern is doomed considering the diversity of individual situations. And yet, even though there is no one single model, we could list a number of parameters which facilitate analysis and help better compare the different Post-Communist countries: the origin of the Social Democratic Party, the pace at which *Social Democratisation* of the inheritor party proceeds, the number of left-wing parties and their basic nature (smaller Social Democratic parties or Communist parties), the impact of the cleavage between anti-Communist forces and inheritor organisations as well as the "government potential".

In the cases reviewed – Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary and Bulgaria – we could note that these parameters carry varying weights in the forming of government alliances and coalitions. In any event, the impact of the anti-Communist versus inheritor organisations struggle is patent. So, in fact, the Social Democratic Party with the highest alliance acceptability potential turns out to be the Czech Social Democratic Party, insofar as it is not involved in this antagonism, with corresponding possibilities to enter into alliances with any other political player.

The case of Poland underlines the basic problem of coalitions made by political players whose common feature is that they are inheritors of the former regimes.

The case of Bulgaria reveals the problems an "inheritor" party encounters when its *Social Democratisation* is especially slow.

One should however mention that a number of experts underline the blurring out of the cleavage between anti-Communists and inheritor organisations. This stands out mainly from the new alliances that are formed within the Left between historical parties, whether inheritors or not to the Communist parties. It should also be noted that such alliances result form the fact that a number of former Communist Party "inheritors" revealed a genuine ability to modernise and adapt and that, in some instances, they retained control of the left political spectrum. Then, the other left-wing forces consider that an alliance with the inheritor parties is more worthwhile than trying their own.

Abbreviations

CSSD	Czech Social Democratic Party
KDU-CSL	Christian Democratic Union-Czechoslovak Party
US-DU	Liberty Union-Democratic Union
ODS	Civic Democratic Party
SLD	Alliance of the Democratic Left in Poland
BSP	Bulgarian Socialist Party
BSDP	Bulgarian Social Democratic Party
OBT	Labour United Block
CEEC	Central and Eastern Europe Countries
UP	Labour Union
PUWP	Polish Unified Workers' Party

Notes

[1] In this text, we are using the terms "Post-Communist" and "Post-Communism" to refer to the chronological period from 1989 – the fall of the Communist regimes – up to present day.

[2] The most accurate name is "Social Democratic parties" that we take from G. Moschonas: "Social Democracy is a specific type of left-wing formation and the *Social Democratic* parties, even if they are viewed, formed or named in different ways, share – despite their considerable differences – a number of common traits". For the sake of terminological clarity, we use the term "Social Democratic parties".

[3] V. Lemieux, *Les coalitions, transactions et contrôles*, Paris, PUF, 1998, p. 13.

[4] *Ibid.,* p. 23.

[5] W.C. Müller, S. Kaare, "Coalition Government in Western Europe. An Introduction", *in* W.C. Müller, S. Kaare (ed.), *Coalition government in Western Europe,* Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 4-5.

[6] *Ibid.* The authors base themselves on the theories of rational choice: the behaviour of political players is defined by the ongoing pursuit of objectives and they seek to rationally predict the behaviour of those with whom they interact.

[7] M.J. Laver, I. Budge, "The Relationship Between Party and Coalition Policy in Europe: An Empirical Synthesis", *in* M.J. Laver, I. Budge (ed.), *Party politics and Government Coalitions*, London, St. Martin's Press, 1992, p. 409- 430.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 429.

[9] See M. Maor, *Parties, Conflicts and Coalitions in Western Europe,* London-New York, Routledge, 1998, p. 12.

[10] H. Back, "Explaining and predicting coalition outcomes: Conclusions from studying data on local election coalitions", *European Journal of Political Research*, 2003, 42/4, p. 442.

[11] This does not mean that CEEC political parties do not work out short or long-term strategies. The point is to know if the political and socio-economic circumstances allow them to be achieved.

[12] According to a CBOS poll, conducted between the 7th and 10th November 2003, 51% of Poles said they were opposed to the government of Leszek Miller. 77% had a poor opinion of the way government was running and 70% wanted Miller to be replaced by a different politician. Only 15% of Poles said they approved of the Prime Minister. "A record fall", KID, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 22-23 November 2003, p. 3, *in Revue de la presse polonaise*, French Embassy in Poland of 24 November 2003.

[13] On alternation see J.-M. De Waele, "Consolidation démocratique, partis et clivages en Europe centrale et orientale", *in* J.-M. De Waele (ed.), *Partis politiques et démocratie en Europe centrale et orientale*, Brussels, Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 2002, p. 148.

[14] On electoral laws in the CEEC see K. Jasiewicz, "Elections and Voting Behaviour", *in* St. White, J. Batt and P. Lewis (ed.), *Developments in Central and East European Politics 3,* Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2003, p. 173-190.

[15] K. Williams, "The Czech Republic and Slovakia", *in* St. White, J. Batt and P. Lewis (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 47.

[16] On cleavages in the Post-Communist countries, see D.L. Seiler, "Peut-on appliquer les clivages de Rokkan à l'Europe centrale?", *in* J.-M. De Waele (ed.), *Partis…*, *op. cit.*

[17] A.M. Grzymala-Busse, *Redeeming the Communist Past*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 227.

[18] For example see the analysis of M. Dauderstädt, A. Gerrits, G. Markus, *Troubled Transition. Social Democracy in East Central Europe*, Amsterdam, Alfred Mozer Foundation 1999; J.J. Wiatr, "From Communist Party to "The Socialist Democracy of the Polish Republic"", *in* K. Lawson (ed.), *How Political parties Work: Perspectives from Within*, Praeger, 1994; J.-M. De Waele, "Le retard de la social-démocratie en Europe centrale et balkanique", *in* P. Delwit, J.-M. De Waele (ed.), *La gauche face aux mutations en Europe*, Brussels, Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 1993.

[19] On the reasons for the failure of "historical" Social Democratic parties, refer to article by J.-M. De Waele, "Les partis de gauche à l'Est: social-démocratie ou "nouvelle gauche"?", *in* M. Lazar (ed.) *La gauche en Europe depuis 1945. Invariants et mutations du socialisme européen*, Paris, PUF, 1996 p. 679-695.

[20] Parties member of the Socialist International after the change in statutes during the 22nd IS Congress in Brazil in October 2003.

[21] G. Sartori, *Parties and party systems. A framework for analysis*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1976.

[22] On the origin of the SdRP, see J.J. Wiatr, *op. cit.*

[23] L. Kuk, *La Pologne, du postcommunisme à l'anticommunisme*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2001, p. 68.

[24] J.-M. De Waele, *L'émergence des partis politiques en Europe centrale*, Brussels, Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 1999, p. 283.

[25] L. Kuk, *op. cit.,* p. 85.

[26] See J.J. Wiatr, "L'évolution du parlementarisme polonais", *in* J.-M. De Waele (ed.), *La Pologne et l'intégration européenne*, Brussels, Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 2003, p. 37.

[27] St. Day, "From Social Democracy of the Polish Republic (SdRP) to Democratic Left Alliance (SLD)", *in* H. Kubiak, J.J. Wiatr (ed.), *Between Animosity and Utility. Political Parties and their Matrix,* Varsovie, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, 2000, p. 86-87.

[28] *Ibid.*

[29] B. Drweski, "Du parti "ouvrier" à la "gauche démocratique"", *in* J.-M. De Waele (ed.), *Partis…*, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

[30] F. Millard, “The parliamentary elections in Poland, September 2001”, *Electoral studies*, 2003, 22/2, p. 367.

[31] In the 7th and 8th June 2003 referendum, 77.41 % Poles voted in favour of the membership of their country in the EU.

[32] On these two populist forces refer to articles by H. Kubiak and E. Nalewajko *in* J.-M. De Waele (ed.), *La Pologne ... op. cit*.

[33] On these two populist forces, refer to H. Kubiak and E. Nalewajko *in* J.-M. De Waele (ed.), *La Pologne…, op. cit.*

[34] See G. Markus, “La typologie des clivages politique en Europe centrale et orientale, un exemple pour l’Occident”, *in* J.-M. De Waele (ed.), *Partis…, op. cit.*, p. 164.

[35] For example see H. Kitschelt, Zd. Mansfeldova, R. Markowski, G. Toka, *Post Communist Party systems*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 292.

[36] F. Müller-Rommel, G. Ilonszki, “Hungary”, *in* J. Blondel, F. Müller-Rommel (ed.), *Cabinets in Eastern Europe*, Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2001, p. 86.

[37] *Ibid.*, p. 90.

[38] M. Pittaway, “Hungary”, *in* St. White, J. Batt and P. Lewis, *op. cit.*, 2003, p. 57-71.

[39] In the latest elections, the Bohemia-Moravia Communist Party won 18.51 % of the votes and became the third parliamentary force after the CSSD and the Civic Democratic Party coming before the KDU-CSL Christian Democratic coalition and the Union for Freedom. On the Communist Party, refer to M. Perottino, “La persistance du parti Communiste en Bohême Moravie”, *Transitions*, 2000, XLI/1, p. 85-101.

[40] *Ibid.*, p. 86.

[41] D. Pesendorfer, “Success or Failure. How Far Is Eastern Europe in the Process Of Capitalist Restoration?”, *in* Vl. Dvořáková (ed.), *Success or, Failure?*, Prague, 1999, p. 61.

[42] In the “agreement” the two parties undertake not to launch a vote of defiance against the government formed by the other party.

[43] M. Klima, “A Hidden Silent Grand Coalition”, *in* V. Dvoráková (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 136.

[44] According to the agreement, the CSSD members leave the hall during confidence votes, F. Müller-Rommel, Z. Mansfeldova, “Czech Republic”, *in* J. Blondel, F. Müller-Rommel (ed.), *Cabinets in Eastern Europe*, Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2001, p. 69.

[45] K. Williams, *op. cit*. p. 49; *Tolerancní patent*, signed between the two parties in January 2000 as continuation of the June 1998 agreement.

[46] Source: Bulletin d’information Radio Praha, Zpavy, 14 April 2002.

[47] Koalicní smlouva, Cast První, 9 juin 2002, source www.cssd.cz

[48] Dodatek, 18th September 2002 according to which the parties undertake to support the bills introduced by the government.

[49] On the reasons for and extent of this antagonism, refer to P. Gueorguieva, “Quels clivages pour les partis politiques bulgares?”, *Transitions, La Bulgarie et l’intégration européenne,* 2001, XLII/1, p. 21-41.

[50] On the reasons and the significance of this cleavage see P. Gueorguieva, “Quels clivages pour les partis politiques bulgares?”, *Transitions, La Bulgarie et l’intégration européenne,* 2001, XLII/1, pp. 21-41.

[51] On the Bulgarian Socialist Party see D. Kanev, “La transformation du parti Communiste bulgare”, *in* J.-M. De Waele, *Partis… op. cit.*, pp. 83-101; M. Touykova, “La social-démocratisation du parti socialiste bulgare”, *Transitions, La Bulgarie…, op. cit.,* p. 73-97.

[52] H. Kitschelt, Zd. Mansfeldova, R. Markowski, G. Toka, *Post Communist Party systems, op. cit.*, p. 372.

Divorce, English Style?
New Labour and the TUC-affiliated Trade Unions

Philippe Marlière

1. Introduction

The alliance between the Labour Party and the trade unions affiliated to the Trade Union Congress (TUC) has always been difficult and antagonistic. During a dispute between party and trade unions in 1971, Jack Jones, the General Secretary of the TGWU [1], explained union attitudes to the party-union link by citing someone asked, after fifty years of marriage, if divorce ever crossed his mind: "Divorce never, murder often" [2].

Without a doubt, relations between the Labour Party and the TUC-affiliated unions have always been confrontational. A deep-rooted disagreement about government wage policy led to the *Winter of discontent* 1978-79. The TUC opposition certainly cost the Labour Party the 1979 elections that put Margaret Thatcher into power. The radical stance taken by the trade unions indirectly contributed to the fact that a fraction of the right wing of the party split away and formed the Social Democratic Party (SDP) in 1980. Despite these turbulent relationships however, the party-trade union link has survived through to present day.

Until the 1980s, the trade unions were custodian of the doctrine, they drafted the party programmes and embodied the "Labour ethos" [3]. Since then, the TUC influence on the party has steadily declined. At the time of Tony Blair's election to the head of the Labour Party in 1994, the trade unions were resigned to being just second-rate partners. Relations deteriorated even further with New Labour. Since 1995-97, the Blair camp has even been referring openly to the issue of "divorce" between the two partners. Indeed, New Labour sees the trade unions as one of the last remnants of a past they would like to break with as quickly as possible [4]. For New Labour, the party-trade union link represents one of the last obstacles that keeps New Labour from becoming a catch-all party, with no class commitments [5].

2. A Unique Position in Europe

"It was not Keir Hardie [6] who created the [Labour] party. It was brought forth by the TUC". This was how Ernest Bevin, secretary general of the TGWU, reminded his Labour comrades of the very special nature of the party-trade union link at the 1935 Labour Party Conference [7]. In most European countries, the Socialist and Social Democratic movements were formed at the same time as trade unions were born and sometimes even before. The British situation seems to be very atypical: it was the TUC affiliated trade unions that were behind the creation of the Labour Party. While the continental Socialist parties were organised on the basis of direct personal membership, the Labour Party took on a federal structure. It is a "trade union party" [8] created, financed and controlled by a highly decentralised trade union movement, which was born thirty-two years before the Labour Party. After having backed the Liberal party for a time, the TUC felt it had to acquire permanent staunch working-class representation in the House of Commons. And so the birth of the Labour Party was proclaimed.

This origin makes it possible to understand better the importance the issue of relations with the trade union movement holds for many Labourites. Even today, between 30 and 40% of party revenue comes from trade unions [9]. The habit of "sponsoring" Labour MPs was abolished in 1995, because the New Labour leadership felt it emphasised too strongly the nature of this relationship. Since then, the trade unions pay contributions to the local party branches and no longer directly "subsidise" a MP; a method that lets New Labour keep up appearances while continuing to receive money from the trade unions.

By means of the "block vote", trade union leadership had 90% of representation at annual Labour Party conferences until 1990. In 1992, this result was reduced to 70% of delegates and to 49% in 1996 [10]. The trade unions continue to elect twelve of the thirty-two members on the National Executive Committee (NEC), the party's governing body. Trade unions also constitute a major pool of votes. In 1964, 73% of union members voted Labour; 39 % in 1983; 46% in 1992; 57% in 1997 [11].

One can see that the conflicts inside the Labour Party have never come down to a conflict between trade unions (on a so-called "left-wing" policy line) and Party (on a so-called "right-wing" policy line). The Labour Party has always had a "right wing" and a "left-wing" and the same holds true for the trade union movement.

The political landscape ensuing from this organisation has no equivalent in Western Europe: on the one hand, a collective affiliation of trade unions to a party (by professional branch and not the TUC as a whole) is today unique in Europe. On the other hand, the organic party-trade union link has meant that the political and ideological struggles of the British Left have taken place within the Labour Party, whilst in most European countries, the lack of trade union unity has provoked the breakdown of the political Left.

3. The Years preceding Tony Blair

During her prolonged domination of British politics, Margaret Thatcher (1979-1990) succeeded in challenging the "Social Democratic compromise". The latter started to appear after the election of the Labour government in 1945. This

"compromise" allowed laying the foundations of the British *Welfare State* that the Conservatives progressively came around to accepting. It was based on a series of social and economic measures: policies inspired by Keynesianism and tripartite labour relation management by government, trade unions and employers [12]. Mrs Thatcher accused the trade unions of being "too influential" and "too militant". She held them responsible for the economic crisis, because in the sixties and seventies their wage demands had been "excessive". The Tory government had a series of "anti-union" laws passed that made Britain the country in Europe with the lowest protection in terms of trade union rights and welfare [13].

The rise in unemployment, anti-union laws and the creation of the SDP prompted the trade unions to join ranks with the Labour Party in the 1980s. Margaret Thatcher attempted to challenge the existence of the political fund, which allowed each trade union to give a share of membership dues to the Labour Party. A very belligerent campaign by the TUC forced the Tories to back down: the trade unions affiliated to the Labour Party all voted in favour of continuation of the political fund and twenty new trade unions decided to become affiliated with the party [14]. In the long run, elimination of the political fund could have threatened the very existence of the Labour Party.

In 1984, Neil Kinnock tried to introduce the principle of "one member, one vote" (OMOV) for the election of party leader. This reform was intended to curb what was seen as highly excessive union influence, by counterbalancing it with the weight of direct members, often more compliant towards the party leadership than the TUC. Kinnock's proposal was defeated by the trade unions. Philip Gould, in charge of polls taken for the Labour Party said that this defeat postponed party "modernisation" by ten years [15].

At the 1998 TUC conference, Peter Mandelson did acknowledge nonetheless that it was the trade unions that enabled Neil Kinnock to save the Labour Party [16] by hunting out Labour's most left-wing elements entrenched in the *Militant* wing [17]. Their expulsion put an end to the party's radicalisation to the left (1980-84). Mandelson also admitted that TUC support for the Labour Party had played a vital role during the years in opposition. Likewise, he thanked the trade unions for their "moderation" during the Thatcher years. Indeed, from the beginning of the nineties, the TUC gave up asking for the repeal of anti-trade union laws should Labour return to power. When Tony Blair did become Prime Minister in 1997, this issue had disappeared from the trade union agenda.

In 1992, John Smith succeeded in having the ban on block voting by trade unions accepted at the annual party conference. He reduced trade union representation at the conference from 90% to 70% and got the "OMOV" principle passed for the election of the party leader. This change further accelerated the unions' loss of influence in appointing the Labour leader.

4. Tony Blair and the TUC

Since 1994, Tony Blair intended to loosen or even break the link with the trade unions. His was mainly an electoral concern. His political advisors felt that the electorate would be favourable to a "firm" attitude from the New Labour leader with regard to trade unions [18]. Shortly before the 1997 elections, Tony Blair stated that

under his leadership, party-trade union relations would be radically different than those that prevailed in the past: “We changed the Labour Party, changed the way our members of parliament are elected, changed our relationship with the trade unions. We have changed our policymaking. We have doubled our membership. We have rewritten our basic constitution. Why? To make a New Labour Party that is true to its principles and values and is going to resist pressure from them or anyone else” [19].

During the 1997 election campaign, the TUC provided unequalled practical assistance to the Labour Party. The trade unions received no promise or commitment in return from Tony Blair. On the contrary, Blair was careful to distance himself publicly from the trade unions. He left no doubts about it, without the faintest willingness to show any consideration for the historical ally of the British Labour movement: “We will not be held to ransom by the unions (…). We will stand up to strikes. We will not cave in to unrealistic pay demands from anyone (…) Unions have no special role in our election campaign, just as they will get no special favours in a Labour Government” [20].

John Monks, then TUC general secretary, acknowledged that with New Labour under Tony Blair, the nature of party-trade union relations changed drastically: “No one knows better than the trade union movement that the Labour Party has changed. At previous elections the TUC and the Labour Party would have agreed proposals on employee-rights questions and then promoted them jointly. This time, under the “fairness not favours” style set by Tony Blair, there have been discussions about new Labour’s proposals, but no more than there have been between the CBI and the party about the forthcoming “business manifesto”” [21].

In the months preceding Labour’s coming to power, the Conservatives condemned the Labour proposal for legal recognition of trade unions in companies. Tony Blair’s response was peremptory: “Anyone who thinks Labour has made changes in the party to give it all away to the unions or anyone else does not know me” [22].

Despite the warnings from New Labour, the TUC greeted the victory of a “friendly government”, pleased to find once again a discussion partner that it considered to be more in its favour. Without any hope for a return to the before 1979 state of things, the union leaderships thought that a Labour government could bring Britain closer in line with continental legislation on labour and social laws. Before long, Tony Blair went to great lengths to crush these modest hopes by stating several times in the post-election period that there was a “need to reform the European social model, not play round with it” [23].

In an opuscule entitled *The Third Way,* Tony Blair gives a rather unflattering picture of the trade unions. He only refers to them on rare occasions and always negatively, speaking of *old politics*, or calling them the *Old Left* or even *unionised male labour* [24]. Anthony Giddens, the Prime Minister’s preferred sociologist, presents them as the typical archaic structure tied to Ford-style production lines [25]. It is interesting to note that the creator of the “third way” does not make a single mention of the repeated Thatcherist attacks against trade unions during the eighties and nineties.

The few union reforms that have been made by the government since 1997 symbolise the settlement of old “political debts” Labour still owed to the trade unions. Without the unconditional support of the TUC during the eighties, the “modernist”

wing of the party would not have been able to implement statutory reforms and radically overhaul the party's social and economic policy.

To be sure, some of the measures favourable to salaried workers are not to be sneezed at: establishment of a minimum wage, recognition of the right to trade union representation in companies, signing of the European Protocol on Social Policy. Promised by Neil Kinnock and John Smith, it was unthinkable for Tony Blair to go back on a promise made by his predecessors. So the Prime Minister kept the promises made by the Labour Party between 1983-1994, but he granted nothing else. Thus he did not budge on the issue of abolishing anti-trade union laws from the Thatcher era, a decision admittedly already approved by Neil Kinnock. He did however go back on the promise made by John Smith to re-establish rights linked to employment from the very first day of being hired (for example, regarding notice and redundancy pay) [26]. These are still only granted to employees after several months of employment in a given company. Tony Blair clearly rejected any return to tripartite management of the economy and refused to consider establishing any wage policy. In this particular case, his position was in line with the Tories. Just like the Conservatives, he is in favour of taking a flexible approach to the labour market and feels that the European social model is "counter-productive" [27]. Tony Blair's opposition to the European Directive on worker consultation at the workplace has also put a lot of strain on relations between the government and the TUC [28].

5. The Surprising Resistance of the Party-Trade Union Link

In a reference work on the relations between the Labour party and trade unions [29], Lewis Minkin felt that the party-trade union link was originally established for four main reasons: it brings in vital financial income; it is synonymous with political stability for the Labour Party; it enables the party to achieve better organisation of the working class and wage earners and finally, it identifies Labour as being "the party of the people".

We will examine the impact of each component seen in the present context of the New Labour government. With regard to financial backing, it is considered that the TUC has spent 250 million pounds since 1979. Without this contribution, the party would have hardly been able to acquire the infrastructure that turned out to be so crucial in the 1997 return to power (financing of new party headquarters in Millbank Tower, construction of a Media Centre, setting up of databanks like "Excalibur" or the "Instant Rebuttal Unit" that has enabled New Labour to react instantaneously to Tory attacks). Extremely concerned about making his party independent from the TUC, Tony Blair would be in favour of public financing of political parties. Such a reform, totally new for Great Britain, would enable the Labour Party to do without trade union support. However, up to now, the Prime Minister has been wary about implementing this measure. On the one hand, he fears this might alienate a significant number of his party members and the Labour benches in Parliament, who are very attached to retaining this link. On the other hand, he knows that a large majority of Britons are opposed to such a reform.

In order to reduce financial dependence on the trade unions, Tony Blair (and Neil Kinnock before him) has conducted campaigns for increasing direct memberships.

The reduction in the cost of membership dues was decided in 1997 in order to attract new members: young people, women and people from ethnic minorities. For a time, this strategy was successful. In 1998, the party counted up to 450,000 direct members against fewer than 280,000 in 1992 [30]. This rather large number of direct memberships has enabled to finance 40% of the total party budget [31].

This growth trend has now reversed. Since 1999, the number of members has been plummeting. According to the latest estimates published in the press, the number would be around 200,000 [32]. Neil Kinnock had set the objective of one million direct members in the 1990s. Today, this objective appears totally out of reach. This setback is worrying for the New Labour leadership because it then makes TUC support even more essential than it was in the nineties [33]. In an attempt to get around the problem, since 1997, New Labour has been trying to attract donations from prominent capitalists. These new links however have caused serious trouble for the government, as demonstrated by "Ecclestone Affair" [34]. In addition, the Labour Party closer link with the business and finance world implies a profound readjustment of its economic policy and party identity: a choice that is highly disputed by many activists and MPs.

The support from the business world also poses another problem: in most cases, it turns out to be very contingent and much more unreliable than the support from the trade unions. Backers of the party-TUC link do their best to explain that in the case of employers, it was an alliance of reason, purely cyclical and dependent on moderate government policies. In the case of trade unions, they speak of a marriage, of genuine family ties between the two partners. One must also note that the large number of trade union militants remains a factor of visibility and basic influence for the party. It is in fact the trade-union members of the Labour Party who, at regional and local level, campaign for the party or actually hold offices within the party apparatus or even local mandates.

Minkin also examines the political stability that the party-trade union link is supposed to give to the Labour Party. In the nineties, the "moderniser" wing of the party fought for putting an end to trade union block voting. Through this procedure, the trade union leadership can commit all the votes held by the trade union without consulting its members. This system is often considered undemocratic because it allows a "handful" of union "bigwigs" to vote on behalf of hundreds of thousands of members without having to get their opinions. Worse still, a handful of professional trade union directors can thus intervene in fundamental decisions that are going to commit the entire party. After having denounced block voting when they were in the opposition, Tony Blair and his allies seem to have put up with it rather well as of 1997-2000. Indeed, New Labour turned to block voting to get itself out of difficult situations during the annual party conferences (on the issues of pensions, renationalisation of the railroads, the minimum wage or electoral reform). In 1999, block voting even secured the election of Alun Michael, a Blair-backed candidate, to the position of leader in the new Welsh Assembly. He thus "came in ahead of" Rodhri Morgan, an "Old Labour" candidate. And yet, the latter had won more than two-thirds of member votes and of trade union members every time they had been consulted by their leadership. So it was the block vote of three trade unions linked to New Labour that made the difference for Alun Michael. In 2000, on the occasion of choosing the Labour candidate to run for

mayor of London, block voting by a few trade unions and the over-representation in terms of votes of MPs (in general, supporters of Tony Blair) allowed Frank Dobson to become the Labour candidate. As it turned out, Dobson lost by a wide margin of votes to Ken Livingstone, his direct rival [35].

If we now look at education and instruction of the masses, we see that the historical function of this link has become largely obsolete. Since the 1990s, it is no longer compulsory for party members to join a trade union. In 1997, only 34% of members belonged to a trade union compared to 64% in 1990. In 1997, only 15% of Labour Party members were workers (compared to 70% in the sixties) [36]. As a result, the educational function formerly provided by the link seems now obsolete in view of the changes that have occurred in the sociological make-up of militant Labourites.

A transformation of the very identity of the British Labour movement has resulted from this sociological upheaval. Up to very recent times, the Labour Party was one of the most working-class European Social Democratic parties [37]. That is no longer the case today. From "the party of the people" and "for the most part working class", it has become an interclass party in which the representation of middle classes (employees from private firms an civil servants), and higher (liberal professions) now prevails. This recent evolution suits New Labour that would like not to have to deal with the union leadership of the TUC any longer, but just with individuals, union members or not.

The years 1997-2001 were marked by distant contacts, if not to say cold, between the party and the TUC. To describe the lack of empathy of New Labour for the TUC, John Monks said that New Labour saw the trade unions as "elderly parents, a bit doddering", who had become a source of "embarrassment" for their children [38].

6. The Return to Militant Trade Unionism

Despite the declared wish for close links by John Monks, TUC General Secretary until 2003, relations between the trade unions and Tony Blair continued to deteriorate. This deeply upset the Blair's project to transform unionism and create a New Unionism [39]. The Prime Minister did after all dream of a "third trade union route" that would have given active support to the reforms implemented by his government (flexibility, Private Finance Initiative [40], acceptance of moderate wage demands, limited social rights compared to continental Europe). In the Blair's "New unionism" initiative, the TUC would seek active partnership with business leaders. The financial and logistic aid from the TUC to the party would be maintained but without the latter having to give the trade unions the power of "political" intervention in its party activities. Under the leadership of John Monks, the TUC of the years 1994-2000 came very close to this ideal situation.

Party-trade union relations of the sixties/seventies were entirely different. When the TUC held the majority of votes in the Labour Party conference or the National Executive Committee, the party and every Labour government had to ask the unions' opinion before taking any decisions that would commit the party or government. Today, this obligation has disappeared. Since 1997, many major decisions have been taken without any trade union involvement in the decision-making process. This was the case during the privatisation of air traffic control, although the TUC was strongly

opposed to it. The privatisation of the postal service was only rejected *in extremis*, not because the government was sensitive to the trade union position, but because at the last minute, it felt that this measure would not be profitable at business level. In 1995, in a speech before the trade union TGWU, Tony Blair painted the ideal picture of this new partnership in the following terms: “I want to be quite blunt with you about the modern relationship between today’s Labour Party and the trade unions. There was a time when a large trade union would pass a policy and then it was assumed Labour would follow suit. Demands were made. Labour responded and negotiated. Those days are over. Gone. They are not coming back” [41].

Since then, the trade unions only have a marginal “nuisance potential” to attempt to point the party program choices in a direction more favourable to them. Union representation in the conferences has been declining, to the benefit of the strengthening of the National Policy Forum (where the TUC only has 30 seats out of 175), the Local Policy Forums and the specialised programme committees, which are all controlled by Tony Blair or leaders who are fully loyal to him [42].

The rather recent re-emergence of militant unionism has disrupted or at least upset the *New Unionism* called for by Tony Blair. Since New Labour’s re-election in 2001, trade union opposition to government policy has, in some cases, become openly hostile [43]. The new relationship, increasingly openly critical of New Labour, appeared progressively between 1994 and 2001.

This mutual distrust trend marks the end of a cycle of party-trade union relationships. This period started in the mid-eighties when the trade unions recognised their share of responsibility in the 1979 election defeat. Starting from the eighties, the trade unions took a low profile, accepting without any fuss all changes imposed by Neil Kinnock, John Smith and Tony Blair. Such was their loyalty during this period that they accepted to see the level of their representation diminished on several occasions.

Nowadays, most trade union members of the TUC feel that the time has come to “fight the government’s drift to the right”. Internally, the highly disputed reform of the public services according to the terms of the *Private Finance Initiative* is severely criticised. At European level, the trade unions denounced “the Europe of markets and flexibility” that Tony Blair was trying to promote together with Silvio Berlusconi and José Maria Aznar. When, in the spring of 2001, the British Prime Minister made a pact to that effect with Silvio Berlusconi, John Monks declared on the BBC that the Blair’s approach was “completely idiotic”. This remark gave him a record popularity he had never had up to then [44]. More recently, the British decision to send troops to fight in Iraq alongside the United States was unanimously condemned by the trade unions. “Public money for public services and not for the war in Iraq” was the popular trade union catchphrase in the days before the military attack against Iraq.

An anti-PFI campaign was even organised in the media by Unison, the largest public service trade union. These campaigns were financed via part of the political funds, i.e. money normally earmarked for the Labour Party. The Rail Maritime Transport Workers Union (RMT) decided to withdraw their financial support to some ministers (John Prescott, deputy Prime Minister and Robin Cook, former leader of the

House of Commons) or certain MPs "hostile" to the trade union, in order to protest against government policy in the area of transport [45].

As sign of the times, for several years, we have been seen a marked increase in public service strike actions to protect public services (transportation, hospitals, education, fire-fighters). According to the polls, these strikes seem "justified" for a majority of users, which is a significant change in opinion compared to the eighties and nineties [46].

The increase in industrial actions is the major new development in the British political landscape of the past twenty years. This rediscovered readiness to fight implies the return to strikes that had reached a historically low level in the nineteen nineties. After two decades of decline, the number of unionised workers has been in full expansion since 1999, with an additional 100,000 memberships. In the mid-seventies, Great Britain had 14 million unionised workers, compared with 7.3 million at present, i.e. less than a quarter of the workforce. For the first time in its history, the TUC-affiliated unions represent more "white collars" than "blue collars", which are the traditional working class professions. The trade unions are particularly recruiting more women, part-time workers and people from ethnic minorities [47].

7. The Gut Rejection of Blairism

The leaders of the "trade union right wing" who clearly supported the Blair *New Unionism* initiative have been defeated in turn by trade unionists unknown to the general pubic. They are more radical people, who have clearly moved away from government Blairism and have been winning elections since the end of the nineties. The candidates with a "Blair-supporter" tag have all suffered bitter defeats. In 2002, Ken Jackson, outgoing general secretary of Amicus and presented as "Tony Blair's favourite trade union official" was defeated by Derek Simpson [48].

Margaret Thatcher established the legal obligation of voting by secret ballot, meant to eliminate pressure from active politicised minorities. The Conservatives hoped that secret balloting would benefit the election of moderate leaders. Well, as it turned out recently, the secrecy of the polling booth has produced the opposite effect: it has assured the election of a new generation of trade union officials who are very clearly to the left of New Labour.

These "new trade unionists" are on the whole young (40-50 years old) and politically more to the left than New Labour. The popular press has condemned the return to "hard core trade unionism", or even "radical". It is no so. These new trade union leaders are in fact far removed from the old barons of the trade union right, but also from the extreme left wing mottoes of the eighties.

This "radical trade unionism" has a number of specific features: it resolutely defends public services against what it sees as the "rampant privatisation" project of the government. In this sense, its main fight is to oppose any new privatisation. For that, it adopts what is known as a "proactive" approach, which tries to combine democracy and transparency in debates and union life [49]. This approach is aimed at breaking away from hierarchical practices inside the apparatus and with a certain type of leadership currently rejected by the members. Consequently block voting, so extensively used by the "trade union right wing" close to Blairism, has today

been abandoned. In most cases, the trade union leaderships consult their members, especially on industrial disputes.

Billy Hayes, the general secretary of the Communication Workers Union summed up this new trade unionism in these terms: "The recently elected general secretaries all have one thing in common: they are turned towards the future. All of us are in favour of forms of action that allow a greater inclusion of members. Those who had a hierarchical view of relationships between leadership and rank and file have been defeated. That amounts as much to a warning shot fired at the government as it does to a condemnation of the bosses of trade unionism" [50].

This new type of trade unionism calls on members to join in "concrete struggles", relating to the conquest of shortly enforceable rights (equal wages for men and women, combat against race discrimination in the workplace, right to maternity leave for parents, safeguarding public services, life long education for members). This approach is a clean break from wishful militant trade unionism, and its "cultural New Leftism" from the seventies and eighties.

This trade unionism rediscovers the principle of solidarity in action from trade unions in different branches, a practice largely hampered by the Thatcher government's laws. Recently, the Fire Brigade Union (FBU), the trade union of fire-fighters, called a solidarity strike with the civil servant unions fighting against the privatisation of the National Health Service – NHS, on the motive that members of the FBU are also potential users of the NHS [51].

One can see that amongst the younger trade union leaders, a number are not (or are no longer) members of the Labour Party. Unthinkable a few years ago, this moving away from the party evidences political repositioning, not just on the left, but also outside of New Labour. Some leaders were members of the Communist party (Derek Simpson, leader of Unison), others were members of the Socialist Labour Party founded by Arthur Scargill (Bob Crow, general secretary of RMT). Another one is currently a member of the Socialist Alliance, an electoral coalition gathering several extreme left-wing parties, including the Socialist Workers' Party (Mark Serwotka, general secretary of Public and Commercial Services Union – PCS). Nevertheless, up to now, all have declared they are in favour of maintaining the party-trade union link, thus keeping the tradition of "divorce, English style" relationship alive, with the two partners, who have very little regard for each other, and yet continuing their life together to protect their respective interests.

Dismissing for the moment any separation proceedings, they have nonetheless all made a downward reappraisal of the funds paid to the Labour Party. On this issue, the trade union leaderships currently have to calm down the fervour of rank and file members who in some cases have called for a clean break with the Labour Party [52]. Three influential trade unions – RMT, Unison and GMB (General, Municipal and Boilermaker's Union) – have reduced their financial contribution, equally, in order to keep the same number of votes at the party conference. The smaller trade unions have taken up this tactical approach. Between June 2001 and present day, the Labour Party expected to receive 6 million pounds sterling from the trade unions, but ultimately only got 4.5 million. This "gap to be bridged", added to the drop in dues from direct

members, resulted in aggravating the Party deficit. It had to move its very costly headquarters from Millbank Tower to a cheaper building.

The Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF) trade union [53] has severed the century-old loyalty link between TUC and the Labour Party. It announced it would back Ken Livingstone, as independent candidate, against the Labour candidate for the London mayoral election in 2004. The union stated that public transport would be in safer hands with Livingstone than with the candidate designated by the Labour Party. Eventually, Livingstone joined back the Labour Party and won again the mayoral election in June 2004. But this decision underlined a drastic questioning of the organic link that had always been preserved, including in periods of the most ferocious controversies. It also went against the Labour Party statutes. They preclude that trade unions should back financially or support any political organisation other than the Labour Party.

On the occasion of its annual conference in July 2003, the RMT also decided, that in certain cases it would support the Scottish Socialist Party (Trotskyist), Plaid Cymru (Welsh separatists), the Greens, Ken Livingstone (the independent mayor of London) or even George Galloway, suspended by the Labour Party for having sharply criticised Britain's participation in the war in Iraq. Bob Crow, its general secretary, considered that Tony Blair and his government should be viewed as "war criminals" on account of the war in Iraq. On the conference rostrum, he clearly placed New Labour in the camp of class enemies: "They [the Government] do not like us and they do not want the unions to have any power. They are in favour of keeping it a bosses' party" [54].

These extremely harsh words may not be representative of trade unions as a whole. Nevertheless, the fact that they were told in as public a venue as the RMT conference here again underscores the appalling state of relationships between the Labour Party and the TUC.

8. Conclusion

It would be premature to conclude that the changes observed within British trade unionism are here to stay. This new trend should strengthen in the future before it can be viewed as a historical evolution. One can already note, however, that this "new trade unionism" offers younger trade union leaders and members who are more militant, more radical and more reformist than the trade union generations of the eighties and nineties.

Two major trends emerge: on the one hand, Tony Blair's ambition, ever since 1994, to promote the creation of an ally trade unionism, but without any political impact on the party, seems to have been stopped for the long term or even for once and all.

The "third way" trade union line was actually attempted in the years 1994-2000. The idea then was to promote a post-industrial trade unionism won over to New Labour politics. Had it prevailed, such trade unionism would have finished off the "ideological revival" initiated by Blairism. It could have meant a complete break with opposition trade unionism as inspired by socialism. For a while, the Blair government had influential allies within the TUC (Ken Jackson of Amicus). However, this support did not last.

Before the end of the Labour Party's first term of office, this trade unionism, viewed as too lukewarm vis-à-vis political moves was increasingly rejected by the union rank and file. The increasing divorce between the members and New Labour encouraged the emergence of a new opposition discourse to Blairism. The proponents of this anti-New Labour line, often young and unknown to the general public, were elected to head the trade unions on the occasion of elections in which candidates who backed the government were systematically defeated.

Despite the recent tougher stance, the question of a divorce between the party and the TUC is still not on the agenda. Though called for by a growing minority of members, the trade union leaderships refuse, for the moment, to sever the link with the party. They continue to feel that by maintaining it, they can influence Labour policy *from within*...

For its part, the Labour Party takes a very dim view of any return to militant trade unionism, which would not hesitate to confront the government on key initiatives in its programme, like the *Private Finance Initiative*. The backers of New Labour even see with increasing exasperation the rise in influence of those they call the *awkward squad*, who regularly oppose their projects to reform public services [55].

The TUC (despite some contacts made with the Liberal Democratic Party and the Socialist Alliance), cannot easily draw a line over a century of cooperation with a government party, without any guarantee that they may find a partner as politically convincing and influential as the Labour Party.

Neither does the Labour Party contemplate physical separation from the TUC, because it desperately needs the financial and militant clout of the trade unions [56]. It therefore appears probable that the state of "divorce, English style" which means a relationship without love on either side, but in which the fate of one is intrinsically linked to the destiny of the other, will continue as such in the years ahead.

Notes

[1] Transport and General Workers' Union.

[2] Quoted *in* L. Panitch, *Social Democracy and industrial militancy: the Labour Party. Trade unions and income policy*, *1945-74*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1976, p. 258.

[3] R. Taylor, "Out of the bowels of the movement: the trade unions and the origins of the Labour Party, 1900-18", *in* B. Brivati, R. Hefferman (ed.), *The Labour Party. A centenary history*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 2000, p. 10.

[4] P. Gould*, The unfinished revolution: how the modernisers saved the Labour Party*, London, Little, Brown, 1998; R. Liddle, P. Mandelson, *The Blair revolution: can New Labour deliver?*, London, Faber and Faber, 1996.

[5] Ph. Marlière, *La troisième voie dans l'impasse. Essais sur Tony Blair et le New Labour*, Paris, Syllepse, 2003.

[6] James Keir Hardie (1856-1915) was the first Socialist MP elected to the House of Commons in 1892 and one of the backers of regrouping trade unions and independent socialist groups into a single party, the Labour Party, in effect created in 1900.

[7] Quoted *in* R. Taylor, *op. cit*., p. 8.

[8] D. Marquand, *The progressive dilemma. From Lloyd George to Blair*, London, Phoenix, 1999, p. 17.

[9] The drop in trade union contributions was offset in part by the rise in direct membership in the period 1994-98. In 1998, it was estimated that affiliation dues paid by direct members provided 40% of party revenue against 30% stemming from the trade union political fund. In addition, New Labour encouraged major offerings from "political friends" in the worlds of business and finance. Contributions from "big business" cover around a fifth of Party income. S. Ludlam, "Norms and blocks: trade unions and the Labour party since 1964", *in* B. Brivati, R. Hefferman (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 235-36.

[10] S. Ludlam, M. Bodah, D. Coates, "Trajectories of solidarity: changing union-party linkages in the UK and the USA", *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 4/2, June 2002, p. 228.

[11] S. Ludlam, *op. cit.*, p. 233.

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 221-222.

[13] D. Coates, "New Labour's industrial and employment policy", *in* D. Coates, P. Lawler (ed.), *New Labour in power*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2000, p. 122-135.

[14] L. Minkin, *The contentious alliance: the trade unions and the Labour party*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1992, p. 564-565.

[15] P. Gould, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

[16] Cité *in* S. Ludlam, "New Labour and the unions: the end of the contentious alliance?", *in* S. Ludlam, M.J. Smith (ed.), *New Labour in government*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 2001, p. 114.

[17] E. Shaw, *Discipline and discord in the Labour Party*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1988, pp. 257-290.

[18] P. Gould, *op. cit.*, pp. 257-258.

[19] *The Guardian*, 11 April 1997.

[20] *The Financial Times*, 7 April 1997.

[21] *New Statesman*, 4 April 1997.

[22] P. Gould, *op. cit.*, pp. 353-354.

[23] T. Blair, *A modern Britain in a modern Europe: speech at the annual friends of Nieuwspoort diner*, The Hague, 20 January 1998, London, The Labour Party, & *The Third Way: new politics for the new century*, London, Fabian Society, 1998.

[24] T. Blair, *The Third Way: new politics for the new century*, *op. cit.*, p. 1 & 8.

[25] A. GIDDENS, *The Third Way: the renewal of Social Democracy*, Oxford, Polity Press, 1998.

[26] S. LUDLAM, "New Labour and the unions...", *op. cit*., p. 116.

[27] *Ibid.*, p. 117.

[28] *Ibid.*

[29] L. MINKIN, *op. cit.*

[30] P. WEBB, "The British Labour Party », *in* R. LADRECH, PH. MARLIÈRE (ed.), *Social Democratic parties in the European Union. History, organization, policies*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1999, p. 104.

[31] S. LUDLAM, "New Labour and the unions…", *op. cit*., p. 117.

[32] David Triesman, Labour Party General Secretary acknowledges the major drop in direct members and says his party had "around 270,000 members" at the end of 2002. It is likely that this figure has fallen again as a result of the war in Iraq; a decision that greatly angered many Labour militants. *New Statesman*, 30 September 2002.

[33] P. SEYD, P. WHITELEY, "New Labour and the party: members and organization", *in* S. LUDLAM, M.J. SMITH (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 75.

[34] On this occasion, the government's integrity was seriously questioned after the latter decided against all expectations, to allow the tobacco companies to continue to sponsor Grand Prix Formula 1 in Britain. Shortly afterwards, Tony Blair had to admit that Bernie Ecclestone (head of the organisation of the Formula 1 world championship) had been one of the main financial backers of the Labour Party during the 1997 election campaign. The Prime Minister had to go before the media and apologise, and the one million pounds received by his party was paid back in full to the contributor. See Ph. MARLIÈRE, "Le blairisme, un thatchérisme à visage humain?", *Les Temps modernes*, 601, Oct.-Nov. 1998, p. 136.

[35] Ph. MARLIÈRE, "Bataille pour Londres", *Le Monde diplomatique*, 554, mai 2000, p. 11.

[36] S. LUDLAM (ed.), *New Labour and the labour movement*, Sheffield, University of Sheffield Political Economy Research Centre, 1998, p. 39.

[37] Ph. MARLIÈRE, "La social-démocratie européenne en question", *Universalis 2003*, Paris, Encyclopaedia Universalis 2003, p. 98.

[38] *New Statesman*, 8 juillet 2002.

[39] S. LUDLAM, "Norms and blocks: trade unions and the Labour Party since 1964", *op. cit.*, p. 234.

[40] The New Labour government pursued the privatisation of public services to a large extent, getting their inspiration from an initiative created by the Conservatives in the nineties. This initiative is called the *Private Finance Initiative* (PFI). It works out the methods of financing and management of public service by the private sector. Key services such as education, health, transport are concerned by the PFI. In post-Thatcher Great Britain, this policy is joined with a "second generation" of privatisations. Highly debated, it is currently sparking off the unanimous opposition of trade unions, civil servants and users. See Ph. MARLIÈRE, "Le public au service du privé: mondialisation néolibérale et la deuxième génération de privatisations en Grande-Bretagne", *Les Temps modernes*, 615-616, Sept.-Oct.-Nov. 2001, p. 347-370.

[41] T. BLAIR, *New Britain. My vision of a new country*, London, Fourth Estate, 1976, p. 133.

[42] P. SEYD, P. WHITELEY, "New Labour and the party: members and organization", *in* S. LUDLAM, M.J. SMITH (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 73-91.

[43] A hostility that went up a notch on the occasion of the long and bitter dispute during the winter and fall of 2003 between the government and the FBU, the fire brigades union. The left wing of the Labour party and the TUC denounced in very harsh terms the "contempt" shown by Tony Blair for the trade union world and his "Thatcheresque gesticulations". See M. SEDDON,

"Bonfire of beliefs", *The Guardian*, 23 November 2002; A. Murray, " The axis of privilege", *The Guardian*, 29 November 2002.

[44] *New Statesman*, 8 July 2002.

[45] *The Guardian*, 25 June 2002.

[46] According to a poll published in *The Guardian* in a period marked by numerous strikes in local public services, public railway transport and the London underground, 59% of users interviewed felt that these strikes were "justified", 29% thought the opposite and 12% had no opinion. See *The Guardian*, 30 July 2002.

[47] Source site BBC, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/, 8 September 2000.

[48] Present as the archetype of the "right-wing trade unionist", unconditionally backing the politics of the Blair government, Ken Jackson, the leader of Amicus, was defeated by Derek Simpson, opponent of New Labour, in the summer of 2002. This election, with very close results, was marked by irregularities on the part of Ken Jackson's supporters. After counting the votes four times, the supporters of the outgoing secretary general had to resign themselves to accepting the victory of Derek Simpson. Commentators have felt that this symbolic election constituted the proof of a deep-seated rejection of Blairism within the trade union movement. *The Guardian*, 19 July 2002.

[49] W. Hutton, "By the left, quick march", *The Observer*, 21 July 2002.

[50] *Red Pepper*, September 2002.

[51] *Ibid*.

[52] This is the case of the members of the Rail Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT) or the Fire Brigade Union (FBU).

[53] *The Guardian*, 3 June 2003.

[54] *The Guardian*, 2 July 2003.

[55] This is how New Labour government and the medias call a small group of trade union leaders considered as more "radical" and more "anti-New Labour" that the other union leaders. This informal group includes Mick Rix of ASLEF (train drivers union), Andy Gilchrist of the FBU (fire-fighters trade union), Billy Hayes of the Communication Workers Union, Bob Crow of RMT (National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers), Derek Simpson of Amicus (the largest of affiliated unions) and Mark Serwotka of PCS.

[56] Which is clearly recognised by the current Labour Party General Secretary, David Triesman, a former union man. According to him, the party is in debt for 5 millions pounds sterling. See *New Statesman*, 30 September 2002.

The Spanish Case: the PSOE

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The Spanish Socialist Party was in power for fourteen years. In 1996, the Partido Popular (People's Party), led by José Maria Aznar, ousted the Socialists from power. The latter became the main opposition party until the March 2004 elections. The majority obtained in the March 2000 elections confirmed the centre-right victory and the role of main opposition party allocated to the Socialists. This second defeat led to a debate in the centre-left of the political spectrum about the role of the PSOE in Spanish society.

One must emphasise that in recent decades, the political cycles in Spain and other European countries have not been in line with each other. We should keep in mind that when the Conservatives were in power in Europe during the eighties, the comfortable position of Spanish Socialist governments headed by Felipe Gonzalez was simultaneously viewed with envy and admiration by the other European Social Democrats, in the opposition at that time. At the end of the nineties, the situation was reversed. While the Social Democrats were in power in nearly all the EU countries, the PSOE was on the opposition benches. Moreover, as leader, José Maria Aznar became the role model for the weakened Conservative parties [1]. There is no simple explanation for this situation. As Felipe González stressed, "the PSOE was killed by its own success", when its ambitious project to modernise the Spanish State came to an end. Paradoxically, the PSOE failed to provide a suitable response to new social and economic challenges facing Spanish society and which arose as a result of its policies. Likewise, in order to provide a satisfactory analysis of the situation that prevailed until the elections in the spring of 2004, it has been necessary to examine several factors. In this contribution, I examine the PSOE from a historical and organisational perspective.

1. A Historical Overview

The PSOE (Partido Socialista Obrero Español, Spanish Socialist Workers' Party) was founded in 1879 by a Socialist, Pablo Iglesias, who was a member of the Workers' International. The PSOE, a member of the Socialist family, can be defined as being rigid, secular republican and with a tendency towards Jacobinism and centralisation. Its initial power base was in Madrid and the Basque Country, but it had no influence in Catalonia, one of the most industrialised regions in 19th century Spain. It had a weak presence in Spanish society during its early years, and although some of its members founded the UGT (Unión General de Trabajadores, General Workers' Union) in 1888, it was not until early in the 20th century that the party achieved some popularity after the election of Pablo Iglesias as Member of Parliament in 1910. In 1921 the party suffered a split when some PSOE members joined the IIIrd International and founded the Spanish Communist Party (Partido Comunista de España, PCE). During the dictatorship of General Primo de Rivera (1923-1930) the PSOE was one of the few political parties tolerated by the regime. In 1930 the Socialist Party joined the *Pacto de San Sebastián* (San Sebastian's Agreement), in which the democratic forces reached a compromise to establish a Republic after the collapse of the Monarchy. The PSOE was one of the winners in the 1931 local elections, joining the Government of the new Republic established on 14th April 1931, and also during the Progressive Biennium until 1933. In October 1934, when the Revolution broke out in Asturias, the region's Socialists participated actively in it. After the collapse of the revolutionaries and the ensuing Conservative governments, the Socialists joined the Popular Front in 1936, a coalition of left and center-left parties that won the February 1936 general elections and formed a new Government. With the outbreak of the Civil War in July 1936, the PSOE took part in successive Republican governments and had several Prime Ministers, such as Francisco Largo Caballero, a member of the party's left wing, the so-called *Spanish Lenin*. Both Largo Caballero and his successor, Juan Negrín, faced Indalecio Prieto, the Minister of War, a representative of the PSOE's moderate wing who advocated a coalition with the liberal Republican bourgeoisie/middle class rather than with the Communist Party of Spain. After the collapse of the Republic in 1939, the party leaders went into exile and the Socialist Party lost many of its members due to Franco's repression. While the party's directorate was being recomposed abroad, inside the country several Socialists groups were founded with few or no connection with the leaders in exile, mainly in Madrid, the Basque Country and Andalusia. Anti-Communist, due to Soviet Union policy, the PSOE created anti-dictatorship platforms without the presence of the Communist Party. The internal groups were led by Felipe González, Alfonso Guerra, Nicolás Redondo and José María Benegas, and prevailed at the 1972 Party Conference. In the 1974 Conference, held in Suresnes, Felipe González succeeded Rodolfo Llopis, Secretary General in exile – who did not recognise the legitimacy of that Conference and formed a new Executive Committee with internal members. The PSOE underwent major reforms that turned it into a completely new party. In 1976 the party proposed the *ruptura democrática* (democratic break) with the régime and the establishment of the Republic. In 1977, owing to the success of the Political Reform inspired by Prime Minister Adolfo Suárez, the Socialist Party ran in the general elections and obtained second place in terms of votes and in number of seats in the new Parliament. In 1978, in a standardisation process of the Spanish left and centre-left, it joined with the Popular Socialist Party (PSP)

of Enrique Tierno Galván, who was elected Mayor of Madrid in 1979. The turning point in PSOE's recent history was the 28th Party Conference in 1979, in which Felipe González was an advocate for abandoning Marxism. Felipe González's proposals were rejected and he resigned. His re-election in the Extraordinary Conference in 1979 established the definite abandoning of Marxism and the unquestioned leadership of Felipe González as General Secretary. In 1982 the Socialist Party won the general elections and formed a monocolour Socialist Government headed by Felipe González. The traditional pacifist and anti-NATO Socialist position changed and in the referendum held in 1986 on whether or not Spain should remain a member of the North Atlantic Alliance, he backed staying in NATO. This resulted in the departure of part of the left-wing, led by Pablo Castellano, who then founded the Socialist Action Party (Partido de Acción Socialista, PASOC) that joined together with the Communist Party to form the United Left electoral coalition (Izquierda Unida, IU). The Felipe González government was in power when Spain joined the European Economic Community. During those years the socialist-inspired trade union, UGT, headed by Nicolás Redondo, cooled its relationship with the Socialist Party. The PSOE succeeded in winning the mayoral elections in the majority of Spain's largest cities (from 1979 to 1995), and they also headed the governments of most of the Spanish Autonomous Communities (1983-1995). From 1991, and especially from 1995 on, the People's Party (Partido Popular, PP) held the power in local and regional governments in various towns and regions. From the end of the 1980s and at the beginning of the 1990s, cases of corruption emerged that affected public opinion and forced the resignation of party Vice-Secretary Alfonso Guerra as Vice-President of the Government in 1991. From then on, there was a *guerrista* wing in the party, with leftist and populist leanings, opposing the *liberal* wing represented by Government Ministers of Economy, such as Carlos Solchaga. The internal split was even more visible in terms of the election results of the many elections that were held at the beginning of the 1990s [2]. In 1996, after the General elections, there was a change in the Government and the People's Party, headed by José María Aznar came to power.

After the election defeat, Felipe González resigned as General Secretary at the 34th Party Congress (1997). The same congress elected Joaquín Almunia as the new leader. In an effort to give credence to the new leadership, the presidential candidate was elected through a new system of primary elections, in which José Borrell was elected ahead of Almunia. Yet after Borrell's resignation, the responsibility again fell on Almunia who had lost the elections in March 2000. The necessity for a complete renewal of leadership led to the election of José Luís Rodríguez Zapatero at the 35th party congress in July 2000. He and his new team had to face the double task of leading the process of renewal while at the same time articulating clear and effective opposition to Aznar's government.

The party's organisational structure took on a federal form based on regional federations or nationalities – with the exception of Catalonia [4], integrated by municipal, local or island federations. It was based on territorial criteria with a pyramidal form. The federation is its fundamental body, with great autonomy, and on which the party's successive levels of leadership hinge. Duverger's (1981) definition of a mass party [5] can be applied to the PSOE's organisation [6].

Electoral results for the national Parties (1977-2004) [3]

	AP/PP	UCD	CDS	PSOE	PCE/IU
1977	8,42	34,83		30,35	9,27
1979	6,46	35,05		30,49	10,8
1982	26,51	6,81	2,89	48,38	4,13
1986	26,14		9,16	44,34	3,83
1989	26,23		8,03	40,27	9,22
1993	35,04		1,77	39,1	9,63
1996	39,17			38	40,64
2000	45,26			34,64	5,55
2004	38,26			43,34	5,04

The division of powers within the party followed a classical pattern: the Federal Executive Commission represents the executive branch; the Federal Committee, the legislative and the Federal Commission of Conflicts, the judicial. The Federal Conference, held every three years, represents the top sovereign power in the party. Each body's competences are those as described by Duverger and other authors with regard to Socialist parties as mass parties.

The party structure is complex, rigid and strong: complex because the parts of each level form the whole, each part complies with the upper level and none of them can work without the other; rigid and strong because both the party Statutes and the different internal rules regulate its inner life systematically and precisely.

This regulation thoroughness is the guarantee of participation both of the affiliates and of the diverse structural elements that form the party. Up to a point there has been an attempt to keep the fundamental principles of political democracy within the Socialist party through the division of powers as well as through participation. This participation is shown by the fact that at all levels, there is always representation of the lower levels. But this inner democracy is more apparent than real as several factors show.

An initial factor to be considered in measuring party inner structure is the incidence of the electoral system. In Spain, it is a proportional, D'Hondt system with closed and blocked lists. "List elections in large districts force the party's local committees or sections to establish a strong articulation among them within the district in order to achieve an agreement on the lists' composition" [7].

The proportional system implies two other factors that must be taken into account: on the one hand, the centralisation in the Federal Nominating Committee of the member candidates for public representation (Art. 29 Statutes); on the other, the internal electoral system. Sartori states that "when the party matters, that is, when political careers must advance through the party's career system, the key variable is the internal electoral system; and it is so because the electoral activity represents, from the leadership's point of view, the central element of their structure of opportunities" [8]. Besides, the Socialist party applies the exclusion clause to those minorities that do not obtain a specific

percentage that enables them to express themselves as minorities in the different bodies of the party.

The PSOE structure implies a vertical – not horizontal – type of linkage. In this sense, Caciagli states that “provincial associations keep their autonomy in this and other fields, although the seemingly decisive bodies, also as links with the centre, are the national or regional federations or the national parties, where they exist. The choice of a federal structure by the Spanish Socialists goes back to 1917, at least on paper. It was necessary after Franco’s death, when the nationalities issue emerged as one of the most serious questions for the new system: the PSOE, accused in the past of being “centralist” and “statist”, adapted its structure to the new requirements, if not for other reasons, accepting the conditions posed by some national associations at the moment of unification”. Jorge de Esteban and Luis López Guerra add that “they are in any case, as we show, regional groups whose activity is favoured by the autonomy allowed by the party’s federal structure and which, if they achieve control of the corresponding regional federation, usually cooperate closely with the party leadership without any serious ideological problem, this collaboration being favoured by the Federal Committee’s peculiar structure” [9]. Finally, Pedro Bofill states that “nevertheless, reality shows us, up to now, that, with the exception of Catalonia, the majority of parties scarcely use this decentralization, which in my opinion indicates the great caution that parties have about this issue”.

The federal structure of the party, its articulation at different levels and the vertical linkages that derive from it are the three basic aspects of PSOE’s organisation. Puhle stated that “when we analyze the centralizing processes and the increase of decisions adopted “at the top” of the party, we will have to consider, besides, whether a democratic Socialist party, relatively small and scarcely institutionalized and bureaucratic as is the PSOE, does not need perhaps in a period of democratic consolidation after decades of dictature, a higher level of centralization and centralism than mass organizations with a long life as the German SPD or the British Labour Party. But, on the other side, the increasing centralization implies some clear enough risks. It can strengthen within the party the tendency to develop a hierarchical mentality and the easy obedience, reducing the potential participation and the process of decision-making from the bottom up, and do so moreover in a moment when precisely the contrary would be necessary as well as recommendable: the strengthening of democratic procedures from below in order to face the increase of patronage, the pressures of the “officialist sector” and the “*force des choses*” that affect a ruling party” [10]. The crisis between Felipe González, Prime Minister and party General Secretary and Alfonso Guerra, former Vice-President of the Government and general vice secretary, and the internal confrontation between the so-called “renewal” and “guerrista” sectors followed the guidelines pointed out by Puhle. Besides, as the 1993 legislative elections campaign showed, Felipe González’s leadership was the party’s fundamental asset. According to Mario Caciagli, “the leader’s authority guarantees, finally, the loyalty of national parties and federations” [11], the internal unity and the necessary electoral pull to keep the PSOE as the first electoral party.

Although this reasoning made sense for maintaining the *statu quo* in the PSOE, it became progressively outdated in the party. The González leadership alone was not enough to avoid defeat in the 1996 elections and nor was the Joaquin Almunia

leadership that followed. It was not until the 35th Congress and a completely new leadership that party dynamics became susceptible to change. It was left to Zapatero to demonstrate that the PSOE had really changed, internally and ideologically. The election victory in March 2004 was a first success.

2. The Socialist Leadership

The central core of the Socialist party, the "inner circle of the inner circle" if we may use that expression, is formed by those members who have participated in all the Federal Committees. It is focussed on a large group of members active in the re-creation of the Socialist party. These members represent the regular leadership core of the party. It cannot be said that they are a mysterious power, out of the party's control. There is no evidence either that this core does not transform itself into a smaller one within the line of the visible leaders and the shadow-leaders, as Duverger pointed out or that it is not nurtured by new members who have acquired their own weight in the party [12]. As Duverger maintained, "popular imagination particularly loves stories about secret powers and mysterious leaders; in this sense, the common opinions must be interpreted with a particular mistrust" [13].

There is evidence of this minimal core's existence but not of the decision-making power that goes through it. Their names, their duties, and the specific weight they bear in the party can give us an idea of that but only as a hardly demonstrable hypothesis.

As provided for, under the PSOE's Statutes, the General Secretary is directly elected by delegates to the Congress, in the same way as all the members who make up the Federal Executive Committee. The Federal Congress, consisting of the delegates elected by the regional Federations, elect a part of the Federal Committee (the maximum leading body between Conferences); the rest of it is formed by the Federations' General Secretaries as born members (Art. 23 of the Statutes).

The vote of the leading bodies is made through the delegation's spokesman according to the represented mandates, namely through weighted vote. The weight of the Federations with more members can impose itself in the adoption of resolutions.

Cayrol and Ysmal say that "the political party Conferences constitute a particularly significant issue for those interested in the militants' sociology. Indeed, they gather together, in a moment full of solemnity in the organization's political culture, all the party's animators namely the middle management and active representatives of the rank and file, who participate in this "*tempus fortis*" of their political organization's life where the party line during the next months and years is defined, where the new leadership is appointed, where the face of the party is created for the outside world and the media" [14].

The inner representation of the Socialist Conference delegates has changed through the years. We cannot say they represent the members, but the militants [15], the so-called party "inner circle". We could think that we are in front of a black-and-white picture of the militants but the evolution of the delegations' composition takes place in the public election functions that hold the majority of Congressmen since 1982, year of the legislative elections victory [16]. We should speak more of party elite representation than of its militants. This Conference attendance is described by Botella in terms of delegates' representation in relation to total party membership: "It

is possible (...) that only, or preferably, those more respected, more acknowledged or more ancient members of the party would be elected as delegates; that, a party conference requiring a quite intense dedication at least for some days, those persons who have a minor personal availability (older members, housewives, etc.) would have less chance to be elected; that the prevailing cultural and social values would somehow influence the choice of delegates. Maybe some of these reasons would go against women's presence or in favour of a major representation of those persons with a higher cultural level. We must not exclude that political parties, with the aims of creating a certain "image" in public opinion, promote and encourage a major presence of certain sections or groups" [17].

It can be said that the Socialist Party's leadership is monocratic. Schonfeld's model can be applied to other parties too, such as the French Socialist Party for example [18]. Roland Cayrol thinks that "the study of the Socialist Party's leadership and central body is more complex through the fact that together with this "democratic" legitimacy there is another legitimacy source: the one coming from the confidence granted by the First Secretary. We know about the role played by François Mitterrand at the head of the Socialist Party since 1971, we know the importance of his arbitration in making possible the existence of different tendencies in his party's leadership. We know about the international prestige he has acquired since 1965, and even more since 1973-74. All this, undoubtedly added to the man's personal nature and to his leadership habits, explains that a structuring of party leadership has been created in a pragmatic way – not considered in the Statutes – coming only from him. The functioning of the Socialist party's central bodies thus starts in a double circuit of legitimacy: that based on the democratic nomination and that other which we cannot call "royal" but maybe "Mitterrandist"" [19].

This was the case of the PSOE, since power was in the hands of one person who controlled the party but, in contrast to the French case, could not directly designate his collaborators. As Puhle states "if the PSOE has a problem, this is not that of democratic leadership but in the worse case that of extending inner democracy and political participation from below. The leader seems assured, strong and indisputable, in a way not known anywhere else in the European democracies. But it depends essentially on one person who cannot be replaced even by his closest collaborators" [20].

When Felipe González was General Secretary of the party, there were never internal confrontations about his leadership. This seems to indicate that his leadership was not of the "*primus inter pares*" – in the colleged kind, but that his figure had a more important specific weight than granted by the Socialist party Statutes.

In this same sense, Mario Caciagli adds that "Felipe González has a great power emerging from some kind of "situation charisma" which is frequent in the period of a party's (re)construction and, in this case, consecrated by the 1979 Conferences and the 1982 election. Although not all the party identifies with him, González represents a real resort to the PSOE. He is so as an image to the exterior and as an "electoral engine", and as a meeting and balance-point of different forces and urges within the party" [21]. But when a party with monocratic leadership is in crisis, its effects are described as follows by Schonfeld "because of the essential role played by the leader and the organisation's tendency to identify itself with the leader, succession always implies a

crisis. The monocrat's replacement always causes a major and abrupt change of staff and leadership as well as of party strategy and maybe style. With a new leader a new organisation is born" [22].

We have found a good example of this crisis involving the PSOE and its leader Felipe González. The two crises we are referring to were those of 1972-74 and 1979. In both cases there was an inner party crisis which provoked a deep change in party strategy and status. The crisis at the 12th Conference in 1972 produced a disadjustment within the party leadership, changing the internal balance but not breaking the party or substantially changing its personal composition. What did change was the conception of the General Secretariat that became a collegiate body, with Felipe González as First Secretary [23].

The split between the two sectors – "historical" and "renewed" – occurred at the 13th Conference in 1974 held at Suresnes. De Esteban and López Guerra state that "in fact, the summons of the 1974 13th Conference did not take place in the established way since it was not done by the appropriate person (Rodolfo Llopis, General Secretary) but by Nicolás Redondo, who was not empowered to do so. It was most of all a coup, successfully achieved, in the party organisation. The "orthodox" Conference took place in December and was convened by Llopis. It is thus difficult to determine exactly who really split the PSOE, whether it was the "renewed" or the "historics". The latter counted on party legitimacy; those with the success legitimacy" [24].

The second crisis in the PSOE erupted at the 18th Conference in 1979, after the second defeat at the general elections. It was due to a basic ideological element between the supporters of maintaining Marxism and those in favour of not defining the party as Marxist. The victory of the first group led to González's resignation from the General Secretariat. The winning sector having not foreseen a spare leadership, a new Extraordinary Conference was summoned in which González accepted his return "to office" and Marxism was abandoned. These two Conferences were the Bad-Godesberg of Spanish Socialism.

A third crisis unfolded with the resignation of Felipe González in 1997. It involved a very deep-seated crisis that was not resolved until the March 2004 victory. At the time he became General Secretary, Zapatero knew it was going to be necessary to renew and transform the party. The PSOE really had to create a new project. But he had positive features. While González's charisma was indeed unique, it was soon obvious that Zapatero had "charm" [25].

We may talk of monocracy in those parties counting on an unquestioned and unquestionable figure, even though the power personalization induced by the media resulted in all the parties having a visible figure. One of the basic strengthening elements of the Socialist Party is how the voter visualises its image. The media and particularly TV are the mediators between politicians and parties and society; in a country like Spain, with really low reading levels, citizens have moved from radio to TV broadcasting without the critical view given by the daily written press. This fact has modified the forms of election campaigns and propaganda and particularly the identification of the parties through their image on TV. In this respect, Puhle states that "it must be taken into account that post-Francoist Spain is one of the first cases (in the "first world", at least) where party system has stabilized itself after TV has conquered

hegemony in the mass media market, thus being able to model the new mechanisms of political advertising and electoral campaigns. As far as we know, more traditional vehicles and instruments of political action have not had a relevant impact on electors' mobilisation and choice, and have often been limited to distributive functions. The 1982 general election campaign, as previous ones, took place mainly on TV screens, where the leader personified the party, be it alone or surrounded by some of his/her collaborators. In the case of the PSOE, the party image, and specially its unity, resolution and steadiness, contributed a large extent to victory. And this image was largely, and decisively, projected via TV by its leader, Felipe González" [26].

In this sense, we might think that electors did not choose on the basis of parties' manifestos, but rather through the comparison of leaders' images which symbolised the basic programme messages as well as the parties they do represent. Sani, in this same line, states that "party leaders enjoy, in Spain and elsewhere, an enormous public visibility and, for many electors, they are the symbol of party and its policies. There are reasons to think that the images projected by parties' leaders and, even more, the comparative assessment made by voters, has become another dimensions of the political composition of the vote" [27].

We have already noted how the creation of the Spanish party system occurred in a country highly penetrated by television, unlike other democracies, where the TV factor appeared after the settlement of the party system. This fact has also influenced the type of leadership in political parties. In their preference for speaking directly to electors and public opinion, leaving aside somehow the traditional role of membership, according to Bartolini, "it cannot be doubted that social communication media have replaced membership as the key means for transmitting party political messages to the broad masses of electors in today's highly educated and urbanised societies. The function of traditional activities of mobilisation and campaigning, such as local assemblies, candidates meetings and canvassing, requiring a large investment in membership, seem to have entered a period of decay, when faced with more efficient campaigning techniques" [28].

It does not necessarily follow that audio-visual impact of party leader images alone will determine the outcome of elections – actually, analysts do not agree on this respect – but, in any case, it can be an invaluable help. "Lazarsfeld's analysis according to which radio broadcasting does not influence directly, but only through opinion-leaders, does not diminish the importance of the fact. Mass media reach both opinion leaders and followers, and a politician does not mind whether his/her speech has a direct or an indirect influence, as long as it has one" [29]. This statement is even more exact if applied to TV, where speech is not the main point anymore, but the images' support, which has brought about structural changes in advertising and election campaigns. Likewise in this regard, López Guerra states, that "the use of radio and TV broadcasting has affected the style of electoral campaigns, because of their technical requirements, eliminating the rhetorical and effectist discourse typical of electoral meetings, replaced by a series of rapidly changing impressions focussing on single points; this technique was required by an early perception that political campaigning (either on radio or TV broadcast) is somehow "imposed" on audiences, unlike traditional (voluntary) attending of electoral meetings. Thus, it was found that

audience reaction is to avoid such imposed propaganda, searching other broadcasting when available" [30].

It must not be forgotten that election campaigning aims at a group of "undecided" electors and at reinforcing the favourable orientation of own voters. Everywhere, this electoral campaigning individualises a leader, who symbolises party and party ideas. It can be said that socialists have such an undisputed and indisputable leader, who symbolises them in the audio-visual realm as power in a monocratic socialist party through unconditional adhesion to the leader. "In effect, Felipe González's leadership undoubtedly constitutes an important factor in the cohesion of the PSOE. But it would be interesting to point out that this leadership has been consolidated not only because it is identified with the overall party objectives, but also because of its contribution to the efficiency of the entire social system. The fact that Mr. González has become a national leader capable of eliciting ample social consensus (as reflected in the constantly high ratings the image receives in opinion polls), has at the same time strengthened the party's internal consensus based on his leadership. But this phenomenon is not unusual, but rather, according to Kirchheimer, is typical of party leadership in the catch-all model" [31].

The "Partido Socialista Obrero Español" (PSOE) impelled a process for the integration of all the different socialist options that were present in the first general election in 1977. This is the only example of a process satisfactorily carried out in the political system, which was a positive point for the configuration of PSOE as a real alternative to government.

Several socialist organisations stood in the first general election: PSOE, as a coalition of small regional socialist parties; the "Partido Socialista Popular" (PSP) whose leader was Tierno Galván and which obtained six seats, party that then merged into PSOE in 1978; and the "Alianza Socialista Democrática" (ASD), integrated by the historic Socialist that had rejected González's leadership after 1974 party conference held in France [32]. In first place, PSOE achieved the union of the socialist political area by integrating all the other Socialist parties into it. Secondly both hierarchy and inner cohesion are imposed in the PSOE due perhaps to the ability of its leader to resolve the complex internal situation provoked by the simultaneous presence of historical leaders, several critics and many young people who just joined the party because of its possibilities to become the alternative to government. The highest point of this process was the 28th Party Conference and the 1979 Extraordinary Conference. In the PSOE Conference of 1979, an "*ad hoc*" commission/committee was elected to prepare an Extraordinary Conference to be held six months later, where Felipe González was re-elected and succeeded in his desire to abandon Marxist principles [33].

In third place, as a result of the two factors already mentioned, Felipe González remained as the indisputable and hegemonic socialist leader from his election in 1974 until 1997, when he resigned from his post as General Secretary. Now, it is to be seen what Zapatero will achieve in his new position. It is still too soon to determine if the renewal that has just begun will have the same impact as the process undergone in the Gonzalez era.

Finally there are strong leadership personalities in both parties affecting as much the inner party as the outside. In the PSOE, this role is positive both internally and externally [34].

Thus far, we have analysed the external factors that affect the political parties, or the influences they receive from the political system in which they operate. Let us now analyse the internal method of selection; we shall have to bear in mind that some of the questions posed in this chapter do not have an easy answer, mainly because of the short period it covers.

We talk basically about formal selection mechanisms; nevertheless we think it would be interesting to complete this research in the future by determining the importance of the political party elite. There is usually inclinations to identify the party with its leadership and even with its national top man/woman; this is also the position we are taking in our study. The importance of the horizontal dividing lines, the intermediate elites [35] and their role in relation to the directive bodies' renewal will be pointed out; we will bear in mind that they could be leaders in the future. In the Spanish situation the parties' crises (1978-79) and specially the change in their structure and dynamics since 1982 influence the renewal of the elite. The renewal and mobility rates of the Spanish political elite contrast with the traditional and also current professionalisation of European democracies. One might think nevertheless, according to the theory of the "cartel party", that being essentially leadership oriented parties, failures or not successful leaderships are more frequent as well as renewals of those successful weakened by time [36].

The predominance of the PSOE in the representative bodies and the ensuing occupation of large areas in Government and public administration helped to decrease the inner tensions in the party and influenced the composition and renewal process of the party elite (ministers, presidents of Autonomous governments, etc.) in the Federal Committee Commission. The importance of mechanisms and formal selection procedures is conditioned by the role the PSOE plays in the political system.

3. The PSOE Government

The current European scenario shows that something has changed. The political scene in the 80s was dominated by the governments of Kohl, Thatcher and Christian Democrats. Now the centre-left governs in almost all European democracies. The victory of the centre-left comes after a process of renewal of Social Democratic parties; a good example of this is the transformation from "labour" to "new" labour led by Tony Blair and the ensuing victory in the 1997 elections after eighteen years of Conservative rule.

The end of the ultra-liberal hegemony has been accompanied by the success of the Third Way idea, first mentioned by Anthony Giddens. Prime ministers like Blair, Schroeder, Cardoso or D'Alema have been its advocates. However, one needs to examine whether the Third Way idea is really a new political concept or if it corresponds to a certain "way of doing politics" that precedes its theoretical definition. In this sense the following questions need to be asked: Can we consider the Spanish Socialist government (1982-1996) as a de facto anticipation of third way ideas? Or should we see the Spanish Socialist government as the only possible response to the existing realities…? Or are both hypothesis intrinsically related? The answer is by no means simple.

In 1974, after the Suresnes congress, the PSOE took on the natural goals of democratic transition. Objectives were explicit, such as the restoration of a democratic political system and implicit such as integration into the European community or the construction of a modern Welfare State to support the newly created democracy.

Democratisation, modernisation and decentralisation were the three lines of the project defined by the political forces during the democratic transition. The PSOE governments were faced with the task of development and consolidation.

Between 1974 and 1982, the PSOE had grew as a potential party in power and learned from significant occurrences such as *Pactos de la Moncloa* (1977), the drawing up of the constitution (1978), the abandonment of Marxist ideology (1979) or the victory in local elections (1979). In October 1982, the PSOE won the elections by a wide majority and suddenly became the political force in charge of Spain's modernisation and the consolidation of democracy. This hegemony was reinforced with the wide majority obtained in both the local and regional elections in 1983.

From 1982 onwards, the new government was confronted with the task of transforming Spanish society from the minimums left by Franco's period. The PSOE years in government can be divided in three periods, each of them characterised by different contexts and challenges.

In the first period (1982-1986), Socialist policies had two main objectives. First, there was a need to consolidate the democratic system. Secondly, there was the difficult task of modernising the obsolete Spanish State. It was a period in which great challenges were addressed, like the entry of Spain into the European Community or the political and administrative de-centralisation of the State. The latter was of extraordinary importance to the future development of the Spanish State. The second article of the Spanish Constitution, which recognises and guarantees "the right of autonomy of nations and regions" of Spain, is still hotly debated. At the heart of the problem is the ambiguity of the constitution on the matter, which is an ongoing source of debate. Yet the article made the territorial division of the Spanish State in Autonomous Communities possible, along the lines of the formula "Coffee for all" (*Café para todos*) which did not satisfy all the ambitions of the so-called "Historical communities" like Catalonia, the Basque Country or Galicia. However, the period also opened some internal wounds in the PSOE, as the party left behind some ideological and symbolic convictions. Most important of all was the progressive alienation of the socialist General Workers' Union (UGT) after the programme of industrial re-conversion or the referendum on the presence of Spain in NATO.

In the second period (from 1986 to 1992), Socialist government policies shifted towards the enlargement of the almost non-existent Welfare State. The PSOE successfully implemented basic policies in the domains of health, education and infrastructures. These actions reached their culmination in the organisation of international events like the Olympic Games in Barcelona or the Universal Exposition in Sevilla, both in 1992.

The third period (from 1992 to 1996) is one of crisis. From 1993 on, the situation of the Socialist Party became increasingly difficult, harassed as it was by the media and the opposition and they ended up losing the elections in 1996. The accusations of corruption, of having made serious mistakes resulted in a damaged reputation and

a re-invigorated People's Party, and its predecessor party the Alianza Popular led by Manuel Fraga.

There have been attempts at comparing the policies undertaken by the government of José María Aznar with those of Tony Blair's Third Way. Some have tended to identify their personal friendship with a political one, i.e. similar projects and ideas. Yet if we follow accurately the theories of the Third Way as described by Anthony Giddens, we clearly see how the Aznar government is still in the conservative camp whereas Third Way politics are still at the centre of the debate in the Left.

From 1996 on, the PSOE has to be analysed in its role as main opposition party. The period has been characterised by a series of internal tensions and calls for renewal and unification. Yet the context of these initiatives has been especially turbulent, with the open cases of GAL, the secret papers of CESID and the FILESA case [37]. The latter have made it difficult to overcome the leadership crisis that arose after the resignation of González in 1997, the failure in the primary elections to choose the new candidate for the presidency and, most important of all, the defeat in the 2000 general elections. The election of Rodríguez Zapatero ended the leadership crisis. His victory in March 2004 proved, albeit in a specific context, his ability and that of his team to achieve a "peaceful revolution" within the party.

In an evaluation of the results of Socialist governments, it is safe to say that the PSOE successfully solved the problem of the military, political and administrative decentralisation of the State, the industrial re-conversion, the gradual opening of the Spanish economy, the ratification of entry into NATO, the full integration of Spain into the European Union, the development of basic Welfare State policies in health and education and the implementation of an ambitious infrastructure plan. The economic crisis or ETA terrorism were major challenges for Socialist governments, but failed however to prevent them from attaining most of their objectives and successfully completing the Spanish transition.

As we said above, somehow the PSOE "died from its own success", once its political project reached an end and the party was not able to adjust its message to the new challenges facing Spanish society.

The socialist government faced some significant challenges. In fourteen years, the socialist governments built up what other European States had done in five decades. Post-Franco Spain needed precisely the modernising project of the PSOE led by González. Was this project a Third Way? It is adventurous to answer yes to the question. A fragment of the prologue written by Felipe González in 1997 for Peter Glotz's *Manifesto for a European left*, can shed some light on the issue: "There is a left-wing individualism that because of being left-wing opposes social Darwinism, wild competition for power or for money but in the name of a solidarity that it is not the collectivity of an ant's nest. Is this individualist solidarity what we can offer as an alternative to the survival of the strongest, to this nightmare of the society of two-thirds, to a society in which thirty one percent of excluded are the price that is paid for the well being of the majority…" [38]. It is about expressing "old" truths in a "new" language. Democratic socialism has always been against gregarious collectivism and Darwinian individualism. But to remember that individual freedom and collective solidarity are compatible is difficult in the midst of this time where it seems that we

need to choose between neo-conservative individualism and the bureaucratic tradition of the assistentialist State.

Reading these sentences, one wonders if one may think that it was really a third way which was put forward by the socialist governments in Spain. But, maybe, one should also say that this third way of the socialist government, and in general, of progressive governments, is just doing everything that is necessary to respond and to provide appropriate solutions to society's needs. Or, maybe, one must think that all that was a third way "before the term was ever invented".

Notes

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[8] G. Sartori, *Partidos y sistema de partidos*, Madrid, Alianza, 1980, p. 136.

[9] J. de Esteban, L. López Guerra, *Los partidos políticos en la España actual*, Barcelone, Planeta, 1982, p. 174.

[10] H. Puhle, "El psoe: un partido predominante y hetrogéneo", *in* J.J. Linz, J.R. Montero, *Crisis y cambio: electores y partidos en la España de los años ochenta*, Madrid, Centro de Estudios Constitucionales, 1986, p. 578.

[11] M. Caciagli, *Elecciones y partidos en la transición española*, Madrid, Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, 1986, p. 221.

[12] M. Duverger, *op. cit*.

[13] *Ibid.*

[14] R. Cayrol, C. Ysmal, "Les militants du ps, originalité et diversité", *Projet*, 1982, 165, p. 572.

[15] M. Duverger, *op. cit*.

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[18] R. W. Schonfeld, "La stabilité des dirigeants des partis politiques", *Revue française de science politique*, 3, 1980, p. 477-505 & 4, p. 846-866.

[19] R. Cayrol, "La direction du parti socialiste. Organisation et fonctionnement", *Revue française de science politique*, 28, avril 1978, p. 201-202.

[20] H. Puhle, *op. cit.*, p. 342-343.

[21] M. Caciagli, *op. cit.*

[22] R. W. Schonfeld, *op. cit*.

[23] L. Lopez Nieto, G. Colomé, *Leadership Selection in the Spanish Political Parties*, Barcelona, Institut de Ciències Polítiques i Socials, 1989.

[24] J. de Esteban, L. López Guerra, *op. cit*.

[25] D. Mathieson, "Blair's amigos lead a comeback", *New Statesman*, 31 July 2000, p. 19.

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[30] *Ibid.*, p. 90.

[31] M. Satrustegui, *op. cit*.

[32] R. Gunther et *al.*, *op. cit*.

[33] M. Caciagli, *op. cit*.

[34] R. W. Schonsfeld, *op. cit.*; J. Blondel, *Political leadership*, London, Sage, 1987.

[35] J. Botella, *op. cit*.

[36] R. S. Katz, P. Mair, "Changing models of Party Organization and Party Democracy", *Party Politics*, 1/1, 1992, p. 5-28.

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Social Democracy and Civil Society

John Callaghan

1. Introduction

By any historical standards the citizens of Western Europe, Australia and New Zealand – the principal centres of Social Democratic strength – are better fed, better housed and educated, less deferential and much better organised than they have ever been. The Social Democratic pioneers imagined that citizens such as these would constitute the building blocks of a society characterised by liberty, equality, fraternity and participatory democracy. And yet today inequality grows stronger, social solidarities decay, and public interest in politics is on the wane. Social Democratic values seem to be in retreat and on the defensive, rather than gaining ground. It is as if Social Democracy, having helped to produce contemporary levels of affluence, security, and rights is no longer needed. But this logic overlooks the return to a more volatile and inegalitarian capitalism over the last thirty years – just the sort of capitalism, it might be thought, which made Social Democracy so relevant in the first place.

So what has changed? Most analysts would agree that today there is no persuasive model of socialist political economy to inspire the Social Democratic activists with a vision of the future. The transcendence of capitalism no longer looks possible as it did at the outset of the Social Democratic journey. As recently as the 1970s and 1980s Social Democratic parties in Britain, France, Sweden and West Germany seriously entertained transformationalist ambitions – either as policy or programme – and significant activist sections of these parties had always done so. Even in decades when Social Democracy was largely bereft of a convincing alternative political economy – as in the inter-war years – the moral superiority of "socialism" was taken for granted by its advocates, as was the conviction that social change itself would eventually create an invincible electoral and social majority for the left. But both assumptions

have withered on the limb; ethical socialism today is as weak as scientific socialism, Fabian socialism or any other variant of socialism. According to Dahrendorf, "the point has to be made unequivocally that socialism is dead, and that none of its variants can be revived" [1].

Furthermore, it has been argued that the "forward march of labour", in the sense of a growing labour movement, came to an end as early as the 1950s in countries such as Britain [2]. One could also argue that socialist ideas had become less relevant for Social Democratic leaders in that decade, especially in those countries which enjoyed a sustained period of full employment and economic growth. Socialism, imagined as a long-term prospect by the early Social Democratic leaders, had become so distant as to slip from view. The management of mixed, but largely privately owned, economies became the order of the day. But such was contemporary confidence in the efficacy of broadly Keynesian techniques in this Golden Age, influential Social Democratic thinkers believed that they had found the means to achieve the strategic goals of Social Democracy without the need for the bureaucratic centralism practised in the Communist command economies. The potency of these macro-economic management techniques now looks suspect and with the abandonment of Keynesianism in the "stagflationary" decades of the 1970s and 1980s one might say that another useful myth which helped to maintain a long-term sense of purpose and direction in the centre-left parties has been set back.

Contemporary ideas of what makes an efficient economy have converged, as they did in the 1950s. But whereas the "common sense" of that earlier period embraced Social Democratic ideas of social justice and kept alive the prospect of piecemeal advance against market values, the dominant economic ideas since 1980 have been neo-liberal. Social Democratic governments in Australia, Britain, France, Greece, New Zealand and Spain conformed to these ideas while groping, in some cases, for a new ideological synthesis which could renew the Social Democratic identity. Thus, since the reversals suffered by the French Socialists between 1981-83 an apparently directionless Social Democracy has struggled to find a new paradigm. The SPD has sought a *modus vivendi* with the Greens, the French Socialists looked for recovery after their defeat in 1993 by constructing a "plural left", British Labour engaged in an extensive policy review after 1987. Ten years later "New Labour" entered government pledged to pursue a "Third Way", which Gerhard Schröder later adapted as *die neue Mitte*. All political parties are vanguards in so far as they take up positions in advance of the electorate. But having lost a sense of socialist purpose, the Social Democratic parties today are not as confident as they were during the long post-war boom that they can manage mixed national economies whilst achieving greater social and economic equality. The vision of a better society is not so clear as it once was and the vanguard role of the parties as mobilisers of public opinion consequently lacks self-confidence. Increasing reliance on focus groups and the mass media is in part evidence of this uncertainty, so is the ambiguity of "Third Way" nostrums.

Such has been the ideological upheaval since the 1970s, as Bobbio has noted, it has become something of a cliché to argue that there is no longer any distinction between left and right, terms which, it is said, no longer possess "any heuristic or classificatory value, and emphatically no evaluative application" [3].

The largely Anglo-American literature on Social Democracy critically surveyed in this chapter has theorised the discomfiture of Social Democracy in a number of inter-related ways. Changes to the social structure, the salience of class, the decline of partisan identification and the cultures of solidarity which supported the Social Democratic parties have been linked to epochal transformations in the global political economy. I will examine these arguments and the contention that profound changes in Western societies ultimately explain the disorientation of Social Democracy in the 1980s and the need for reorientation now. If the old metaphysic of the inexorable rise of labour is dead, we must be sure that it has not been replaced by a new metaphysic of pessimism.

2. Class, Class Solidarities and Class Conflict

One starting point in this analysis is the long-term shrinkage of the blue-collar working class which now typically represents only around 25 per cent of the workforce in Western Europe. This downward trend is expected to continue and for some time sociologists have talked about the transition to a "post-industrial society" in which the world of work has only a diminishing significance for Social Democratic politics. Indeed some Social Democratic thinkers and politicians in the 1950s – such as Anthony Crosland and Hugh Gaitskell in Britain – linked the need for programmatic renewal to the perception of changes in the class structure which enlarged the middle class and shrank the industrial working class. But even in the 1950s this was not a novel argument. Eduard Bernstein achieved notoriety in the Second International as early as 1899 for arguing that the Social Democrats had to reckon with a far more complex class structure than the binary divide envisaged by Marx and Engels in some of their influential works [4]. The need to reach beyond Social Democracy's "natural" constituency to obtain the support of other social classes also became a function of the desire to represent the nation when this became a possibility in countries such as Britain and Sweden in the inter-war years. The reformist left was also in need of coalition allies in this period and entered government on this basis in France and Germany. On each occasion that the need for class allies has been raised, the spectre of "revisionism" and dilution of the Social Democratic programme has arisen. Perhaps the difference today is that the manual working class – so very far from having the potential to dominate politics – is depicted as a shrinking minority whose political significance is such that in 1980 a well known radical sociologist, Andre Gorz, could bid farewell to the working class altogether [5].

The economic recessions experienced after 1973 vividly illustrate the nature of the problem as they accelerated the decay of the old "smokestack" industries. In Britain, for example, the recession of 1979-81 eliminated around twenty per cent of manufacturing, leading to mass unemployment, trade union membership losses and population decline in Labour's urban heartlands. The strength of the left – concentrated, on this reasoning, in the social groups, employment sectors and regions that were least dynamic and demographically favoured – was thus in decline. Whereas in 1979 around thirty-two per cent of British workers were employed in manufacturing, by 1997 only eighteen per cent were so categorised. But the decline of old heavy industries – such as textiles, shipbuilding, mining, and steel – is by

no means confined to Britain. In the advanced industrial nations the proportion of secondary-sector workers peaked decades ago – as early as 1911 in Britain (at 51.6 per cent) and as recently as 1962 in France (at 38.1 per cent). Clearly such workers have only briefly constituted a majority of the workforce even in the most industrialised societies of the nineteenth – and twentieth – centuries. In some countries they were never such a majority. But today, it is argued, the workers who were supposed to transform capitalism according to Marxist theory, "constitute a residual endangered species" and the growth of employment in menial, low-skilled jobs in the tertiary sector is not expected to compensate for their decline in numbers [6]. This is enough to jeopardise the future of "electoral socialism" for Przeworski and Sprague who deduce that the need for class allies must bring with it ideological retreat from the old Social Democratic values [7]. Others agree with this sociological determinism [8]: Gorz points to the diminishing significance of the world of work for progressive politics. But it is not just a question of numbers.

A growing internal differentiation of the working class – reducing its capacity for solidarity – was also identified as a feature of the new era, with a shrinking semi-skilled stratum sandwiched between the unemployed, the unskilled and the casualised workers on one side and a relatively secure, prosperous, skilled stratum on the other. The prospects for solidarity between these strata did not look good. In some versions of the argument a "culture of contentment" has arisen binding the better paid, more secure, employees in an implicit alliance with the rich against any tax rises, redistributive and interventionist policies designed to ameliorate the condition of the unemployed and those living in poverty [9]. This is said to have handicapped the reformist wing of the Democrats in the USA since the beginning of the Reagan era in 1980. Other accounts find all western societies divided into a comfortable two-thirds and a poverty-stricken one-third; or perceive a "30-50-20 per cent" economy [10]. In all these accounts the political problem for Social Democracy is the same; how to persuade the growing middle class to bear the burden of Keynesian redistributory policies – a problem made worse by popular tax resentment in decades of adverse economic conditions. But this conjunctural dimension is not the main emphasis, especially in those versions of this argument which link this problem to economic globalisation and attribute the rising tide of incomes inequality to the operation of global market forces and a new international division of labour. We will return to this argument below. Here it must be noted that the decay of solidarity is not exclusively attributed to economic forces.

Some observers have pointed to the growing generational and gender divisions within society and the workforce as further obstacles to collective action, as well as to divisions arising from ethnicity and immigration. These can also be linked to a growing individualism and greater heterogeneity of lifestyles and values. The thrust of these arguments emphasises the secular character of the changes in question, rather than their conjunctural significance [11]. Some analysts go beyond the thesis of working class decline to conclude that in the light of all these changes to the social structure, a fundamental dissolution of the class mechanism itself is in process as the old social structure decomposes. Class has become so attenuated as to be unimportant in explaining political behaviour, identity, conflict and socio-political cleavages [12].

Inequality of income, as we have noted, is becoming greater; capitalism has become more ruthless; and social stratification will remain. But classes, as nationalised quasi-communities organised by political parties and trade unions, have been decomposing since the 1970s, according to some analysts. The collapse of corporatist and Fordist structures in state and industry is sometimes said to have contributed to this outcome.

3. The New Politics

The "new politics" can be invoked to support these conclusions. The appearance of the new social movements since 1968 is often mentioned in such "end-of-class" theories to suggest that a changing hierarchy of values lies behind the new issue agenda which these movements represent – one which transcends the class-based political loyalties of old. Political identities are said to form around numerous non-class variables and these become the new, fragmented, generators of political action [13]. If new parties arise to represent these constituencies, such as the Greens, the old parties, it is said, are forced to respond by abandoning the discourse of class – itself a constitutive force of class identities – in order to broaden their appeal. The decline of class discourse thus interacts with the objective shrinkage of the old working class to accelerate the decay of class identities. The Left certainly became more complex and more differentiated ideologically from the late 1960s as the agenda of the "new social movements" was both brought into Social Democratic parties and led to the formation of new parties in some countries (as in West Germany when *Die Grünen* made its electoral breakthrough in 1983). The Left was thus divided and consequently made more aware of the contradictions and inadequacies of its policies and slogans. Indeed a consciousness of complexity and social fragmentation in this period led some erstwhile socialist intellectuals to the conclusion that all socialist theories were inherently authoritarian and/or unrealistic in nature because they explicitly or implicitly denied this reality.

Some explanations of the problems of Social Democracy link this ideological division and confusion to the growth of "post-materialist values", a generational phenomenon which Ronald Inglehart found evidence for in the most affluent societies of Western Europe and which he explained in terms of the successes of the broadly Social Democratic arrangements found efficacious to capitalism in the era of full employment and economic growth. The generation that was brought up in these advantageous material circumstances found new ideals, or so the argument goes, consonant with its ability to focus on lifestyle issues rather than the struggle against poverty and unemployment. Affluence had allegedly promoted individualism, a new preoccupation with "self-actualisation" and a turn away from state-centred, bureaucratic collectivism and the conventional Social Democratic concerns of economic growth and class. In West Germany the SPD was said to be caught in the middle of an electoral trap because of this phenomenon. Its traditional blue-collar support was allegedly alienated from the "new politics", particularly those aspects of it such as feminism and environmentalism which threatened the material interests of male trade unionists. Any concessions to the Green agenda lost the SPD votes from this constituency to its Christian Democratic rivals. But neglecting the Green agenda

also lost votes to *Die Grünen* and alienated the young idealists who would normally gravitate to the SPD. It was thought that this zero-sum snare was a major factor in preventing the SPD from entering office at national level after 1982.

Even if this estimate is judged an exaggeration there is no doubting the real conflict between the "eco-" and "concrete" Lefts which was visible in West Germany, Sweden and Austria during the 1980s over such issues as nuclear power. A sectarian concern for ideological "correctness" coupled with an indifference to vote maximisation – said to be characteristics of the new Left – were also thought to be among the reasons for British Labour's loss of working class voters at the time of the radical municipal socialism which Ken Livingstone, the current Lord Mayor of London, came to symbolise in the mid- to late 1980s (a time when the tabloid newspapers denounced a so-called "loony Left" with its support for nuclear free zones, community activism, and sexual radicalism).

4. Party Membership and Organisation

The changes in Social Democracy recorded so far in this essay were necessarily related in various ways to its changing membership and power structures. In general, membership of these parties was becoming more white-collar, more middle class and more educated. This was often a long-term trend, but one with significant short-term characteristics. In the SPD, for example, the blue-collar workers had shrunk from sixty per cent of the membership in 1930 to twenty-two per cent in 1978 – a greater shrinkage than that recorded in the workforce as a whole. The 1970s witnessed an influx of new members which accelerated this trend. The new members tended to be young, university-educated radicals committed to a Marxist viewpoint and/or advocates of new forms of radicalism associated with feminism, environmentalism and positions critical of US foreign policy, nuclear deterrence and NATO. A similar, but far more dramatic, process was observed in the Dutch Labour Party (PvdA) which changed both its political and its class culture. Participatory democracy, peace and environmental progress were of more concern to the members recruited in the late 1960s/early1970s than the party's traditional concerns. So much so, in fact, that the party split in 1970 when the Democratic Socialists was formed to represent the old working class agenda of welfare and jobs. Factionalism increased within the PvdA in the 1970s as it did in the Norwegian Labour Party (DNA), the SPD and the Swedish SAP. The same ideological divisions between the new and old Left agendas was visible in all of them. Though British Labour remained resolutely economistic in its concerns throughout the 1970s, it too experienced a growth of factionalism alongside an influx of younger, educated, militants attracted by and adding to the membership rebellion of the period.

Herbert Kitschelt has attempted to link some of these changes in order to theorise the nature of the transition in Social Democracy since 1968. He has argued that the electoral problem encountered by most of the left reformist parties in the 1980s "was rooted in fundamental premises of socialist ideology itself" [14]. He rightly points out that conventional sociological explanations for the problems of Social Democracy cannot illuminate the national variations in their electoral fortunes. He assumes that these depend on their ability to respond credibly to the twin pressures of managing

economies and welfare states in an era of economic globalisation and at the same time facing up to the sharpened sensibilities of electorates and activists around the range of issues associated with the new social movements. Social Democracy, in this view, is squeezed between the pressures of neo-liberalism and what Kitschelt calls "the left-libertarian challenge". The strategic flexibility of the parties to cope with these demands is identified as the key resource of the parties, though it is acknowledged that whether there are strong incentives to respond to the twin challenge will depend on their competitive position in the party system. Thus, if the party is faced with a rival which dominates the Right it will be confronted by a force able to articulate the challenge of market efficiency; if, at the same time, a left-libertarian competitor emerges Social Democracy is compelled to respond on both fronts, as in Germany. Where the left-libertarian challenge eclipsed the demand for market efficiency, as in the Netherlands during the 1970s, Social Democracy addressed the themes of the new social movements but only at the cost of consigning itself to the political ghetto for much of the 1980s. In countries in which the demands of market efficiency outweighed the left-libertarian challenge, as in Spain and Greece, the socialists rapidly adapted to the new circumstances. Where they did not, as in Britain, Kitschelt explains the lack of a rational, vote-maximising strategy as the effect of the Labour Party's lack of strategic flexibility. This points to the importance of party organisation, as well as the party system, in explaining the choices which Social Democracy actually made in the face of these twin pressures to change.

Parties with traditional mass memberships, patronage networks, party bureaucracies, decentralised recruitment structures for public office and close linkages to trade unions are in this view like huge oil tankers unable to change course quickly. The creative redirection of socialist discourse is most likely to take place, in this view, when party structures permit both grassroots activism and leadership flexibility, thus ensuring both the possibility of ideological dynamism and a pragmatic concern for vote-maximisation. Kitschelt suggests that the French Socialists come closest to this model. The need for such a creative turn arises, in this argument, because the Social Democratic tradition employed "a grammar of problem solving in its political visions that bears close elective affinities to the older, more principled criticism of capitalist society" associated with Marx. Though the old Marxism was massively diluted and/or officially repudiated it survived as a begrudging admission of the utility of markets, a corresponding failure to introduce markets where they were needed and a conception of democracy that was centralised and bureaucratic. Once the welfare state had removed the old barriers to improved life chances, Social Democracy was unable to see beyond its own accomplishments. Hence it was caught off guard by both the growth of left-libertarianism after 1968 and the challenge of globalisation in the 1980s. The priority of collective choice, the collective problems of production and consumption and egalitarianism delivered within a framework of centralised and bureaucratic institutions – all of these were now brought into question, as was the technocratic and vanguardist political practice associated with them. A new emphasis was demanded by the changed economic and political conditions of the post-Bretton Woods era. This ought to have involved, according to Kitschelt, a re-examination of the conditions of capital accumulation, an intelligent response to

the new consumerism and to demands for greater grass-roots participation, personal autonomy and self-realisation, demands that were often structured around non-class identities. For Kitschelt these new pressures indicated the exhaustion of the old Social Democratic discourse and its methods of problem solving. He acknowledged that behind these pressures complex changes in occupational and social structure may have lurked, some connected to changes brought about by affluence, education and new grievances replacing those solved by Social Democracy itself. But Kitschelt is more concerned with the capacities of parties to respond to these changes than in explaining the changes themselves, even in his later book *The Transformation of Social Democracy* (1994).

Kitschelt's ingenious theory is an imaginative attempt to go beyond the sociological determinism mentioned earlier. I do not have the space here to assess every aspect of his argument, though I will suggest below that the "left-libertarian challenge" is exaggerated and misunderstood. What is worth highlighting here is his casual assumption about the importance of changes in the global economic environment to the fortunes and future of Social Democracy. This "globalisation" thesis has generated a huge literature. It overlaps with arguments linking changes in social structure to the emergence of new technological and institutional conditions affecting the production and exchange of goods as capitalism restructured in the post-war years. Industries that had sustained much of Social Democracy's blue-collar support – mining, shipbuilding, textiles, steel, car manufacture – have been progressively relocated in new centres of global production, often far away from Western Europe, as a new international division of labour came into existence in the 1970s. The organisation of production, according to this thesis, has also been subject to new manufacturing systems and new management hierarchies which dispensed with the "Fordist" structures of old. Gone, or going, were the old industrial armies of semi-skilled workers subject to centralised control in vast plants mass producing standardised goods; in their place flexible production systems, "just-in-time" procurement of parts, extensive subcontracting, and devolved work teams empowered to achieve "quality" targets on the basis of flexible skills. By the mid-1980s "globalization" became the key word purportedly explaining this capitalist restructuring and showing why national economies were becoming a thing of the past. By the mid-1990s the old Social Democracy was identified as one of the main losers in the process, for reasons which we will return to below.

5. Second Thoughts on Class

Before we progress any further with this survey it is worth considering some of the counter-arguments to the observations so far made. It should first be noted that the decline thesis is misleading if it gives the reader the impression that secular trends have undermined a long-standing Social Democratic hegemony within the working class. Before the Second World War Social Democracy was rarely able to win general elections and even during the so-called Golden Age after the war Social Democratic governments were largely confined to Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Austria and Britain in Western Europe. Indeed, only in Scandinavia did Social Democracy appear to be the "natural" party of government. While the SAP in Sweden was in power continuously

(and the SPO was in continuous coalition with its rivals in Austria), British Labour – the fifth most successful party of the centre-left in the Golden Age – was in office for just twelve of the twenty-eight years in question (1945-73). Spain and Portugal were of course dictatorships in this period, while the democratic credentials of Greece were extremely thin even before the military coup of 1967; Social Democracy could make little or no progress in these countries. In West Germany the SPD had to wait until 1966 before it could enter office (in coalition with the Christian Democrats). In France and Italy the socialists had to contend with the biggest Communist Parties in Western Europe and only occasionally entered government as junior partners of parties to the right of them. This is not a picture of Social Democratic strength. In an age when the British working class unquestionably represented around seventy per cent of the population the Conservative Party established its inter-war electoral hegemony, taking around fifty-five per cent of the working class vote in the general elections of 1931 and 1935. It took the Second World War to weaken this grip but even in the 1950s and 1960s around one-third of the working class supported the British Conservative Party. De Gaulle's political strength in France likewise derived in large measure from working class support; in the second ballot of the presidential election of 1965, for example, he secured 45 per cent of the working class vote against his socialist rival, Francois Mitterrand.

In all the countries considered here there has never been a time when the working class was not divided by politics, gender, status, economics, work, and trade union allegiances – to name a few of the factors making for heterogeneity, rather than homogeneity. This was as true of the period when Social Democracy made its first advances as it was in the supposed Golden Age after the Second World War. In many countries, furthermore, sizable rural populations persisted after 1945. This was true in France and West Germany as well as in the countries of southern Europe. The size of the blue-collar working class has undoubtedly shrunk in some industrial countries since the 1970s but – and this is the most important point – there are no self-evident political conclusions which can be deduced from this fact, even in those countries where it is relevant. In West Germany, for example, the proportion of manufacturing workers shrank from forty-eight per cent to around forty per cent of the workforce between 1968 and 1986 but it had no discernible effect on the SPD's share of the vote and trade union membership continued to grow. In France the blue-collar working class represented a stable share of the workforce between 1968 and 1992, when the decline of agricultural workers was the most striking change in the class structure. In Sweden industry peaked in importance for the composition of the workforce during the early 1960s, since which time the service sector has grown faster. If the prospects of Social Democracy simply depended on the size of the blue-collar workforce it would be difficult to explain the Social Democrats' continued electoral successes in this "post-industrial society". This can only be due to the willingness of much of the new middle class to vote for the SAP. As we have seen, some theorists maintain that this can only be possible if the Social Democratic programme is progressively diluted to appeal to the white-collar voters – a development which will then corrode the party's working class support. Yet in Sweden the SAP entered a very radical phase in the late 1960s and early 1970s, at a time when its reliance on the white-collar vote

was increasing. This did not prevent further electoral successes leading to radical legislative changes which have left a permanent mark on welfare and employment rights in that country. The total Left vote in Sweden reached fifty-six per cent of the turnout as recently as 1994 and equally impressive aggregates for the Left have been recently secured elsewhere, as in Germany in 2002.

The evidence suggests that we cannot depict changes in voting behaviour and class structure over the last thirty or forty years as being especially injurious to Social Democracy. Rural and peasant populations have declined, the urban-rural balance has been re-drawn, and gender relations have changed in ways which could be especially damaging to right-wing parties. Confessional voting, for example, is in decline. Church attendance – an important predictor of right-wing voting – fell from forty-six to twenty-six per cent of the population in West Germany between 1968 and 1986. One survey of the evidence in 1992 concluded, on the basis of this change, that "the Social Democrats have the potential to surpass the CDU/CSU as the strongest single party of the Federal republic" [15]. In Italy the same process seems to have been at work as in West Germany, with attendance at the Catholic mass falling from fifty per cent of the population in 1968 to twenty-five per cent in the 1980s. Change has of course been more complex than this; the proportionate share of industrial employment fell in Italy after 1968, and especially quickly in the 1980s; unions lost members and were increasingly concentrated in the public sector; but the significance of social structure in predicting voting behaviour actually *grew* during the 1970s, as did the evidence of an increasing class consciousness – dipping only slightly in the 1980s [16].

Political and socio-economic change in Greece, Portugal and Spain has been both complex and profound since the coincidental collapse of the dictatorships in the mid-1970s. Spain, for example, has been self-consciously engaged in a modernisation process designed to upgrade its economy and welfare state, consolidate democracy, and integrate European Union and NATO. The urban population has grown, the peasantry's decline has accelerated and gender relations have been modernised, while church attendance has fallen. The influence of religion on voting behaviour is still strong, but less so than in 1976. Similar changes are evident in Greece and Portugal. None of these countries were important centres for Social Democracy before the mid-1970s. The sort of sociological determinism we have encountered among the doomsayers of Social Democracy might predict a rosy future for Social Democracy in these countries. Indeed we do not have to go very far back in history to find such optimism in studies of the Left in the more advanced economies of Western Europe. The success of the Socialist Party (PS) in 1981, for example, was in part attributed to long-run "processes of economic and social change in France (…) such factors as movement from the country to the towns and decline in religious attendance during the more than twenty years of right-wing rule" [17]. Agricultural workers had shrunk from twenty-eight per cent of the population in 1954 to just nine per cent in 1975, while the decline of Catholicism in sustaining the Right was observed in the transformation of the CFDT union federation, which became a transmission belt for the PS, and the growth of Catholic leftism [18]. Mitterrand's close challenge for the presidency in 1974 (49.3 per cent against Giscard d'Estaing's 50.7 per cent) was taken by some observers to be evidence of a profound shift within the working class electorate from Gaullism

to the Left. The French Left was said to be benefiting from secular trends eroding confessional voting and class voting was expected to supplant the old loyalties and thus release "to the Left large numbers of those hitherto influenced away from their "natural" class party" [19]. As the veil of religion fell, it was argued that the facts of social inequality would be the more easily exposed.

In Britain too, sociological determinism predicted the growth of Social Democratic support as recently as the early 1970s, on the grounds that Labour would benefit most from the secular decay of Liberal voting [20]. This thesis was soon made redundant by the evidence of dealignment. But the dealignment thesis was first applied to both Labour and its rival, the Conservative Party. Partisan identification was said to be in decay for both parties and was plausibly attributed to growing public alienation from ideologically similar organisations, both of which had failed to reverse Britain's economic problems in the years since 1960 [21]. Only after the 1979 general election, which signalled Mrs Thatcher's first victory, was evidence mobilised to show that the defection of much of Labour's working class support was rooted in the popularity of policies which challenged Social Democratic values. The shift in popular values was now said to demonstrate a move against Social Democracy [22]. The supposition that this represented a secular revolt against Social Democracy was, however, confounded by authoritative evidence in 1989 showing the persistence of collectivist and even socialist values within large sections of the British electorate, despite a decade of "Thatcherism" [23].

A certain scepticism might be appropriate, therefore, when we encounter sociological arguments about the secular forces working against Social Democracy now, if only because the discussion shows how recent these "long-term" trends really are and how contradictory the evidence is. The same might be said about the declining significance of class. In the 1970s there was plenty of evidence to support the argument that a resurgence of class conflict was taking place [24]. This was manifest in the wave of strikes which engulfed Sweden, Italy, France and Britain after 1968. One study estimates that the impact of this strike wave in Sweden and Denmark between 1979 and 1985 was to add four or five percentage points to the growth of trade union density in these countries – the conclusion drawn was that "intensified class struggle" stimulated "workers' self-organisation" [25]. But class was important in other ways too. Evidence of increased class consciousness and class conflict can also be seen in the programmatic shift to the left within Social Democracy. This resulted in radical legislative change in Sweden in the early 1970s and the adoption of programmes proposing far-reaching structural change in Britain and France. In West Germany the SPD embarked upon a revision of basic values which produced a new programmatic statement in 1989 (the Berlin programme) that was far more radical than its predecessor adopted thirty years earlier at Bad Godesberg. It is true that many of the ideas came to nothing – the radical Meidner Plan for employee investment funds in Sweden is a good example of such failure. But it is also true that a high degree of class consciousness and class mobilisation was evident in the right-wing backlash against these policies. The advent of "Thatcherism" in Britain, for example, led to a redistribution of income from the "bottom" to the "top", the destruction of trade unions, the accelerated growth and persistence of mass unemployment, and numerous

legal measures to enforce new relationships between the classes which were generally beneficial to the wealthy and injurious to low income groups.

Such evidence suggests that the structural conflict between capital and labour remains significant. The long-term growth of the new middle class – far more heterogeneous than the old middle class – does not of itself negate this conflict, though it may make more and more people occupy ambiguous positions in relation to it. But there is no structural reason why the new middle class should be hostile to organised labour, as the Scandinavian societies demonstrate with their high levels of trade union density alongside "post-industrialism" and generalised affluence. These countries also show that there is no objection in principle to the construction of class alliances beneficial to Social Democracy and the sustenance of Social Democratic values. As for the less affluent countries of Western Europe, as the proponents of the "post-materialist values" thesis have conceded, the old preoccupations and values remain salient when the conditions which originally gave birth to them persist or return. But the impact of the new social movements has in any case been much exaggerated. Their agendas can be seen in many ways as aspects of the socialist programme which Social Democracy neglected. Their novel aspects often require further specification and need to be turned into workable policies. Often the Green parties are self-consciously left parties and Social Democracy is their nearest useful electoral ally, as in Germany, Austria and Sweden. Both Green parties and Social Democratic parties are subject to political and programmatic change.

In Germany the erstwhile zero-sum dilemma of the SPD perceived by some analysts in the 1980s, did not prevent the formation of a Social Democratic-Green coalition government at federal level in 1997, by which time *Die Grünen* was led by pragmatists, rather than fundamentalists, and the SPD had embraced parts of the environmentalist agenda. This simply points to the importance of politics and alliance building in determining the way new developments impact on established parties. The new developments themselves must be kept in perspective. While it is true that the Social Democrats, in common with their main rivals on the right, find themselves with a smaller share of the average vote than they obtained in the 1960s, the average net loss of all the established parties taken together is only of the order of eleven percentage points over the last thirty years, a period during which they have polled an increasing absolute number of votes. Green parties, though they have been in existence for most of this time, average only five per cent of the vote in Western Europe.

6. Economic Problems after 1973

It is nevertheless true that most advanced economies have experienced massive socio-economic change in the decades after 1970 and it would be surprising if class had remained a stable predictor of political behaviour under these circumstances. It is worth looking at the contours of this conjuncture in a little more detail. The collapse of the Bretton Woods system in 1973 can be used as a convenient marker to denote the beginning of a period of growing financial volatility, slower rates of economic growth, higher rates of inflation, and growing unemployment. All West European countries were adversely affected, though the impact varied as did the policy response.

Table 1
Economic growth in Western Europe

	1965-73	*1973-81*	*Change*
Spain	6.5	2.1	-4.4
Netherlands	5.1	1.8	-3.3
Italy	5.4	2.4	-3.0
France	5.4	2.5	-2.9
Belgium	4.9	2.0	-2.9
UK	3.1	0.5	-2.6
Germany	4.2	2.0	-2.2
Sweden	3.9	1.5	-2.4
Denmark	3.8	1.4	-2.4
Norway	4.1	4.2	+0.1
Finland	5.0	2.6	-2.4
Greece	7.4	3.0	-4.4
Austria	5.3	2.6	-2.7

Source: OECD [26].

Table 2
Inflation of consumer prices in Western Europe (% per year) [27]

	1965-73	*1973-81*	*1981*
Italy	5.0	17.0	19.5
Spain	6.8	17.9	14.6
UK	7.0	16.0	11.9
France	5.9	11.1	13.4
Belgium	4.5	8.1	7.6
Netherlands	6.3	7.1	6.7
Germany	4.3	4.8	5.9
Sweden	5.3	10.3	11.0
Denmark	6.7	11.0	9.2
Norway	6.3	9.0	13.3
Finland	6.4	12.5	12.0
Greece	4.7	17.3	24.5
Austria	4.8	6.3	6.8

Britain was among the countries which experienced the highest rates of unemployment, averaging just over 7% of the workforce in the years 1974-82 (Norway and Sweden, at the other extreme, averaged around 2%). The Labour Government of 1974-79 saw unemployment double to around 1,6 million and was faced with rates of inflation around 25% in 1975, 15% by the end of 1976, 8.4% by December 1978, rising again to 17.2% a year later. After May 1979 Britain was also the first country to be governed by an administration determined to break the post-war

social settlement, when the Conservative Party under Mrs Thatcher was elected. Unemployment rose to above 13% in 1981 (well over three million), peaking at 14% in mid-1986, even though rates of economic growth had been improving since 1982. The worst affected regions of Britain had higher unemployment rates in 1983 than anywhere else in Western Europe except Sardinia, Campania, and Corsica. Inevitably the Labour and trade union strongholds were worst affected as jobs were lost in the car industry, textile, engineering, steel, mines, shipbuilding and ancillary industries. By the mid-1980s growing inequalities of income were also evident; the Institute of Fiscal Studies calculated that the income of company directors and senior managers had risen by forty-three per cent and nineteen per cent respectively while that of the average unemployed man had lost about fifteen per cent. Excluding taxes and benefits, the relative income of the poorest twenty per cent of households fell by about sixty per cent between 1975 and 1983 [28]. Notwithstanding the fact that total labour costs in the UK were already lower than any of the sixteen industrialised countries studied by the National Institute for Economic and Social Research in 1984, the Conservative Government prescribed greater labour market flexibility as the way to combat unemployment in 1985. This resulted, *inter alia*, in further measures to erode rights to unemployment benefits. On no less than seventeen occasions between 1979 and 1989 these were made more restrictive; over twenty other changes adversely affecting the income of the unemployed were made in the same period. The Unemployment Unit calculated that the numbers struck off unemployment benefit nearly trebled from 113,000 to 317,000 between 1993-4 and 1995-6, on the grounds that those affected were failing to "actively seek work" or were refusing to take up training. Frank Field, Tony Blair's first choice to reform the welfare state in 1997, reported in 1989 that savings on the welfare budget in that year alone amounted to around £5 billion – an amount which covered the £4,2 billion in tax cuts received by the richest one per cent of taxpayers in the same year [29]. By 1997 official figures showed that 13,7 million people (4,2 million children) in the UK were living below the poverty line, compared with 5 million in 1979. A European Commission survey of the same year found that 22% of the UK population lived in poverty defined as an income of half the average or less (32% of children), compared with an EU average of seventeen (and twenty) per cent respectively [30].

Taking the period 1978-97 as a whole official unemployment in Britain averaged two million people or 8.9% of the workforce – almost five times the average for the Golden Age, twice as high as the average pre-1914 figure and close to the inter-war average [31]. Employers made increasing use of part-time workers. Trade union membership declined in this context. The Workplace Industrial Relations Survey showed that union recognition had declined since 1979; 66% of establishments recognized unions in 1984, 53% did so by 1990. By 1994 Labour Force Survey data showed that only 48% of employees belonged to workplaces where unions were recognized, varying from 34% in the private sector to 86% in the public sector (compared with 60% and over 90% respectively in the early 1980s) [32]. Six Acts of Parliament concerned with trade unions were introduced between 1980 and 1993 having the combined effect of enforcing pre-strike postal ballots, outlawing secondary strikes, unofficial strikes, and the closed shop and rendering strikers vulnerable to

dismissal. The unions had lost five million members by 1992. The number of days lost through strike action fell to 528,000 in 1992 compared to an annual average in the 1970s of 7-10 million. Multi-employer bargaining was by 1990 “the main basis for pay increases for only 19% of manual employees in private manufacturing and for only 6% of non-manual employees” [33].

During the twenty years after 1970 there was in many respects a great divergence between the British case and that of some of the other West European countries in which the Left was a credible contender for government office. In Sweden, for example, the Social Democrats pursued reforms in the years 1968-76 which widened and deepened the welfare state to such an extent that they “challenged the power and prerogatives of corporate managers and owners of capital” [34]. Though, the next stage in this assault – the Meidner Plan for employee investment funds – was eventually watered down, most of the new rights embodied in the legislation of 1970-76 survived. Full employment also survived until 1990 even though the Social Democrats eliminated the huge government deficit which they inherited in 1982. The Swedish economy grew at an average rate of 2.7 per cent between 1983 and 1988 and unemployment was brought down from 3.5 per cent to less than 2 per cent, while the balance of trade deficit was turned into surplus. After their unaccustomed experience of opposition in the years 1976-82, the Social Democrats enjoyed three consecutive victories and managed to retain the loyalty of their traditional working class supporters, seventy per cent of whose votes were cast for the SAP. Sweden’s experience of the 1970s and 1980s was no more typical than that of Britain, though both countries had to function in an international economic environment that had deteriorated compared to the previous twenty years.

7. Globalisation

The purpose of mentioning these facts is to suggest, in the first place, that they supply the raw material for a relatively straightforward explanation of the difficulties faced by some Social Democratic parties after 1973; economic growth slowed down, while inflation got out of control and unemployment returned to levels last seen in the 1930s. The British case additionally supplies us with a particularly vivid instance of how the agency of government policy contributed to the conditions which caused unemployment, weakened trade unions, exacerbated income inequalities, shifted tax burdens to the detriment of lower income groups, altered the job market in ways that were beneficial to employers (at least in the short-term), and dismantled structures of the welfare state. The return to mass unemployment in the 1970s, coupled with stagflationary conditions, balance of payments deficits, and heavy government borrowing, had been predictably constraining for the Labour Government of 1974-79. The French Socialists ran into the same difficulties in 1981, with unemployment around two million, inflation at 13% and a legacy of persistent balance of payments during the 1970s. When the Socialists took office and tried to reflate the economy, an international recession was deepening, governments in the USA, Britain and West Germany were committed to deflationary policies, and steps had already been taken to deregulate financial markets in other countries. Like Leon Blum in 1936, Mitterrand entered government at a time of international deflation, chronic deficits on current

account, currency speculation, financial disorder, capital flight and the explicit hostility of business [35].

Some of the Socialists' problems can be attributed to the decisions of Western policy-makers determined to resolve the economic contradictions of the 1970s in ways congenial to holders of money and capital. The process can be traced to policies pursued in the USA and the transformation of agencies such as the IMF, OECD, World Bank, and GATT/WTO into proselytizers for a raft of neo-liberal policies designed to stifle inflation, deregulate markets and institutionalize new trading regimes [36]. The Mitterrand experience – a rapid U-turn and the collapse of much of the Socialists' reform programme – showed that reflation in a single country in the context of global deflationary policies could not succeed. But the forced retreat of the Socialist government soon became annexed to the thesis that Social Democratic governments were faced with more or less permanent constraints attributable to a new stage in the evolution of the global economy – rather than those deriving from reversible policies and the economic problems of a particular conjuncture [37].

Globalization became the ubiquitous scourge of Social Democracy in much of the academic literature of the 1990s. It has been invoked to explain the erosion of the rights of labour on the grounds that the state's diminished power vis-à-vis capital undermines its capacity to guarantee those rights in law [38]. The decay of trade unions and collective bargaining, together with the decentralization of collective bargaining, have also been linked to various aspects of globalization [39]. These include the supposed greater geographical mobility of companies due to "the disappearance of any effective barriers to the global mobility of capital" [40]; the creation of a new international division of labour; the growth of inequality both within and between nations; and the competitive pressure of "billions of industrious and skilled workers released onto global markets by the communist collapse" [41]. On the basis of these assumptions it has also been deduced that tax rates on capital, business and wealthy individuals need to be "internationally competitive", or in plain language relatively low [42]. That means that redistribution through the tax and benefits system will no longer work [43]. Even the relatively well off skilled workers – exposed on this reasoning to the chill winds of global competition – will, it is said, rebel against the costs of a bloated and "protected" state sector. In some variations of this argument an alliance between the rich and the relatively well off middle strata will successfully resist proposals to pay more in taxes in order to bail out the unskilled and unemployed workers. It is not too difficult on this reasoning to find that the crisis of the welfare state is ultimately related to the superiority, in the current global economy, of the low tax, low regulation, type of economy blessed with a relatively small state sector. Apart from the fact that the supposed crisis of Social Democracy can be linked directly to this crisis of the welfare state [44]; deductive reasoning may lead to the increasingly familiar conclusion that the old (Social Democratic or "European") model of welfare capitalism undermines competitiveness and creates cultures of dependency.

Thus, what is at issue here is whether the problems encountered after 1973 were the consequence of an adverse conjuncture, in which conservative policy-makers took the initiative, or arose as the effects of new, more or less permanent structural and long-term changes in the world economy. One of the reasons why the latter

interpretation seemed plausible was the fact that Keynesianism was exposed as ineffective in the 1970s and 1980s. In this way the perceived foundation of a coherent Social Democratic strategy of equality since the 1950s was revealed as obsolete. This lead some analysts to make misleading comparisons between the "Golden Age" of Social Democracy and the present. Whereas Keynesianism had formerly entailed a capacity to "steer the economy", that ability no longer existed. It was thus tempting to believe that a new phase of capitalist development was responsible for the change – one in which markets had triumphed over the state. The fact that institutionalized wage restraint and active labour market policies were overwhelmed by the scale of the economic crisis was translated into a crisis of Social Democratic governance; the Keynesian "steering" mechanism was perceived to have irretrievably broken down. The doctrine that gave diverse Social Democratic policies strategic direction, however spuriously that might be in reality, was now admitted to be defunct. Under the prevailing circumstances of prolonged economic adversity in the 1970s and 1980s this realization contributed to the substantial policy revision taking place in Social Democratic parties.

It now seems more reasonable to stress, however, that the source of their difficulty lay not in "globalization" but in the problems emanating from well established relationships between persistent mass unemployment and falling trade union membership; the weakening of collective bargaining; the gap between tax revenues and expectations of public spending; the growth of inequality; the need for budgetary austerity and the resulting crisis of public provision. The impact all of this would have on programmes traditionally reliant on full employment and sustained economic growth varied according to local circumstances, but it could be devastating as in Britain. The Social Democratic predicament was also compounded by the policies actually pursued by governments faced with stagflation, rising public indebtedness, fiscal crisis, increasing distributional conflicts, and growing competition. The dominant policy preferences were deflationary and at the expense of wage earners. There was a corresponding growth in employer power and evidence of its exercise in the form of bigger demands on workforces, downward pressure on wages, and the exclusion or marginalisation of unions. Simultaneous recessions occurred in 1974-5, 1979-82 and 1990-91, while the precise policy response varied from country to country in accordance with national differences in the intensity of the economic problem and institutional and cultural variations between the countries affected. The economic difficulties of this period were prolonged into the 1990s by the Maastricht convergence criteria for European monetary union, the massive problems encountered by the German economy in the wake of reunification and the impact of the economic and financial crises in Eastern Europe [45]. The strain on welfare systems and demands for appropriate reforms – already great – were also informed by evidence of secular changes in fertility rates, ageing populations, changes in family structures and work patterns – long-term changes which policy-makers became conscious of in the 1980s and 1990s.

My point is twofold. First, when all these considerations are taken together with government policies designed to resolve the economic problems of the day in ways congenial to holders of money and other forms of capital, there is an abundance

of reasons to explain the problems of Social Democracy and their variations from country to country. Second, there is no value in conflating these phenomena under the general heading of globalization.

8. Conclusions

It is true that Keynesianism lost credibility in the stagflationary circumstances of the 1970s and 1980s. But it is not true that Keynesianism empowered national governments to maintain full employment by deficit financing in the years of the long boom, as some globalisation theorists maintain. Social Democratic policies such as indicative planning, regional policy, active labour market policy and corporatism were effective *at the margin* in conditions of full or nearly full employment. There should be no surprise that they became ineffective in conditions of mass unemployment. No peacetime government has ever been able to mop up mass unemployment by deficit financing or public works programmes. The explanatory "value-added" of the globalisation argument has not yet been established, precisely because the problems attributed to globalisation – rising inequality, welfare state retrenchment and so on – are exactly what one would expect in an economic and political conjuncture of the sort that prevailed after 1973.

Significant changes can nevertheless be seen in the advanced capitalist societies during this period, affecting the class and occupational structures, demographic trends, and much else besides. But the picture is complex, it affects all parties and does not represent a particular drama for Social Democracy. The left parties themselves are nevertheless experiencing significant changes. The trends are too widespread for local explanations to be convincing. Nor are they confined to Social Democratic parties. The decline in membership numbers and the ageing of those that remain is the dominant pattern. There is a common problem for established parties in attracting the young and the working class and sustaining levels of political activity among those who are recruited. The cultural significance of the parties is in decay and this is perhaps of more significance for Social Democracy, than it is for parties of the Right. Social Democratic publications which had survived for most of the twentieth century have disappeared in the last thirty years, while the volume of information from other sources has massively increased. The parties no longer conduct the sort of conversation with their membership that they used to have and the opinion-forming activists who once took the message into the neighbourhoods and workplaces are fewer than they once were. The array of integrating associations which the Social Democrats maintained in countries such as Germany and Austria has shrunk. Social Democrats are more dependent than they ever were on the support of individuals exposed to mass media which operate according to a code which inflates personality, controversy, and rivalry between leaders. Some argue that these constraints distort the projection of the Social Democratic vision, and contribute to the alienation of parts of the Social Democratic constituency [46]; perhaps in part because they see more of the personal pettiness of leaders than is good for them. Certainly these parties now employ an image strategy which emphasises leaders who make policy, and such leaders will make policy independently of their own parties when these do or say something which the focus groups dislike. If this is a response to media requirements it is more than

likely that it then feeds off and reinforces oligarchical trends in the parties and these are then dominated by a Blair, a Gonzalez, or a Papandreou.

What we can say with some confidence is that the period opened by the 1970s created a larger degree of uncertainty than had prevailed in the Golden Age and identified new, hitherto neglected problems for Social Democracy to address, such as those affecting the environment. Parties have converged, as they did in the 1950s, but this time around the priority of markets rather than the priority of welfare state full employment. This convergence of economic policy has not made it any easier to tackle the issues raised by the new social movements. Nevertheless real gains in welfare provision were made in Sweden in the 1970s and in Greece and Spain during the 1980s. Greece and Spain also made the transition to liberal democracy and participation in the process of European integration – goals which remind us that economic policy is not the whole story. But it is in economic policy that Social Democracy has been placed on the defensive with the virtual rout of many of the old tools of policy such as planning and public ownership, as well as retreat from the associated goal of equality. The perception that globalisation entails new constraints on Social Democratic governments has played a role in this by reinforcing caution and conservatism in policy; but there is reason to believe that the constraints have been exaggerated and that a more confident Social Democracy is both possible and likely. The commitment to neo-liberal economic policies – which undermine the remedial social policies and public service ethic which Social Democrats still favour – will be diluted as economic circumstances permit and in so far as the recent ideological link between equality and economic inefficiency is challenged and broken again. The decline of the average OECD rate of inflation to around two percent by the mid-1990s will assist this process of readjustment. But any ideas about transforming capitalism will lie dormant for as far ahead as it is possible to see.

Notes

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Social Democratic Parties in East-Central Europe
The Party and Civil Society Relationship

Attila Ágh

1. Introduction. Trajectory of Democracy in ECE

There has been a robust Social Democratization of the Left in the East-Central European (ECE) countries and in most cases the former ruling parties have turned to Social Democratization [1]. The first party to make this turn was the Hungarian Socialist Party in October 1989, which dissolved the former party completely and formed a new, Social Democratic party with less than five per cent of the former membership. The HSP was followed in January 1990 by the Polish Social Democracy (first Social Democracy of the Republic of Poland, then Left Democratic Alliance) radically reorganizing the former ruling party. In the Czech Republic the traditional Social Democratic Party has managed a successful comeback. Finally, Social Democracy has remained weak and unreformed only in Slovakia because of obvious complexities of nation-building [2]. Despite these national idiosyncrasies, Social Democracy has faced the same problems in all ECE countries that I analyze here only in the party-society or party-constituency relationship [3].

The internal logic of the democratization process in the ECE countries gives the background of this relationship and determines the major tasks for the ECE Social Democracy. In order to describe the living past of parties and civil society in ECE one has to outline first the trajectory of democracy from its minimalist concept to the maximalist one, since only the completion of the democratization project can result in the consolidation of democracy in ECE [4]. At the same time, regarding democracy as a project of democratization, the democratic regimes of the ECE states have to be analyzed against the background of the current criteria of global democratization [5]. There has been a characteristic development of the democratic idea in the advanced countries, moving from a narrow, minimalist concept to a much broader vision, and finally to a quasi-“maximalist” concept, which is very instructive for us now in ECE. I

revoke here its stages only in order to assess the democratization process in ECE and not with the intention to describe the development of democratic theory in international political science. The evolution of new democracies has shown the above-mentioned development of democratization more markedly and vividly than in the West and therefore it may induce new ideas and insights in democratic theory in general [6].

First, the "minimalist" concept of democracy, as it appeared at the very beginning of systemic change, was based on free and fair elections that presuppose simply and only the formal equality of all citizens in a liberal democratic state with all basic human rights. Supposedly, everybody is uniform as a citizen and, therefore, equal treatment of all citizens as voters is both correct and sufficient, leading to a legitimate formation of the political will of the majority. Public opinion surveys of the ECE countries have indeed proven that most people see human rights as having been secured in the new democracies [7]. Nonetheless, the population was rapidly demobilized by the new parties in these "electoral democracies", which indicated the limitations of this minimalist concept. The deficiency of this formalist-majoritarian approach was not yet obvious in the first years of democratic transition in ECE because of the relatively high electoral turnout. Very soon however, the losers and socially marginalized lost their interest in politics. As a result, electoral participation began to decline and all the problems of the "participation deficit" surfaced [8].

In the first stage of democratization the ECE Social Democratic parties were both weak and ideologically confused but they realized that this approach was not satisfactory. In fact, it proved to be a blind alley, since most citizens could not use their abstractly equal civil rights for a meaningful political participation. Western Social Democracy, accordingly, long ago, recognized that societies were not homogeneous at all and, as a result, different strata organized themselves in various interest organizations. Thus, abstract-formalistic treatment of equal voting rights does not lead to real democracy because of the impact of "pre-political" organized interests on political life, resulting in the marginalization of large sectors of the society. Nonetheless, the "pluralist" presumption was in the West that all groups have equal opportunity to organize themselves to gain better interest representation. At this level of interest representation each and every group was supposed to be equal, that is having the same capacities and resources, so the former simplistic model returned in a more sophisticated form. In the new democracies this naïve pluralist belief was also widespread in the first years but in ECE it was confronted in a much shorter time with the more gloomy socio-economic realities than it had been in the advanced countries some decades ago, since in ECE from the early nineties on, a large mass of politically silent people has emerged. Their interests were neglected by all parties, including the Social Democrats who were unable to cope with this complexity either. Moreover, they were charged with economic crisis management in order to avoid socio-economic collapse and chaos. In ECE the sociological characteristics of non-voters are the same as in the West (the less educated and poor, mostly elderly and rural parts of the population), although, in addition, the unemployed have been over-represented among them in ECE. However, the growing electoral abstention in ECE has been connected with the "social costs of transition", in which the social deprivation of the losers coincided with their political "dis-empoverment" [9]. The legislation governing

free associations in the new democracies has given again only an abstract-formalistic equal opportunity for the participation of all social groups in political life. Initially the civil society developed its sector mobilized in social movements to begin systemic change but later on its association sector came to the fore. However, the association sector of civil society as a whole, with its NGOs and foundations, has become more asymmetrical than official political society.

The socially deprived strata or those temporarily or permanently disadvantaged by economic transformations have been less organized and politically more deprived than their counterparts in the West. It has been a fatal blow to Social Democracy in ECE because its potential constituency, and potential or actual allies, has marginalized, albeit the modernization oriented semi-losers or winners have maintained its political strength. In the new democracies the losers have been more vulnerable as private persons than as citizens, since their particular interests were less protected by their special interest organizations, if they existed at all, than their general interests by constitutional stipulations. After WWII in the West societal corporatism was the European answer to social deprivation and asymmetrical interest representation. If some persons and/or interest groups are "more equal" than others – that is, some strata have a better organized and more efficient interest representation –, then they can turn their position to a political advantage. Finally, the most privileged strata form the elite by cumulating their advantages even in advanced democracies. Hence, this "pre-political" sector of social actors must be regulated by the state in order to balance the unequal representation of organized interests. Interest representations are, however, rigid organizations, so they may soon become outdated and obsolete. Therefore their regulation requires permanent adjustments by the state. But the state is not necessarily neutral even in the West, and less so in the "East". It can be easily proven in new democracies that state intervention regulating associations, foundations and NGOs has been rather of partisan character. The state has not only preferred some groups to others in particular, but this preference has also been reflected in the efforts of the incumbent governments to control civil society and build up a clientura system in general. Yet, the increasing strength of the association sector of civil society has lessened the problem of unequal political representation and at least compensated for some weaknesses of democratic deficit in the ECE democracies.

Thus, the ECE Social Democrats have been confronted with the unsolved problems of the social costs of transition and have been unable to pursue a leftist socio-economic program for many years, until the late nineties when national economies recovered and some efforts could be started for social recovery as well. In the meantime, however, a new set of problems surfaced. In the third period it became drastically evident that the ECE countries were multicultural and multiethnic societies, and the Balkan countries in their neighbourhood were even more heterogeneous along these cleavages. Societies with deep cultural divisions and cleavages such as ethnicity, religion, and language tend to focus on their cultural particularities in their political organizations as well. Thus, this ethnic-cultural dimension appears to be an obstacle to a real, substantive democracy organized in a majoritarian fashion. This dilemma was discovered in democratic theory in the seventies and eighties, but it became obvious for Western populations at large and for Western politicians only in the early nineties with the

dirty wars in Yugoslavia. Since the eighties it has been commonsensical in democratic theory that a "political technology" is required as a set of special policy measures to express ethnic-cultural divisions politically in order to compensate for the socio-economic and cultural deprivation of minorities with veto rights on vital issues. As a result, the ECE countries have struggled with the problems of constitutional regulations that give special voting rights to national minorities with reserved seats in parliaments and secure protection for minority languages. The deficiencies of the minorities' treatment have not yet been removed even in ECE, but the minorities' protection figures high on the political agenda of the EU accession as defined by the Copenhagen criteria. EU monitoring through the Regular Country Reports has helped promote the issue of minority protection step by step but could not solve the real socio-economic problems behind, given the very narrow budget constraints in accession countries.

The lack of financial resources and concentration on the too many other vital issues have reserved a "passive" approach to minorities. This approach described above advocates only the need to express cultural divisions at the political level of representation. Given the fact that these social and cultural divisions stay with us, a real "social" and/or "cultural" democracy, in turn, calls for an "active" approach if they are to be alleviated. Both social and cultural divisions necessitate positive discrimination but in a different way. An active social policy is mandatory to lessen social differentiation and to avoid marginalizing losers by promoting social cohesion or by radically reducing social polarization, on the one hand. However, the ethnic, linguistic and religious divisions characterizing ECE societies ought not to be "eliminated" but accepted and even protected, on the other hand. Action must be taken and powerful policy measures applied, mainly in the fields of education and employment, to preclude the conversion of ethnic-cultural cleavages to permanent and stable, "ossified" social differentiation and deprivation. This problem of deprivation or cumulated disadvantages as a whole appears as epitomized by the Roma minority in all ECE states. Nonetheless, in general the majoritarian practices of nationalizing states have created everywhere in ECE, and even more in the Balkans, a relative cultural and social deprivation of national minorities, resulting in socio-economic (unemployment) and political marginalization (voter's abstention). This situation requires comprehensive positive discrimination of all kinds for the ethnic-cultural minorities. The solution is their socio-political integration into the common civilization of the country, but without culturally absorbing them. Treating minorities using positive discrimination is a relatively new factor even in advanced democracies and this change has hardly begun in new democracies. Although there are many splendid "recommendations", international treaties have not yet facilitated a sufficient protection of the collective rights of these minorities, nor are collective rights included in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights [10].

Western Social Democracy has been confronted with the same problems but the tensions in ECE have been much stronger and deeper. Moreover, the ECE countries have faced the necessity of consolidating their democracies that has needed a large social support. The development of democratic ideas and practices in these four stages as a representation-participation dimension for completing substantive democracy has been closely connected with the dimension of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the

democratic system and its workings in the ECE countries. Satisfaction with, or trust in institutions as a legitimacy dimension, has in turn, developed through its own stages [11]. The first stage in the acceptance of democracy was the separation of systemic support for democracy from satisfaction with its workings, i.e. the performance of democracy. Although most people have supported democracy as a political system from the very beginning, only a small part of the population was satisfied with its performance in ECE and this gap has even widened. The second stage, however, has begun but not yet taken place, namely the separation of the evaluation of incumbency, i.e. the given government, from satisfaction with the workings of democracy. Full satisfaction with the performance of democracy – and trust in the new institutions – comes only with the approach suggesting that "it is not my government but it works rather well and in a democratic way". This is the situation in which the political losers are also satisfied, which presupposes that socio-economic losers have been reintegrated politically. It is well known that in advanced democracies political losers are more satisfied in the consensual than in the majoritarian type of democracies because in consensual democracies there are no total electoral victories and defeats.

Regarding the party-society relationship, the ECE Social Democratic parties have to cope with this complexity when turning to civil society for support and when representing interests for their constituencies. This complexity explains why the efforts of the ECE parties to address the basic needs of their constituencies and to build up strong relationships with civil society have only been partly successful. Obviously, Social Democratic parties have been disadvantaged by the asymmetrical interest representation at this stage of democratization [12], but it has not been easy to overcome the difficulties of the minority issue either. The first conclusion is that there has been a historical process in which the social movement and the association sectors of civil society have basically changed their functions, and the "vitality of civil society" can only be measured in these two functions merged together [13]. Namely, first the social movement sector of civil society was rather strong and there were some important social movements behind the Left as well. Later, however, a political demobilization came while the association sector of civil society still developed very quickly but in a distorted and asymmetrical way – with some simplification as exclusively the civil associations and NGOs of the winners. In order to understand this controversial process, one has to see the new social crisis in the nineties and the ensuing new tasks of the Left.

2. The New Social Crisis in ECE and the Social Costs of Transition

The collapse of the former regime was accompanied by a deep social crisis but the systemic change has produced a new one. The debates about majoritarian versus consensual democracy have pushed the question of homogeneous versus heterogeneous civil societies and political cultures to the centre of the research on the relationship between party and civil society. However, most Western theories have described "Eastern" democratization as basically an evolutive process, without properly considering the pernicious effects of the major setbacks in socio-economic fields. That is, most theories have discussed democratization without regard to the relationship between democratic transition and social disintegration, although

mentioning many serious difficulties such as the negative side effects, backlash, slowdown, and revival of the past. In fact, beyond this, the entire process has been overloaded by a special – so far hardly noticed – contradiction that has been the price paid for the survival of democratization in order to avoid the danger of populism. The whole controversial nature of democratic transition originates from the fact that all ECE countries, including Hungary, underwent a transformation recession losing about one quarter of their GDP. This resulted in a large-scale impoverishment and increasing social inequality, in an alarming degree of social dislocation and a strong deterioration of the standards of living. I will discuss this dis-empowerment briefly in terms of exclusion, fragmentation and disintegration. This is a general phenomenon in Central European new democracies, which, however, was milder in Hungary both in depth and length than in the other Central European countries. Another special feature is that Hungary has become the second most open economy in the world (after Ireland) and it has been completely "multinationalized". Thus, the global challenge in Hungary appeared in both positive and negative aspects earlier and stronger than in other Central European democracies. The same applies more or less to Europeanization. It would be relatively easy to point out both the advantages and disadvantages of this global openness. EU integration has advanced very quickly in building up administrative capacity and Hungary has been qualified "ready for Europe". Although one could also argue with relative ease that Hungary was still not "ready" enough to full EU membership. All the same, it is certainly a positive change that due to globalization and Europeanization, there are a lot of foreigners in Hungary from affluent countries, mostly EU citizens, employed as managers and experts in multinational firms. This is a favourable migration and it has restored to some extent the multicultural character of Hungarian life so drastically discontinued after World War II.

Despite its relatively better position, the nineties' social and economic crisis shook Hungary as well and it could not avoid the process of deep social disintegration either. Exclusion, subordination and non-recognition characterize the first phase of democratization even in the most advanced Central European countries that has to be followed nowadays, in the second phase by inclusion, integration, and recognition. Simply said, as a result of economic exclusion (large unemployment) and social fragmentation (polarization and marginalization of social strata) there has been a huge contrast in the political transformation between the dis-empowerment of the losers and the empowerment of the winners. Political recognition and social inclusion are largely still missing in the Central European young democracies where the exclusion and subordination of the losers have been the rule. Hence, multiculturalism has also been very vulnerable in these Central European democracies, and even more so in the other "post-communist" countries. Civil society, however, has not been that weak in Central Europe as common wisdom suggests but has been moving in recurrent cycles between its social movement and association phases and forms. It leads us to the problem of participatory democracy associated with movement politics against New Authoritarianism that has been produced by national-conservative governments. The obvious cases are the Hungarian mass protests in 1992-94 against the re-organized extreme Right and the massive Hungarian electoral participation in 2002 against

the distortion of democracy by the "presidential" FIDESZ government, reaching an electoral turnout of 73 per cent.

It is rather difficult to balance the positive and negative features of democratic transition as regards social transformation. In this paper, however, the emphasis has been put on the negative side that has been less known in the West. The social construction of democracy has not only been delayed but it was deeply disturbed and distorted even in Hungary by these successful political and economic processes consolidating the base for democracy. The most important issue is that successful democratic transition in Hungary has created new contradictions that have presented the major obstacle to further democratization. Formulated in a simplified way, the removal of the *economic* deficit created a serious *social* deficit and the new problem is how to cope with this new deficit. Moreover, early democratization led to the *political* demobilization of the masses. The new agenda is how to mobilize and empower them now, at a stage of early consolidation that gives a special task to the ECE Social Democracy. One can identify the major socio-political problems in terms of the key words or catchphrases, such as "the trap of materialist needs", "the drastic reduction of public services" and "the demobilization of voters" and/or "the depoliticization of public life" that I try to indicate briefly here, since I have recently characterized them in great detail [14]. In general, these issues have also been discussed as the "social costs of transition" and the "political costs of transition" [15].

The trap of materialist needs means basically that the drastic reductions of incomes has produced a return to basic "materialist" needs and the post-materialist period, which began in the late eighties, has been postponed. Altogether, in ECE there were two parallel processes in the nineties: the drastic reduction of real incomes on the one hand and increasing social and regional polarization on the other. Real incomes decreased by about thirty per cent compared to the 1989 level, and have returned to that level only in the early 2000s. By this time social polarization has been completed, a wide gap emerged between the lowest and highest income brackets, since it has increased in a decade from 1:3 to 1:8. The decline of incomes was accompanied by a drastic reduction in public services: a near collapse of the public sector threatened the ECE countries in the early nineties. Under permanent budgetary pressure, public services were drastically reduced, in some cases completely abandoned. This reduction had two consequences in the nineties. Its direct consequence was not only a decrease of the delivery of public services and the erosion of the maintenance of public institutions, but an important and even more shocking consequence was the drastic reduction of salaries and wages of all public employees. Instead of a general emphasis on the emergence of a middle class, as the slogan of the new democratic society has demanded, there was a very marked process of declassification of the middle class (for instance teachers and doctors) in the nineties with only a small recovery in the 2000s. The disintegration of the formerly large middle-income strata has produced an upper class of successful entrepreneurs and those professionals who have moved from public sector to private economy. All in all, by the mid-nineties it resulted in the exclusion of large groups of professionals, including most civil servants, from the emerging middle class and recent reintegration has been slow and uncertain. The final

result has been the demobilization of voters generated by their economic and social exclusion from the productive world.

The demobilization of the masses was in some ways a conscious process in the early nineties by parties and politicians eager to avoid populism. But this was even more an unintended result of economic and social marginalization discussed above. In both ways it has generated an "unstructured political market" with a low membership density for parties [16]. The two major institutional aspects of demobilization have been in the world of civic associations and industrial relations. First, there has been a pervasive lack of both civil organizations representing various losers' groups, and channels, other than voting in elections, for civil control over state policies in general. Second, the trade unions were de-legitimized and marginalized, so the interests of employees remained mostly underrepresented at both national and shop floor levels. The trade unions were struck by the rapid de-industrialization and declining wages and, since they could not cope with the problems of unemployment and impoverishment, they have lost their membership to a great extent. The reform of trade unions inheritated from the communist system has been lagging behind and the newly organized trade unions have usually not been proper partners for the ECE Social Democracy. Actually, depoliticization has been much wider than electoral demobilization. People have turned away from politics in ECE because they have felt that politics has not dealt with their real problems, that is has shown a very low level of "social responsiveness" [17].

In the jungle of civil society theories the concept of Wolfgang Merkel provides a systematic approach and, in addition, his analysis relates directly to the ECE developments. According to Merkel, there are four classical functions of civil society: (1) protection from state arbitrariness (the Locke function); (2) the balance between state and society (the Montesquieu function); (3) the schools of democracy (the Tocqueville function) and (4) the public sphere and critique (the Habermas function). The protection of civil rights is a basic precondition of democracy in the ECE countries that has been basically met. The control of civil society over the state, however, is very faulty, since the state responsiveness to the demands of civil society is still weak. The participatory socialization of population is even weaker and democratic political culture is only in the making. Finally, critical civil society is rather strong, therefore the articulation and aggregation of community values takes place also outside the parties and parliaments, although with many limitations and bottlenecks [18]. He concludes that "in East-Central Europe democracy is secured more by the citizens' acceptance of the new constitutions and central democratic institutions than by the vitality of its civil societies. Civil society is the last of four fundamental levels, and it still has to be consolidated (as attitudinal consolidation), following institutional consolidation, representational consolidation through political parties and behavioural consolidation with the integration of veto actors" [19].

Yet, as Klaus von Beyme warns us, one should not embrace the black-and-white ideology of the state versus civil society that emerged in the eighties in the fight with authoritarian regime because it constituted "a pre-modern ideology". This civil society based ideology has been "apolitical" and "anti-political", and to some extent even "anti-economic", Beyme argues [20]. Indeed, this is a rather naïve ideology,

mystifying the non-political sector of society and demonizing the state or the political sector of society. Although the idea of "civil society in power" has been counter-productive in the democratization process, first of all in the Czech Republic and in the activities of Vaclάv Havel, it has still been influencing the analyses on the party-civil society relationships. In my view, it is very doubtful whether one can speak about civil society as one single actor against the state (e.g. in the case of Solidarity in Poland), since civil society as a whole has always been more divided and can be considered as one united actor only in very rare historical moments and even then with many reservations. Therefore, I am rather sceptical about the country typology that says that in the eighties there was in Poland a full confrontation between state and society and in Hungary this confrontation was less acute [21]. In fact these "confrontations" were but different – political or economic – faces of the fragmented civil societies in the ECE countries, so this typology does not lead to a proper explanation of the emergence of the successor parties either. Therefore I share the view that Polish and Hungarian Social Democratic parties have been embedded in the whole complexity of political and social life [22], i.e. also in some parts of civil society. This complexity of their connections with the particular civil society, namely close relationships to its modernized parts, existed already in the eighties and it can be noticed in the electoral support throughout the nineties.

All the sociological and electoral data show that the ECE Social Democracy has been solidly anchoring in civil society, although the party developments have been diverging from the Western highways to a great extent. One has to see the categories of mass parties, peoples' parties and/or cadre parties against this background of painful social transition. My hypothesis is that the ECE Social Democratic parties fall into the category of "small peoples' parties", which includes a contradiction between the relatively small size of party membership and the all-representative character of the party. These parties comprise all social strata to some extent, for instance the Hungarian Socialist Party has always had at least twenty-five per cent voting support from all major social strata. The only mass parties are the unreformed ruling parties (as the Czech Communist Party or sister parties in the Balkans). The newly emerging parties are usually only cadre parties, i.e. collections of office seekers. People do not join parties in ECE, not only because of the political demobilization but first of all because they are busy with the everyday burden of adjusting to the realities they do not have time and energy for party business. The result is the "senilization" of party memberships as the domination of senior citizens among the members of all parties. It seems so that the ECE Social Democratic parties have escaped this trap, since they have attracted more members than the other parties and from all social strata. There has been a prejudice that the relatively bigger membership is due to the successor character of these parties. In fact, the Hungarian Socialist Party emerged in 1989 with a membership of 40,000, half of which came from the old party (which had a membership of 800,000) and the other half from new recruits. Nowadays membership of the HSP is at the same level, after more than ten years with a declining percentage of former party members. There has been a membership paradox as well, with the over-representation of more educated and higher income strata in both membership

and constituency for the ECE Social Democratic parties, combined with the under-representation of the less educated and lower income brackets [23].

Parallel with this membership-paradox there has also been a "democracy-paradox" in the ECE Social Democracy. These parties have wanted to dissociate themselves from the principle of "democratic centralism" so much that it has been much more difficult for them to create real party coherence and party discipline, while many rightist parties have been happy to grasp "Bolshevik" methods of power concentration in their party leaderships. Party coherence has usually also been weak in the membership, thus the various interests and ideological currents have come to the surface with ease, although the parties' unity has not been endangered in the Polish and Hungarian cases, and also very rarely in the other countries. The real problem for ECE Social Democratic parties in their contacts with civil society is not the size of membership but that of the missing "satellite" or civic organizations. Actually, all mature parties in the world build up their satellite organizations to have organic contacts with civil society through autonomous or semi-autonomous organizations, and in the West it has been even more characteristic for the parties on the Left. However, this system of satellite organizations has been largely missing for the Left in ECE or at least it has been rather weak. At the same time a deeply going particization of civil society or civic associations has taken place on the Right through the activities of the paternalistic state in the periods of national-conservative governments by giving them large resources for political loyalty. It is true that the Left has not been completely immune to this challenge of clientura building either, but it has usually neglected the institution building and/or creating-supporting civic organizations. In addition, there has been a massive resource transfer for the parties on the Right from the West (including the Western church organizations). There has been nothing similar on the Left, although some foundations like the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung have played a very important role in the ECE democratization. The massive resource transfer for the Right from the West has been one of the reasons for the asymmetrical situation in civil society organizations also in political aspects that created a clear domination of rightist and church-oriented civic associations in the meso- and micro-politics. Strangely enough, the Left is strong "below", in the population at large, and "above" as a well organized party, but rather weak "in between", in the organized civil society [24].

3. The Tasks of Social Democracy: Re-integrating Societies

Nowadays the elaboration of a genuine Social Democratic program in ECE has become necessary in order to represent those who are politically silent and to invite them back into politics as partners. This is the future dimension of the party-society relationship as the task of social inclusion or cohesion with the re-integration of losers to society. It has been re-enforced by EU accession both negatively and positively, since this process creates new losers but offers as well an opportunity for social cohesion through sustained economic growth and EU requirements. Democratization and marketization have been very successful processes in ECE, yet there is still a long way to go for the recovery of the standard of living and for a real "participatory revolution" or "deliberative democracy". By the early 2000s the disintegration, segmentation, or fragmentation and social exclusion, described above, have created

an obstacle to multiculturalism, social integration and political recognition. Recovery began painfully slowly in the late nineties and this slow reintegration was hampered by the majoritarian effort, the "winner takes all" approach of the ECE national-conservatives like the Klaus government, the Polish Right with and after Walesa and most recently the Orbán government. Both economic and political problems were aggravated by the policies of the national-conservative governments, first of all by the "presidential" efforts of the Orbán government [25]. The "winner" means here an actor relying on the combination of economic and political success. The national-conservative governments have pursued economic and social policies to promote the interests of the "new rich" people for the organization of a large clientura to supporting party followers in order to occupy favourable economic and political positions. The situation left by the national-conservative governments was huge polarization and social disintegration where all the advantages of systemic change were more concentrated in a small upper class than ever before [26].

Thus, "national re-unification" has been left for the newly elected Social Democratic governments. Hence, Eastern Enlargement has to be seen as a two-sided process of integration both inside and outside. The dual challenge of globalization and Europeanization makes this domestic integration more difficult for ECE because of international migration and other processes on one side, but the "external" integration of ECE to the EU basically facilitates the domestic one creating a positive "path dependency" on the other. In the mid-nineties, at the time of the first leftist governments the drastic economic crisis management was the most urgent task. Now, sustainable economic growth since 1996 has created the economic preconditions for "systemic change in welfare". The patient decade is over in ECE and now people demand the catching up with the EU in wages and salaries. The task of re-integrating the civil society as a whole has been clearly formulated by the new socialist-liberal coalition government in Hungary as the program of the Medgyessy government indicates. The Medgyessy government (2002-2006) has realized that it has to "unify" Hungary through involving a large majority of the population in the economic, social, and political activities. It has declared itself "the government of the national centre" to indicate its efforts for a large-scale program of "re-unification" of the country by solving the new social crisis and re-integrating people to the "nation" or "society". The first step of the systemic change in welfare has been a substantial pay-rise in public sector as part of the first hundred-day program of the new Medgyessy government that took office on 27 May 2002 [27].

The solution of the citizenship issue, internally and externally, is also an imminent task for ECE Social Democracy. First, it has to be decided internally, by "defining" social citizenship through the concretization of delivery of public services. Second, the relationship with the national minorities both in their neighbouring countries and inside the ECE countries has to be regulated in terms of economic, cultural, and social assistance, and of political recognition. No doubt that EU membership with transparent borders offers a solution for the ECE ethnic minorities both at home and abroad in some cases, although the new exclusion with the Schengen borders aggravates the situation in other cases (Serbia, Ukraine and Croatia). Altogether, the Schengen borders, designed to filter or even to stop migration, offer a good chance for ECE to

avoid or lessen coming difficulties for these future immigration countries, but modern technical equipment and common border guards are needed from the EU, and hopefully both will be provided. Creating social citizenship domestically, however, has two aspects: employment and public services. As a paradox, illegal migrants have the first, as illegal employment, and not the second, while many ECE citizens have public services but some of them have no employment. The minority problems are very similar in all ECE countries and their solution is both a precondition and a result of EU membership. In the spirit of the Third-Way approach, education is the most important policy measure to avoid marginalization and/or to catch up with the others.

The integration of migrants is a "nested game", or a two-level game in the West where rather well integrated societies have to integrate migrants, which still causes many problems and tensions. In Central Europe the situation is much graver; in this region "the poorly integrated society versus the migrants" is the model that may create social disintegration on the second power. It may lead to a further disintegration of society under the pressure of globalization in general and mass migration in particular, since even many citizens are lacking meaningful social citizenship as a precondition for their political recognition. In order to get prepared for the massive wave of "Eastern" migrants, the ECE governments have to elaborate a plan to re-integrate the marginalized part of their societies to the general framework of a consensual democracy, which is of high priority for the ECE Social Democracy in order to avoid xenophobia and the resurgence of the extreme Right that can already be noticed in the West. Advanced democracies, according to their historical traditions, can perform relatively well and remain stable even as majoritarian-type democracies, in the recent globalized world. New democracies, however, can manage consolidation only through the consensual-type constitutional and political measures and based on massive participation. Active political participation has both procedural-institutional and substantive-cultural sides. Involvement in various forms of representation has to be legally regulated and institutionalized in order to provide effective participation in ECE. Beyond this, however, there is a cultural side that includes a large spectrum of socio-political activities, cultural underpinnings and affirmative behavioural patterns. These cultural patterns are for stabilizing the democratic order and, at most, for making its institutions efficient. There is no doubt that this side of active participation has been insufficiently developed in ECE.

Actually, this line of research dealing with multicultural societies and cultural cleavages couples the *institutional* issues – discussed here as consensual, multi-actor democracy – quite directly with the *cultural* approach. Indeed consensual democracy needs some organizational underpinnings with a large variety of institutions acting as connections between culture, social structure, and political institutions. They provide a system of social and political integration through an institutional structure for a meaningful social participation, since the lack of political integration of intense – political, social, cultural or ethnic minorities can lead to the fragility of democracies. Thus, the support by, and involvement of, minorities in this concrete context is much more important than the rather abstract question of overall "diffuse" support (David Easton) for the system, that has been so often discussed by political scientists. Finally, political integration or involvement means providing alternative channels of

representation as policy channels for all organized groups and/or minorities. In this way, conflicts may be positive by exerting pressure for innovation on institutions and actors, including parties and as a means for maintaining the collective identities of these institutions and actors.

Democracy is an "unfinished project" in Central Europe as a matter of progressive inclusion of a large variety of groups into the political life or as a demand for an "inclusive state" or actively inclusive representation. Now, the idea is that representation of groups rather than individuals should be the locus of democratic politics. However, the basic fact is that the inequality of participation in the form of limited access to representation needs to be radically corrected by the "inclusive state" versus the "exclusionist state". In democratic transition the "opposition public spheres", the organizations of civil society were turned into, or subjected to, mere party politics, a process I call "over-particization" that has to be overcome. Nowadays, demobilization has become the greatest danger of further democratization in Central Europe in the period of democratic consolidation. There was a drastic decline of social and political participation right after the early mobilization phase of systemic change as a demobilization of masses and social movements by the new power elites in the party formation process and the reverse process of "participatory revolution" has not yet been completed. The lack of political organizations for their meaningful participation has caused a further shock to participatory behaviour. Over-particization, a quasi-monopolization of the political scene by the parties has created a long-lasting alienation from politics and low trust in the new democratic institutions. The alienation from politics has usually been generated by the national-conservative parties but it has punished harder the Social Democratic parties, since their constituency has been much less traditionalist and they have turned away more from elitist democracy.

Representation crisis contains three participation dimensions that have often been analyzed in political science literature. The first one is from the *input* side – "unequal participation" as a major obstacle to efficient representation. The second one is from the *output* side – the "politics matters" issue as a major result of effective representation, which gives a general frame to policy-making. The third problem is political efficacy ("participation matters") or trust in public institutions – it is, in fact, a *synthesis* of both aspects of efficient and effective participation. The new approach to representation – as an extension of parliamentary representation and through its new functions – has been clearly formulated by a team headed by Dietrich Herzog [28]. On the "input side politics" the theory of political representation presupposes not only free and fair elections for all adult citizens as equal participation but also an actual, not only potential, quasi-full participation. For Arend Lijphart, in the spirit of consensual democracy, this issue of "unequal participation" has become "democracy's unresolved dilemma" because "Unequal participation spells unequal influence (...) the inequality of representation and influence are not randomly distributed but systematically biased in favor of more privileged citizens – those with higher incomes, greater wealth, and better education – and against less advantaged citizens" [29]. This "systemic class bias" in electoral participation is the biggest problem of political representation for Lijphart, and even more so for ECE Social Democracy in the practice of politics. Here we are.

This unequal participation can be one of the major problems of political representation in Central Europe even more than in the West. As we know, in the first free elections in the early nineties the turnout was very high, first of all in the countries with abrupt changes like in Czecho-Slovakia where the participation at the June 1990 election was 96.8 per cent but in the November 1996 Senate election only 34.6 per cent. Later on it declined very quickly in Central Europe, reaching its lowest point for the Lower House parliamentary elections (Sejm) in Poland in October 1991 with 43.2 per cent. The politically marginalized or silent strata have no chance to express their views at the level of national politics. Democratic consolidation cannot be successful without "inviting back" a large part of this passive forty per cent of population to national and municipal politics.

There is a danger that nothing remains in Central Europe (and much more in the Balkans) for a rather large segment of the population but to join "anomic" movements, which is a recurring danger in the EU accession process and after in Poland and the Czech Republic. Another choice for them is to support the extreme right-wing populist or anti-political parties. But the bottom line of these common reactions is that the percentage of those completely "silent" has been around forty per cent as a regional average. The old slogan "if you do not vote, you do not count" remains profoundly true. Lijphart quotes Lipset's famous formulation that elections are "the expression of the democratic class struggle". There is a broad consensus on this issue that "Governments pursue (...) policies broadly in accordance with the objective economic interests and subjective preferences of their class-defined core political constituencies" [30]. This argument of Lijphart follows the line of his theory about consensual democracy. The theory of consensual democracy is not simply about "justice" for minorities in abstract terms, it is also about the high political performance of democracies in pragmatic terms. The crucial issue for him is which democratic system – majoritarian or consensual – is better at coping with social, economic and political problems. Lijphart does not claim that there is a big difference between both kinds of democracies as to macro-economic policy outcomes and law-and-order issues. Asking more and more about "the operation of democracy" or "how well democracy works", he argues, however, for a big difference on other, "softer" issues like electoral participation, income equality, etc., i.e. in the cases of ratings of "democratic quality" consensus democracy performs better [31]. All in all, Lijphart has pointed out systematically that "consensus democracy makes a big difference" in macro-economic crisis management, control of violence and quality of democracy. In the same spirit, Jeremy Richardson argues that "the active participation of citizens is not only a good in itself, but it is also *functional* to the success of a liberal democracy" [32].

In short, the present situation in Central Europe is still the following: the economically advantaged have a "voice" and the disadvantaged have remained politically "silent", or what is more, they have only the "exit" option, since there is a rather big asymmetry of interest representation and organization in an otherwise robust civil society. While parties were fighting for their establishment, the quasi-monopolization of the political arena was understandable, even if not justified. But by now they have reached some maturity in Central Europe. The parties and

governments have to reach the new understanding that democratic consolidation is possible only through the re-integration of both the social as well as territorial actors and the population at large into the political system. They can promote and represent those interests that have no or only limited access to public space because they are usually disadvantaged and have difficulties to get organized. Through parties, these interests can influence the political agenda, since, in a transitory period, until they become autonomous and self-relying, public discourse and deliberation can correct the deficiencies of unequal participation in formal institutions. Macro-political organizations, including the parties, are dependent on informal public opinion too, embracing also the views of the dis-empowered part of the population; therefore this representation can offer them a positive feedback. I consider it as a genuine Social Democratic program, since the ECE Social Democratic parties have to promote not only the interests of their related civil associations in particular but beyond this they also have to support the completion of consensual democracy as a whole.

4. Conclusion. The Responsibility of the International Social Democracy

The Socialist International, the Party of European Socialists and some significant Western Social Democratic parties have strongly influenced the development of the ECE parties. They have a continued commitment and responsibility for assisting the ECE Social Democratic parties in their further Social Democratization and Europeanization to facilitate their integration to the European polity and the EU party system. At the same time, it is a necessity for the Western Social Democracy, since in the next EU elections in 2004 these ECE sister parties may contribute to the strength of the PES in the European Parliament. All in all, further institution and policy transfer is needed for the ECE Social Democratic parties from the West to complete the second wave of institutional reforms in their countries.

Notes

[1] See recently A. GERRITS, "The Social Democratic Tradition in East Central Europe", *East European Politics and Societies*, 2002, 16/1, p. 105.

[2] There has been a rather large literature on Social Democracy in ECE, so I discuss here only those issues that are relevant for my topic. I have dealt with the ECE Social Democratic parties and its literature in many papers extensively. I have investigated this topic first of all through the analysis of the Hungarian Socialist Party, see recently A. ÁGH, "The dual challenge and the reform of the Hungarian Socialist Party", *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 2002, 35/3. I focus here only on the party-society relationship.

[3] About the party-constituency relationship it is important to note that political parties "act as a channel for citizen demands, aggregating them, giving them coherence and translating them into policy; through the electoral process they provide the governments that will conduct that policy; they regulate elite competition, offering an orderly means of accession to governmental power and playing a crucial role, again through the electoral system, in the alternation of power; and, through these and other aspects of their political action, they educate society and confirm the order of which they constitute so important a part" (M. WALLER, and M. MARTIN, *Parties, Trade Unions and Society in East-Central Europe*, London, Frank Cass, 1994, p. 161).

[4] The completion of democracy project means also institution building from the "institutional vacuum" in the early nineties (T. COX and B. MASON, *Social and economic transformation in East Central Europe*, Cheltemham, Edward Elgar, 1999, p. 4-5) through an "institutional design" to a relatively well developed system of democratic institutions in the period that I call early consolidation. Therefore this long decade covers rather different periods, also in the development of left wing parties and in their changing relationships to the organized civil society, including trade unions that has been discussed in many papers, see e.g. L. COOK, M. ORENSTEIN and M. RUESCHMEYER (ed.), *Left Parties and Social Policy in Postcommunist Europe*, Boulder, Col., Westview Press, 1999, p. 70-75 or in my papers in the nineties (A. ÁGH, "The Parliamentarization of the East Central European Parties", *in* S. BOWLER, D. FARRELL and R. KATZ (ed.), *Party Discipline and Parliamentary Government*, Columbus, Ohio State University Press, 1999). This analysis cannot go through the different periods in detail but outlines the major theoretical problems of its itinerary.

[5] The literature, quoted in this paper, usually considers the ECE transformation in a global context. The most relevant book in the respect is B. DEACON, *Global Social Policy: International organizations and the future of welfare*, London, Sage Deacon, 1997, which devotes a long chapter (p. 91-152) to ECE developments.

[6] P. KOPECKY and C. MUDDE, "What has Eastern Europe taught us about democratization literature (and vice versa)?", *European Journal of Political Research*, 2000, 37/4.

[7] For details, see P. ULRAM, and F. PLASSER, "Mainly sunny with scattered clouds: political culture in East-Central Europe", *in* G. PRIDHAM and A. ÁGH (ed.), *Prospects for democratic consolidation in East-Central Europe*, Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press, 2001.

[8] P. LEWIS and Fr. MILLARD, "The development of democratic institutions in Poland", *in* G. PRIDHAM, and A. ÁGH (ed.), *op. cit.,* p. 181.

[9] See B. GRESKOVITS, *The Political Economy of Protest and Patience: East European and Latin American Transformations Compared*, Budapest, Central European University Press, 1998.

[10] In a recent paper, "Multicultural democracy and social democracy in ECE" written for a Friedrich Ebert Stiftung volume, I have described the road leading to multicultural democracy in detail, so I introduce here the topic only in broad outlines.

[11] P. ULRAM, and F. PLASSER, *op. cit*.

[12] A. ÁGH, "Early democratic consolidation in Hungary and the Europeanisation of the Hungarian polity", *in* G. PRIDHAM and A. ÁGH (ed.), *op. cit.,* p. 167.

[13] K. HENDERSON, "The path to democratic consolidation in the Czech Republic and Slovakia: divergence or convergence?", *in* G. PRIDHAM and A. ÁGH (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 220-221.

[14] A. ÁGH, "The dual challenge and the reform of the Hungarian Socialist Party", *op. cit.*

[15] On the winner-loser issue in general see H. TANG (ed.), *Winners and Losers of EU Integration*, Washington DC, The World Bank, 2000. In some recent papers (A. ÁGH, "Early Consolidation and Performance Crisis : The Majoritarian-Consensus Democracy Debate in Hungary", *West European Politics*, 2001, 24/3 ; "Early democratic consolidation in Hungary and the Europeanisation of the Hungarian polity", *in* G. PRIDHAM and A. ÁGH (ed.), *op. cit.* I have tried to give a comprehensive analysis of the Hungarian situation concerning social and political disintegration. The following data have been taken from my papers and based on the data of the Central Statistical Office in Hungary. Referring to the same process in a shorter version I have concluded in a recent paper that "The prolonged social crisis and the accumulated social deficit meant for the HSP that the materialist, short term interests of Hungarian society have become dominant" (A. ÁGH, "The dual challenge and the reform of the Hungarian Socialist Party", *op. cit.,* p. 276).

[16] K. VON BEYME, "Parties in the process of consolidation in East-Central Europe", *in* G. PRIDHAM and A. ÁGH (ed.), *op. cit.,* p. 139, 153.

[17] There has been a large literature on the ECE trade unions (see e.g. M. WALLER and M. MYANT, *op. cit.*; J. HAUSNER, O. PEDERSEN and R. KARSTEN, *Evolution of interest representation and development of the labour market in post-socialist countries*, Cracow, Cracow Academy of Economics, 1995; M. ORENSTEIN, "A genealogy of communist successor parties in east-central Europe and the determinants of their success", *East European Politics and Societies*, 1998, 12/3 ; L. COX and B. MASON, *op. cit.*; and L. COOK, M. ORENSTEIN and M. RUESCHMEYER, *op. cit*.) but this issue needs a separate treatment.

[18] W. MERKEL, "Civil society and democratic consolidation in East-Central Europe", *in* G. PRIDHAM and A. ÁGH (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 96-99.

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 111-112. About the "attitudinal consolidation" or political culture of systemic change in general, see P. ULRAM and F. PLASSER, *op. cit.*

[20] K. VON BEYME, "Democratic Transition in Central Eastern Europe", *in* M. TELÒ (ed.), *Démocratie et construction européenne*, Bruxelles, Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 1995, p. 233-234.

[21] M. NOVÁK, "Les systèmes de partis en République tchèque, en Pologne et en Hongrie", *in* J.-M. DE WAELE (ed.), *Partis politiques et démocratie en Europe centrale et orientale*, Bruxelles, Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles, p. 105.

[22] J.-M. DE WAELE (ed.), *Partis politiques et démocratie en Europe centrale et orientale*, *op. cit.,* p. 13.

[23] This contrast between "educated" and "non-educated" membership and the resulting divergent electoral support is very strong in Hungary. In addition, the centre-right party, FIDESZ has increased this gap with its nationalist rhetoric at the latest elections in 2002, since the nationalist-traditionalist discourse has been very successful in reaching and mobilizing the least educated and poorest strata of the Hungarian society (see A. ÁGH, "The dual challenge and the reform of the Hungarian Socialist Party", *op. cit.,* p. 16).

[24] I have consciously avoided in this paper all issues concerning party organizations, here I have only made a reference to the missing meso-organizations around the Left.

[25] See A. ÁGH, "Early Consolidation and Performance Crisis: The Majoritarian-Consensus Democracy Debate in Hungary", *op. cit*.

[26] The social and political exclusion has appeared most markedly but not exclusively in the Roma question.

[27] It is characteristic that a fifty per cent pay-rise was necessary in Hungary in public sector to get close to the salary level of the early nineties but otherwise medical doctors, nurses and teachers would have left public sector in large quantities.

[28] D. Herczog *et al.* (ed.), *Parlament und Gesellschaft*, Opladen, Westdeutscher Verlag, 1993.

[29] A. Lijphart, "Unequal participation: Democracy's Unresolved Dilemma", *American Political Science Review*, 1997, 91/1.

[30] *Ibid.*, p. 4.

[31] A. Lijphart, "Dimensions of Democracy", *European Journal of Political Research, ECPR 25th Anniversary Issue*, 1997, p. 195-197.

[32] A. Lijphart, "Unequal participation: Democracy's Unresolved Dilemma", *op. cit.*, p. 116.

European Social Democracy and the World of Members

The End of the Community Party Concept?

Pascal Delwit

"Paradise lost?". These were the words used by Gerrit Voerman in 1996 to consider the issue of membership in Social Democratic political parties. It is true that in world of make-believe, the *universe* of Social Democratic members is an integral part of the Social Democratic identity and one of the key features of the Social Democratic *pattern of organisation* as exposed nearly a century ago by Roberto Michels [1]. Two years before Voerman's observation, Gerassimos Moschonas spoke of "basic and near general decline" referring to Social Democratic membership [2].

The object of this contribution is to examine this notion of "decline" in the present-day membership of Socialist parties. To analyse this issue, we examine the countries of *Western Europe.* In this domain, the situation is broken down into sixteen national cases: Germany, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Spain, Finland, France, Great Britain, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Norway, the Netherlands, Portugal and Sweden. For Spain, Greece and Portugal, our commentary will be brief due to their recent entry into representative democracy.

The contribution is divided into two phases. Firstly, we reappraise the status and role of members in political parties and more specifically in Social Democratic parties.

Then, we analyse evolutions in terms of membership for Western European Social Democratic parties over the six decades since the end of the Second World War. The developments are studied from three standard indicators.

a) The evolution of the number of members in each of the parties reviewed from 1945 to the present day. To do this, we calculated the average number of members for each decade and underlined the changes in this average number in terms of party members. Three territorial sub-sets are examined: Northern Europe with its declension from Labour-style Social Democracy and the Scandinavian model,

Central Europe broken down into German-style Social Democracy and that of the Benelux states, and Southern Europe.

b) Then comes the relation of the number of members of researched parties and their electoral results (number of votes). Through this approach, we calculated the development of *membership ratios.* The main advantage of the membership ratio is that it evidences parallelism (or absence thereof) between the curve of actual member numbers and that of votes won by the party.

c) Finally, we also show the relationship between the number of members and that of registered voters. In so doing, we calculated the *electoral penetration rate.* The relevance of this indicator is that it refines the total number of members into demographic subsets. It offers a more refined presentation of the *actual evolution* of membership numbers for each party.

1. Social Democracy and Membership: the Law of Numbers

In collective thinking as well as in scientific analysis, the Social Democratic parties are impressive groups in terms of the size of their memberships. They cover a model analysed as early as 1913 by Roberto Michels in his famous book on political parties: a highly developed organisation producing a bureaucratic phenomenon leading to the "iron law of oligarchy" [3].

This model overlaps with the mass party type pinned down by Maurice Duverger [4] or the party of social integration considered by Neumann in the same period [5]. Moschonas takes up and amends these concepts by speaking of "societal party, *sub* and *counter* societal at the same time" with its *class-based party declensions* [6].

The number of members and their involvement gives Social Democratic parties powerful mobilisation capabilities, steady revenue and indisputable political, social and cultural influence based on the *law of numbers* [7]. Moreover, it is true that the ratios are sometimes outstanding. For example, Michel Charzat recalls that in the nineteen twenties, one out of every four Viennese was a member of the Social Democratic party. Nevertheless, this overall picture should be toned down in view of several factors [8].

Sometimes the numbers are linked to the close ties between Social Democratic parties and trade union organisations. In this regard, the distinction between *direct and indirect parties* as criticised by Duverger does stand out [9]. Indeed, the impressive number of members of some Social Democratic parties is mainly due to indirect membership mechanisms. Several parties have resorted to this system. We should note, amongst others, the Belgian Workers Party (POB) until 1945, the Swedish Social Democratic Party (SAP) until 1990 or, in combination with direct membership, the British Labour Party.

Moreover, the concept of a model applies to Social Democracy in its *restrictive* internal-level party organisational model and to a policy hinging on neo-corporatism, in terms of public policy. In other words, a few key parties from Northern and Central Europe: Scandinavian, German, Austrian and Benelux parties. British and Irish Labour are a bit different and Southern European Socialist parties have never been reviewed from such an organisational point of view.

2. Western European Social Democracy and its Members

A. Scandinavian Social Democracy

As we said, if there is a typical Social Democratic organisational model, it must be the Scandinavian Social Democracy. In Sweden, Norway and Denmark and, to a much lesser extent, in Finland, Social Democratic membership is felt as being part of joining in a *community.*

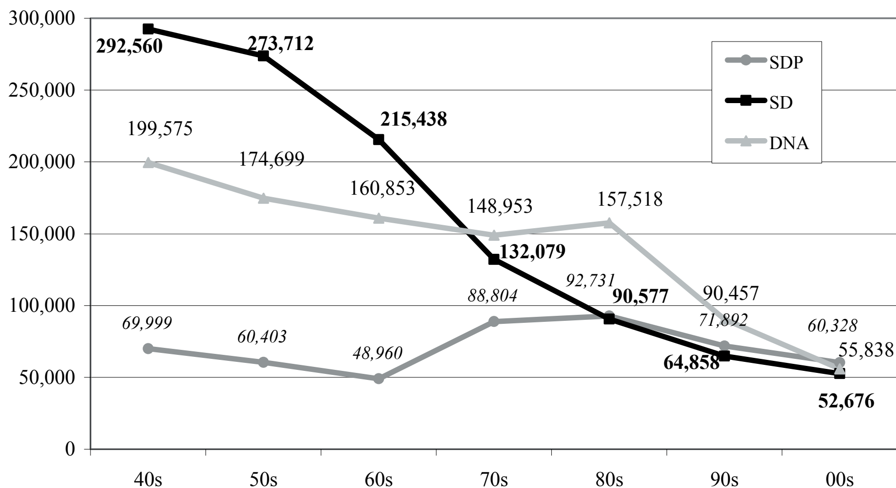
How did this develop? In the *Scandinavian model,* three cases are most self-explanatory, those of the Norwegian Labour party (DNA), the Danish Social Democratic party (SD) and the Swedish Social Democratic Party (SAP). At the end of the war, the three parties had a considerable number of members. They involved several hundred thousands of people. For the SAP, however, this total must be put back in context since, until 1990, it was only an indirect type of party. Therefore its curve must be considered separately.

The Danish and Norwegian parties retained an extremely powerful and unchanged social integration structure until the end of the 1960s (SD) and 1970s (DNA).

Subsequently, the two parties experienced an abrupt decline in membership. That entailed about the same membership in the 90s, that is respectively 20 per cent and 28 per cent of total membership in the 40s.

As a mirror image, the average evolution of Finnish Social Democratic Party membership figures does not show the same linear decline. Following a setback in the 50s and 60s, the SDP enjoyed an increase in the two subsequent decades before it sustained a further decline. But this setback was not as deep as that experienced by its Norwegian and Danish counterparts. As evidence of this, the three parties currently have a fairly similar average membership while they started off from wide apart bases.

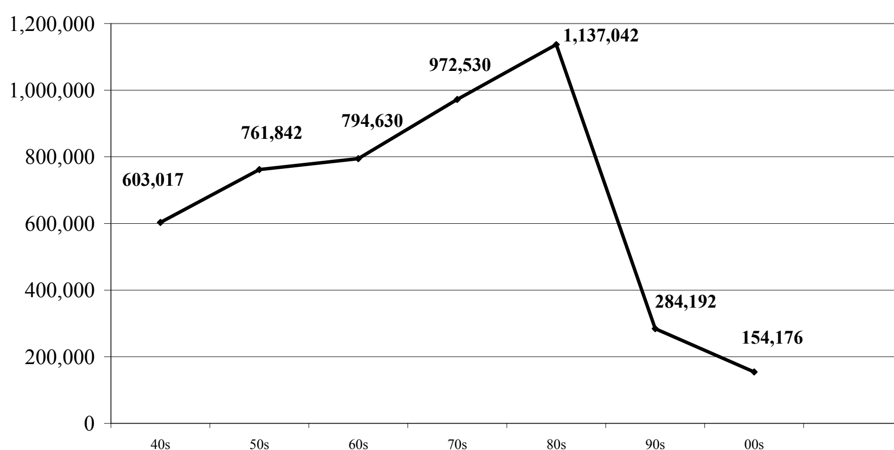
Figure 1
Party Membership of Scandinavian Social Democratic Parties (1945-2004)



Due to the change from indirect membership to individual joining, it is difficult to make a pertinent comparative statement for Swedish Social Democrats. We do note, however, that this alternative membership system has led to loss of several hundred thousand members within just a few years.

Moreover, current observations tend to corroborate the difficulties of Scandinavian Social Democracy as a group (relative though, as it is still 150,000 members strong) as for the SAP.

Figure 2
SAP's Party Membership (1945-2004)

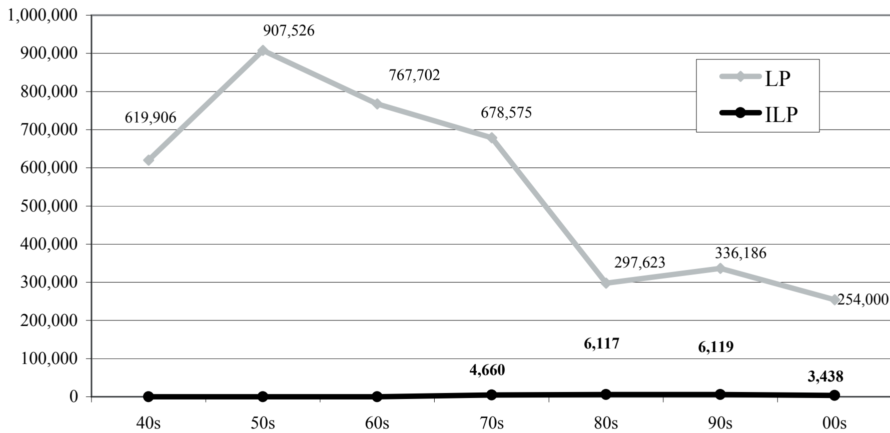


The set up for British Labour is very similar to the prevailing configuration of the Danish and Norwegian parties. At the end of the war, the Labour Party succeeded in signing up nearly one million members through direct membership. Secured in the fifties, this total soon eroded away in the following decades. Over twenty years, British Labour lost 220,000 members in total figures. In the nineteen eighties, the drop was spectacular: the party recorded the resignation of 400,000 members over a ten-year period. To be sure, the Labour Party suffered from the Social Democratic Party (SDP) breakaway in the early 80s, but all in all this only had a slight impact on the magnitude of disinvestments from British Labour.

When he took over the reins of the party in 1994, Tony Blair tried to boost direct membership in order to minimise the influence of indirect members subservient to the trade unions. Ten years later, the attempt turned out to be a failure even though the sociological aspects of the world of Labour members have changed, oddly enough [10].

In the Irish party system, the Labour Party is a medium sized party between the two main ones, Fianna Fail and Fine Gael. Its numbers are low and the changes are smoother. We have however noted confirmation of the current difficulty Social Democratic parties are having in recruiting members. Over ten years, the Irish Labour party has lost 45 per cent of its members.

Figure 3.
Labour Parties' Party Membership (1945-2004)



B. Central European Social Democracy

Historically speaking, the German (SPD) and Austrian (SPÖ) Social Democratic parties are the two *superpowers* of the Social Democratic model. Numbers confirm this: the SPD has hit the million member mark and the SPÖ has over seven hundred thousand. While not parallel, the two membership curves offer similar trends.

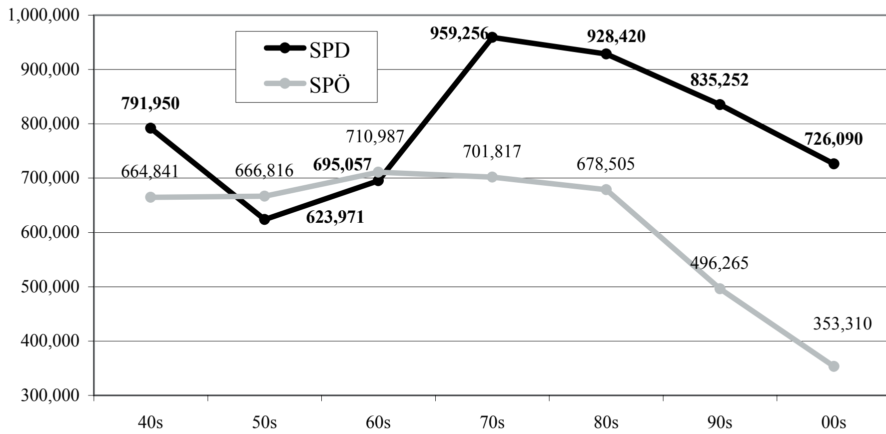
In Germany, after the years of the Christian Democratic age sustained by the legacy of Konrad Adenauer, the SPD gradually recovered prominence and regained its voter appeal at the end of the sixties and during the seventies. In ten years time, the Social Democrats saw their numbers increase by one third. However, since then, a decline has occurred. This has driven the SPD to membership numbers that nowadays do not exceed the seven thousand mark, even though the recruitment base has been broadened with the German reunification (see *infra*).

Over four decades, the total number of members of the Austrian Social Democratic Party has fluctuated between 660,000 and 710,000. But for the past twenty years, there has been a radical change. SPÖ voter appeal has dropped considerably and the party has been affected by an unprecedented spiral of political indifference. In twenty years, the Austrian Social Democrats have thus had half their members resign, which contributed to lessening their place and role in Austrian society, as well as altering their organisational model.

What about the Social Democratic parties in the Benelux states?

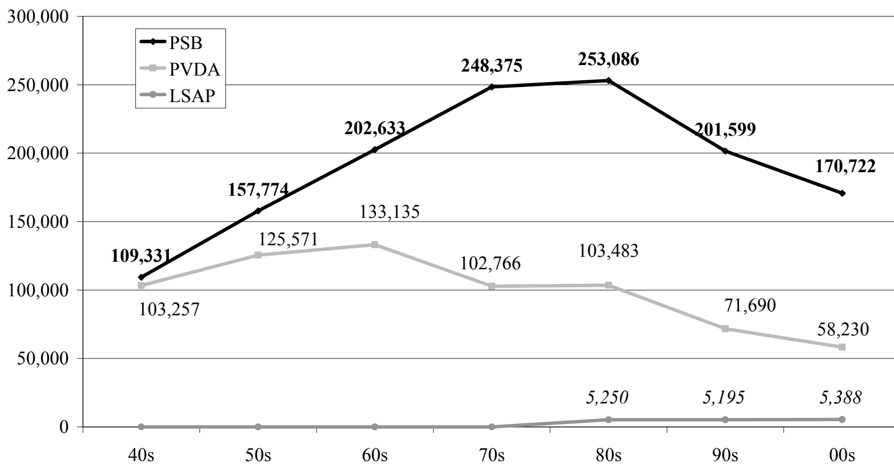
Despite demographic differences, Belgian Socialists and Dutch Labour party members started out on an equal footing in the period following World War II. The two parties had around one hundred thousand members just after the Liberation. But the two curves soon diverged.

Figure 4
Party Membership of Germanic Social Democratic Parties (1945-2004)



The *parti Socialiste belge (PSB-BSP)* (Belgian Socialist), then the *parti Socialiste (PS)* (French-speaking Socialist Party) and the *Socialistische Partij (SP, SP.a)* (Flemish Socialist Party) succeeded in becoming mass parties by switching over to direct membership party status. In Belgium, the Socialists progressed in gross terms up to the mid-nineteen eighties. Since then, they too have been hit by dwindling numbers to such an extent that their current membership is some 70 per cent of what they reported in the nineteen eighties.

Figure 5
Party Membership of Social Democratic Parties of the Benelux (1945-2004)



The expansion capabilities of the Dutch PVDA (Labour party) have been rather more limited. Its maximum was around 130,000 members in the sixties, and then it was affected by a sharp drop in numbers. The PVDA can only rely on a base of between 55,000 and 60,000 members.

As for the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, our data are incomplete for the post-war period. We noted no significant development over past thirty year period. The Luxembourg Socialist Workers' Party (POSL-LSAP) has retained a base of around 5,000 members.

B. Socialism in Southern Europe

In Southern Europe, the overview of membership developments does not follow the same pattern. Generally speaking, data are much harder to come by. Moreover, Greece, Spain and Portugal have to be analysed differently due to their late transition to democracy.

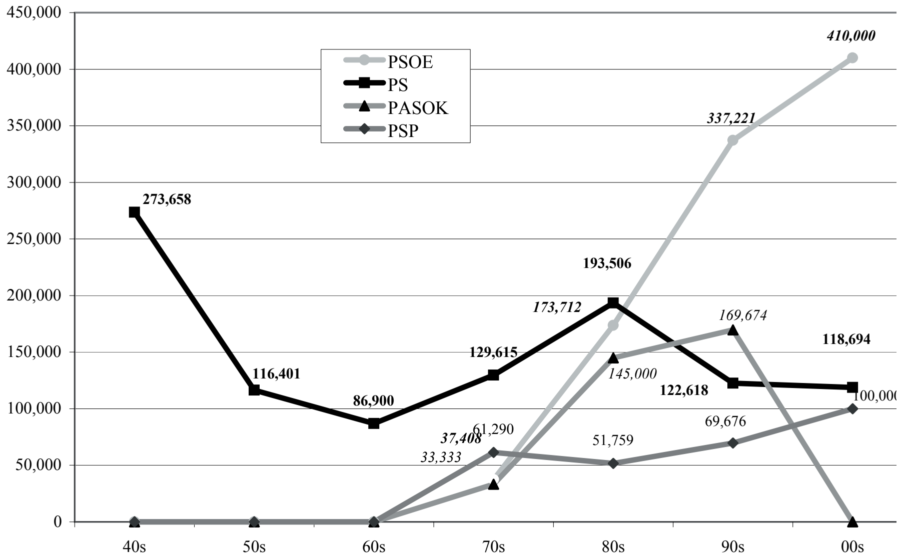
Now a well known fact, the French Socialist party has never been a mass party in the sense that it would have played a role in social integration of major segments of one or more social classes. Daniel-Louis Seiler pinpoints it as a party of activists, very sensitive to ideological swings and power struggles [11]. The shifts are actually rather abrupt. After reaching nearly 300,000 members at the Liberation, the SFIO [*Section française de l'internationale ouvrière* – French section of the Worker's International] experienced a spectacular decline in numbers of party activists within two decades. The party suffered the loss of two thirds of its active members! The end of Molletism and the reorganisation of the party at the start of the seventies brought about a reverse trend that was largely confirmed in the decade that followed, as an after-effect of the victory of François Mitterrand in the May 1981 Presidential elections. On the other hand, the second seven-year term led to activist disappointment that turned into a mass exodus from the party that could only put a damper on the victory in the 1997 legislative elections. The Socialist Party suffered a new massive loss in membership that brought it down to one hundred thousand members at the start of this millennium.

For PASOK, PSP and PSOE, we "necessarily" register progress during these past thirty years. Operating in a new democratic framework, the Socialist parties could only grow to begin with. In Portugal and Greece, as far as can be ascertained from fragmentary data, stability seems to have been achieved over the last decade. In Spain, the PSOE kept growing until recently. Its current membership verges on the four hundred thousand mark.

Finally, the case of Italy is highly specific. The parties that embody democratic Socialism changed over time. Consequently, comparison is complicated. Until 1992, two parties laid claim to Social Democracy and were members of international organisations for Social Democratic cooperation: the Italian Socialist party (PSI) and the break-away party, formed shortly after the Liberation, the Italian Social Democratic party (PSDI). These two parties have impressive membership numbers: between five and seven hundred thousand for the PSI; between one hundred fifty and two hundred fifty thousand for the PSDI. These parties bore the full brunt of the operation "Mani

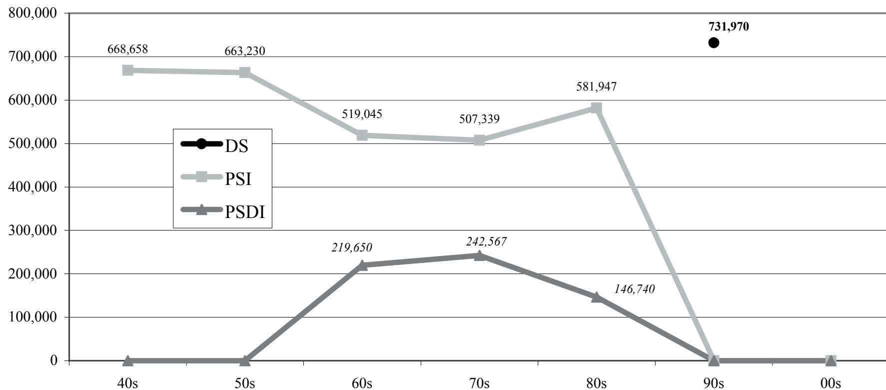
Pulite" and the evidenced involvement of the Italian government parties. The PSI and PSDI were wiped off the Italian political scene in 1993.

Figure 6
Party Membership of Social Democratic Parties of Southern Europe (1945-2004)



In the meantime, the Italian Communist party had given birth to two new parties: the Party of the Democratic Left (PDS) and the Communist Refoundation Party. (PRC). The PDS was the *major* fraction from the PCI. It soon received the blessing of organisations for Social Democratic cooperation and de facto became the Socialist party in the Italian political system.

Figure 7
Party Membership of Italian Social Democratic Parties (1945-2004)



The Italian Communist party was a nearly perfect example of a party for social integration. It counted up to two million members. At the end of the eighties, before its transformation, this figure was still one million one hundred thousand! Like most European political parties, the PDS, then the Social Democrat (DS) experienced a decline in member involvement. Its current number of members is seven hundred thirty thousand.

Besides the gross figures, we tried to put this data into perspective. We used two indicators to do this.

The first is the membership ratio. It relates the number of members of a party and the total voter base. It therefore offers comparison between the evolution in members and in voters. Are the two curves proceeding apace or are they diverging over the past sixty years? And if so, which way?

The second is the electoral penetration rate. It relates the number of members of any given political party and the total of registered voters. The latter are basically the recruitment potential for parties in a given society. This indicator further refines the information on the gross number of members.

3. Changes in Membership Ratios for Western European Social Democratic Parties

A. Membership Ratios for Northern European Social Democratic Parties

In the case of Scandinavian Social Democracy, the membership percentage reveals contrasting situations. In the past, the Finnish Social Democrats maintained a relatively stable percentage but it has been falling in recent years. Over sixty years, the SDP dropped from one member for every seven voters to one member for every twelve voters. In other words, in recent years, the electoral curve is steeper than the membership curve.

The situation is different with the Danish, Swedish and Norwegian socio-democrats. In six decades, these three parties experienced a significant collapse of their membership levels. As we noted, the Swedish case is specific, given the changes that occurred in 1990. All the same, the situation today is completely different from that immediately after the Liberation and in the first decades that followed. At the end of the war, these parties recorded one member for every three or four voters. In the last fifteen years, this ratio has changed substantially. Nowadays, the SD, DNA and the SAP only have one member for every fifteen to twenty voters! So they have lost their unique quality in European Social Democracy and at Scandinavian level, they are on a par with the Finnish SDP.

The membership ratio in British and Irish Labour is basically different. Over a forty year period, the member/voter ratio for the Labour Party was within a range of one fifteenth to one twentieth. Since the early eighties, the membership ratio has declined. All things being equal, electoral results turn out to be better than those for membership. This observation corroborates what has been observed in the case of Scandinavian Social Democratic parties.

Table 1
Membership ratio of Social Democratic Parties
(Labour and Scandinavian cases) (1945-2004)

	SDP	SD	DNA	SAP	LP	ILP
1945	14.97		31.35		4.07	
1946						
1947		36.64				
1948	15.35			35.52		
1949			25.40			
1950		34.91			6.85	
1951	14.69				6.28	
1952				42.82		
1953		31.68	21.43			
1954	11.89					
1955					6.80	
1956				44.98		
1957		29.13	19.07			
1958	11.36			43.94		
1959					6.94	
1960		25.34		35.92		
1961			19.15			
1962	9.99					
1963						
1964		20.77		40.06	6.80	
1965			17.01			
1966	8.01	17.67			5.92	
1967						
1968		18.13		33.81		
1969			15.69			
1970	10.22			37.04	5.65	
1971		15.41				
1972	11.56					
1973		16.66	19.19	39.06		[a] 2.69
1974					6.04	
1975	14.55	13.40				
1976				44.25		
1977		9.66	15.73			2.41
1978						
1979	14.42	9.01		48.46	5.78	
1980						
1981		9.70	16.76			3.16

	SDP	**SD**	**DNA**	**SAP**	**LP**	**ILP**
1982				46.75		3.44
1983	11.99				3.49	
1984		9.16				
1985			16.40	46.66		
1986						
1987	12.64	8.52			2.88	5.89
1988		8.00		46.42		
1989			14.01			4.28
1990		6.35				
1991	13.17			12.62		
1992					2.42	3.00
1993			11.39			
1994		5.72		10.34		
1995	8.93					
1996						
1997			7.12		3.00	3.03
1998		4.69		9.26		
1999	10.15					
2000						
2001		5.49	8.63		2.37	
2002				7.20		2.67
2003	8.39					

a : Party Membership of 1974.

B. Membership Ratios for Central European Social Democratic Parties

Upon examining Central European Social Democratic parties, one first notes the specificity of the Austrian Social Democratic party, which quickly reached a membership ratio of 35 per cent [12]. Unlike Scandinavian parties, it did not suffer any collapse but nonetheless one does see an erosion over the past fifteen years, despite a shrinking reference voting base. The situation for active members is even worse. And yet, the SPÖ still has one member for every five Social Democratic voters, which is the best ratio among the Social Democratic parties.

The divergence of the curves for the Benelux countries underlined in terms of vote results is confirmed by membership rates [13]. PVDA and PSB-BSP started with a fairly similar membership ratio (between 8 and 10 per cent). Dutch Labour was to maintain this ratio for twenty-five years and finally ended up experiencing a progressive drop. At present, the Dutch Labour party has around one member for every thirty voters.

In Belgium on the other hand, the membership ratio rose steadily to reach 18 per cent at the start of the eighties. The curves for voters and for members do not keep pace but this time the situation is better for members. Over the past fifteen years,

there has been a change but a small one. The 2003 results are largely due to the major election victory of French-speaking and Flemish Socialists during this election [14].

The changes in the membership ratio for the German SPD are small and slow. For twenty years, especially since reunification, the ratio members/voters has been declining. This is due to a drop in membership but also to improved election results.

Table 2
Membership ratio of Social Democratic Parties of the Centre of Western Europe (1945-2004)

	SPD	SPÖ	PVDA	PSB	POSL
1945		24.94			
1946			8.65	12.76	
1947					
1948			9.46		
1949	10.62	37.84		8.27	
1950				7.45	
1951					
1952			7.20		
1953	7.65	36.13			
1954				7.94	
1955					
1956		36.73	7.59		
1957	6.59				
1958				9.85	
1959		36.36	8.08		
1960					
1961	5.64			[a] 10.29	
1962		35.64			
1963			7.90		
1964					
1965	5.54			13.13	
1966		36.26			
1967			8.08		
1968				14.29	
1969	5.54				
1970		32.17			
1971		30.84	6.20	16.34	
1972	5.56		4.66		
1973					
1974				18.15	
1975		29.80			
1976	6.35				
1977			3.59	16.79	

	SPD	SPÖ	PVDA	PSB	POSL
1978				18.44	
1979		29.89			
1980	6.07				
1981			4.46	18.44	
1982			4.20		
1983	6.23	30.04			
1984					9.78
1985				14.20	
1986		32.02	3.36		
1987	6.49			13.04	
1988					
1989					11.61
1990	5.91	30.08	3.40		
1991				13.81	
1992					
1993					
1994	4.96	31.70	3.23		12.48
1995		26.44		13.37	
1996					
1997					
1998	3.84		2.45		
1999		25.08		14.42	12.68
2000					
2001					
2002	[b] 3.88	19.80	3.98		
2003			2.17	[c] 9.05	

a : Party Membership of 1960 ; b : Party Membership of 2001 ; c : Party Membership of 2000 for the PS and 2001 for the SP.a.

C. Membership Ratios for Southern European Socialist Parties

What about Socialist parties in Southern Europe?

Over a period of fifty years, the PSI and PSDI have had a high membership ratio for a party that was derived from the Social Democratic model (between 10 and 20 per cent). As for the Party of the Democratic Left, they retain a substantial membership ratio of 10 per cent due to the former social structural organisation of the Italian Communist party.

The French, Greek, Spanish and Portuguese Socialists on the other hand record a rather low membership ratio (between two and five members for one hundred voters). This is especially significant for the French Socialist Party, the party with the lowest membership ratio among all the parties we have studied. The specificity of Latin country Socialism has been confirmed. Nonetheless, we should stress that due to the

decline in the membership levels of Social Democratic parties, this indicator shows a trend to convergence in the European Social Democratic family.

Table 3
Membership ratio of Social Democratic Parties of Southern Europe (1945-2004)

	DS	PSI	PSDI	PSOE	PS	PASOK	PSP
1945					7.36		
1946		18.05			8.47		
1947							
1948		13.28					
1949							
1950							
1951					4.62		
1952							
1953		22.67					
1954							
1955							
1956					3.61		
1957							
1958		11.57			3.63		
1959							
1960							
1961							
1962					3.99		
1963		11.55	8.03				
1964							
1965							
1966							
1967					1.94		
1968		[d] 13.76			2.21		
1969							
1970							
1971							
1972		17.92	[e] 16.58				
1973					2.37		
1974							
1975							3.59
1976		14.08	24.92	0.17			4.85
1977						2.08	
1978					2.81		
1979		13.48	15.46	1.85			[j] 3.95
1980							4.00

	DS	PSI	PSDI	PSOE	PS	PASOK	PSP
1981					2.15	3.67	
1982				1.18			
1983		13.21	14.26				1.67
1984							
1985						[g] 8.57	[k] 3.90
1986				2.09	2.06		
1987		11.17	11.70				[l] 3.72
1988					2.30		
1989				2.99		[h] 6.27	
1990							
1991							4.18
1992	12.19						
1993				3.83	2.56	4.92	
1994	[a] 8.84						
1995							ND
1996	[b] 8.55			3.87		5.53	
1997					1.85		
1998							
1999							[m] 4.24
2000				5.24		[i] 6.65	
2001	[c] 10.11						
2002					f 1.95		ND

a : Party Membership of 1993 ; b : Party Membership of 1995 ; c : Party Membership of 1998 ; e : Party Membership of 1967 ; e : Party Membership of 1971 ; f : Party Membership of 2000 ; g : Party Membership of 1984 ; h : Party Membership of 1990 ; i : Party Membership of 1998 ; j : Party Membership of 1980 ; k : Party Membership of 1986 ; l : Party Membership of 1986 ; m : Party Membership of 2000.

4. The Changes in Electoral Penetration Rates for Western European Social Democratic Parties

The electoral penetration rate is the ratio between the number of members in a party and the total number of registered voters. The latter form the virtual recruitment base for political parties.

The number of registered voters is a variable that is independent of party results (membership or voters). Therefore, it offers a better appraisal of the "membership" variable in its external environment. This variable offers a corrective assessment of the gross figures of a party's membership levels.

A. Electoral Penetration Rate for Northern European Social Democratic Parties

The analysis of changes in electoral penetration ratios for Scandinavian Social Democratic parties is very enlightening. From this angle, the mutations these parties have undergone are obvious.

At the end of the war, the Norwegian, Danish or Swedish Social Democratic parties recruited between 10 and 15 per cent of all registered voters! Their social binding action appears clearly from this ratio. In comparative terms, the results of the Finnish SDP or the British Labour party are manifestly lower: 1.5 to 3 per cent.

Over the past sixty years, no matter what parties have been examined, the electoral penetration rate has either eroded or collapsed. The three major Scandinavian Social Democratic parties have declined over the entire period. And in the first twenty years, Norwegian and Danish Social Democrats saw their electoral penetration diminish by half. The trend then continued and led these two parties to a ratio ten times lower that it was at the Liberation: 1.38 and 1.57 per cent.

In the case of the Swedish Social Democratic party, it was the shift from indirect membership to direct recruitment that changed the order of things. The shift is radical since in twenty years, the SAP electoral penetration rate went down from around 20 to 2 per cent.

Starting from a much lower electoral penetration rate, the Finnish SDP also recorded a downward trend. However it does not present the linear feature of the preceding cases: the erosion is recent and its impact is limited. In-keeping with the negative trend observed for the membership ratio, this currently means the SDP is in line with the Social Democratic parties of the three other Scandinavian countries, even though it has never taken on the dominant character in the party system that the Danish, Swedish and Norwegian Social Democrats had.

Table 4
Electoral penetration rate of Social Democratic Parties
(Labour and Scandinavian cases) (1945-2004)

	SDP	SD	DNA	SAP	LP	ILP
1945	2.79		9.74		1.47	
1946						
1947		12.55				
1948	3.14			13.50		
1949			9.45			
1950		11.28			2.64	
1951	2.91				2.51	
1952				15.52		
1953		11.03	7.89			
1954	2.48					
1955					2.42	
1956				15.87		
1957		9.57	7.18			
1958	1.96			15.64		
1959					2.39	
1960		9.13		14.69		
1961			7.04			
1962	1.65					
1963						

	SDP	SD	DNA	SAP	LP	ILP
1964		7.42		15.78	2.31	
1965			6.24			
1966	1.85	5.97			2.16	
1967						
1968		5.51		14.50		
1969			6.11			
1970	1.96			14.80	1.75	
1971		4.97				
1972	2.42					
1973		3.77	5.42	15.43		0.28
1974					1.73	
1975	2.66	3.52				
1976				17.30		
1977		3.13	5.50			0.21
1978						
1979	2.58	2.93		18.90	1.62	
1980						
1981		2.64	5.11			0.24
1982				19.32		0.23
1983	2.42				0.70	
1984		2.54				
1985			5.62	18.57		
1986						
1987	2.19	2.15			0.67	0.28
1988		2.03		17.03		
1989			3.98			0.27
1990		1.96				
1991	1.96			4.06		
1992					0.65	0.39
1993			3.17			
1994		1.65		4.00		
1995	1.72					
1996						
1997			1.95		0.93	0.21
1998		1.44		2.69		
1999	1.50					
2000						
2001		1.38	1.57		0.57	
2002				2.26		0.18
2003	1.36					

a : Party Membership of 1974.

The British and Irish Labour parties never achieved the impressive ratios of certain Scandinavian Social Democratic parties. In 1950, Labour attained a maximum rate of 2.64 per cent. The downward trend is indeed present. In fifty years, the British Labour party was brought down to a ratio equal to that for 1951: 0.57 per cent! So, today, there is one Labour member for every two hundred registered voters. The situation in Ireland is more stable, but the party does not have the same status as its British *alter ego*. In 2002, we counted one Irish Labour member for every five hundred registered voters.

B. The Penetration Rate for Social Democratic Parties in Central Europe

The trends we were able to identify for Central European Social Democratic parties now converge with those for the Scandinavian parties. Over the past two decades, the electoral penetration rate has been falling, sometimes sharply. But the curves do not reveal the same feature of structural decline as those of Danish or Norwegian Social Democrats for example.

In Austria, the SPÖ has retained the same electoral penetration rate for forty years, in a 13 per cent to 15 per cent range. Yet, in the second half of the eighties and in the nineties, losses were very heavy. In 2002, the Austrian Social Democratic party "only" mustered the equivalent of one voter out of twenty compared to one out of five-six a bit less than twenty years before.

All things being equal, the same observation applies to the German SPD. During four decades, the SPD retained the same ratio. Qualitatively, the situation was obviously not the same from the moment the ratio stood around 2 to 3 per cent. The nineties recorded a significant drop. In 2002, the ratio of SPD members/German voters was reduced to half of what it was fifteen years previously. This transformation is due to the overall trend that we pointed out, but also to the broader electorate subsequent to the German reunification. And, all things being equal, the number of party members is clearly lower in the *Länder* of the former DDR than in the former Federal Republic of Germany.

The analysis made on the membership ratio for Belgian Socialists is confirmed by the electoral penetration rate. Up to the start of the eighties, the ratio for the Belgian Socialists stood at 4 per cent. Since then, each election shows a decline. In the May 2003 elections, the electoral penetration was half of what it was in 1981: 2.2 per cent.

For the data available to us, Luxembourg shows the most obvious stability. No noteworthy change can be singled out over the past two decades.

Finally, the Dutch Labour Party electoral penetration rate curve resembles that of the Scandinavian Social Democrats: relative stability during twenty years followed by an ongoing dwindling ever since. On the other hand, the real significance of the ratios is not identical. The electoral penetration rate peaked at only 2.32 per cent in the Netherlands and settled at less than 0.50 per cent at the start of two thousand.

Table 5
Electoral penetration rate of Social Democratic Parties of the Centre of Western Europe (1945-2004)

	SPD	SPÖ	PVDA	PSB	POSL
1945		10.37			
1946			2.21	3.50	
1947					
1948			2.20		
1949	2.36	13.99		2.20	
1950				2.26	
1951					
1952			1.92		
1953	1.83	14.32			
1954				2.61	
1955					
1956		14.91	2.32		
1957	1.77				
1958				3.14	
1959		15.13	2.29		
1960					
1961	1.72			3.30	
1962		14.54			
1963			2.05		
1964					
1965	1.84			3.16	
1966		14.31			
1967			1.76		
1968				3.36	
1969	2.01				
1970		14.26			
1971		14.11	1.20	3.75	
1972	2.30		1.09		
1973					
1974				4.02	
1975		13.81			
1976	2.43				
1977			1.06	4.01	
1978				4.06	
1979		13.91			
1980	2.28				
1981			1.09	4.13	

	SPD	SPÖ	PVDA	PSB	POSL
1982			1.03		
1983	2.10	13.07			
1984					2.41
1985				3.48	
1986		12.27	0.96		
1987	2.01			3.47	
1988					
1989					2.35
1990	1.52	10.76	0.86		
1991				3.11	
1992					
1993					
1994	1.41	8.88	0.61		2.42
1995		8.45		2.75	
1996					
1997					
1998	1.28		0.52		
1999		6.58		2.40	2.43
2000					
2001					
2002	1.17	5.79	0.48		
2003			sd	2.19	

a : Party Membership of 1960 ; b : Party Membership of 2001 ; c : Party Membership of 2000 for the PS and 2001 for the SP.a.

The study of electoral penetration rates for Southern European Socialist parties shows the blatant difference with the Northern *model.* Even the PSI and PSDI who had a considerable membership ratio are, at this level, not in a position to rival Social Democratic parties in the organisational sense of the term. And in Italy, the Party of the Democratic Left, heir of the major, formerly prevailing Italian Communist party reveal a membership/national electorate ratio relatively low as compared with other social integration parties (around 1.5 per cent) [15].

The weakness of French Socialism, in terms of membership, has been evidenced once again. Currently, the French Socialist Party and the Irish Labour Party share the privilege of having the lowest electoral penetration rate of all Social Democratic parties in the European Union: 0.30 per cent.

The Socialist parties of the *new* democracies of Southern Europe have relatively identical electoral penetration rates – between 1 and 2.50 per cent. Moreover, it is difficult to trace any evolution, given the late start. At this point, we should underline the lack of any significant linear development.

Table 6
Electoral penetration rate of Social Democratic Parties of Southern Europe (1945-2004)

	DS	PSI	PSDI	PSOE	PS	PASOK	PSP
1945					1.36		
1946		3.07			1.44		
1947							
1948		1.82					
1949							
1950							
1951					0.52		
1952							
1953		2.58					
1954							
1955							
1956					0.44		
1957							
1958		1.50			0.42		
1959							
1960							
1961							
1962					0.33		
1963		1.44	0.44				
1964							
1965							
1966							
1967					0.29		
1968		[c] 1.78			0.29		
1969							
1970							
1971							
1972		1.55	[d] 0.77				
1973					0.36		
1974							
1975							1.26
1976		1.23	0.76	0.039			1.41
1977						0.42	
1978					0.52		
1979		1.15	0.51	0.37			[i] 0.95
1980							0.93
1981					0.55	1.42	

	DS	PSI	PSDI	PSOE	PS	PASOK	PSP
1982				0.44			
1983		1.27	0.49				0.48
1984							
1985						[f] 3.26	[j] 0.61
1986				0.63	0.48		
1987		1.35	0.29				[k] 0.60
1988					0.55		
1989				0.85		[g] 1.91	
1990							
1991							0.83
1992	1.62						
1993				1.13	0.29	1.77	
1994	[a] 1.44						
1995							ND
1996	[b] 1.38			1.12		1.70	
1997					0.31		
1998							
1999							[l] 1.15
2000				1.24		[h] 2.13	
2001	ND						
2002					[e] 0.29		ND

a : Party Membership of 1993 ; b : Party Membership of 1995 ; c : Party Membership of 1967 ; d : Party Membership of 1971 ; e : Party Membership of 2000 ; f : Party Membership of 1984 ; g : Party Membership of 1990 ; h : Party Membership of 1998 ; i : Party Membership of 1980 ; j : Party Membership of 1986 ; k : Party Membership of 1986 ; l : Party Membership of 2000.

5. Conclusion

Our research has confirmed and refined the observations made on the fall in member numbers in Social Democratic parties. Viewed in terms of gross figures, membership, or electoral penetration rates, the "party membership" variable suffered a significant drop. That applies for parties experiencing decline, stability or electoral progress. We can therefore identify a specific problem relating to Social Democratic party membership.

The fall in membership numbers is not just an issue for the Socialist family. The studies relating to political commitment and militancy reveal a general trend for all political families [16]. But this change affects Social Democracy in a specific manner.

Often analysed in terms of its organisational force, Social Democracy no longer has, or has to a lesser extent, the traits of an imposing organisation, simultaneously feared and envied by its political and social rivals.

The European Socialist parties no longer seem able to mobilise tens of thousands if not hundreds of thousands of members or supporters in order to achieve their

objectives. This being the case, it alters some of their traditional functions and consequently their identity. Their social structuring role, the mediation between State and wage earners and employees (workers in particular) are roles that few Social Democratic parties still appear able to fulfil.

All the Social Democratic parties have not lost their mass character, but that is due in part to the increased life expectancy of its members. The studies relating to socio-politico profiles of members show this clearly and the recruitment of new members is increasingly more difficult.

Comparatively speaking, measured by the yardstick of members, the gap between Socialist and Social Democratic models has narrowed. To be sure, the Austrian SPÖ and the French Socialist Party reveal extremely different organisational realities. But this applies to extremes whose political effects are in any case not the same as those of the fifties or sixties.

In short, considered from the membership point of view, our analysis confirms the anticipatory statement made by Stefano Bartolini who announced the doom of social integration parties [17]. Globally, the Social Democratic family is in the gradual process of become a family of parties *that are just like the others*, in this respect at any rate.

Notes

[1] R. Michels, *Political parties: a sociological study of the oligarchical tendencies of modern democracy*, New York, Dover, 1959.

[2] G. Moschonas, *La social-démocratie de 1945 à nos jours*, Paris, Montchrestien, 1994, p. 31.

[3] R. Michels, *op. cit*.

[4] M. Duverger, Political *parties: their organization and activity in the modern state*, London, Methuen, 1954.

[5] S. Neumann, "Toward a Comparative Study of Political Parties", *in* S. Neumann (ed.), *Modern Political Parties: approaches to comparative Politics*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1956.

[6] G. Moschonas, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

[7] D. Pélassy, *Qui gouverne en Europe?*, Paris, Fayard, 1992.

[8] M. Charzat, "Une tradition mal connue: Otto Bauer et les austro-marxistes", *in La social-démocratie en questions, par des Socialistes, des sociaux-démocrates, des communistes*, Séminaire organisé par l'Institut Socialiste d'études et de recherches, Editions de la *Revue politique et parlementaire*, p. 156.

[9] M. Duverger, *op. cit*.

[10] P. Seyd, P. Whiteley, *New Labour's Grassroots. The transformation of the Labour Party Membership*, Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2002.

[11] D.-L. Seiler, *Les partis politiques en Occident: sociologie historique du phénomène partisan*, Paris, Ellipses, 2003.

[12] See *supra* our paper: Electoral developments in European Social Democracy.

[13] *Ibid*.

[14] P. Delwit, E. Van Haute, "Les élections fédérales du 18 mai 2003: un scrutin de "défragmentation"", *L'année sociale 2003*, Bruxelles, Institut de sociologie de l'ULB, 2004.

[15] It is true that the Italian Communist party itself recorded significant losses before its transformation. See Ph. Daniels, "The Mass Party in crisis: the PCI's response to organisational decline", Paper presented for the workshop on the organisation of the Western European Communist Parties, ECPR, April 1989.

[16] P. Mair, I. Van Biezen, "Party membership in twenty European Democracies, 1980-2000", *Party Politics*, 2001, 7/1, p. 5-21.

[17] St. Bartolini, "The Membership of Mass Parties: The Social Democratic Experience, 1889-1978", *in* H. Daalder, P. Mair (ed.), *Western European Party Systems. Continuity and Change*, London, Sage, 1983, p. 177-220.

The Organisational Structure of Social Democratic Parties in Eastern and Central Europe

Jerzy J. Wiatr

Social Democratic parties in the Post-Communist states of Central and Eastern Europe can be divided into two broad categories: the "historical" parties which trace their history to the period before the communist takeover and the "reformist" parties, established on the basis of the transformed Communist parties after the fall of the Communist regimes [1]. For a variety of reasons, the historical parties, with an interesting exception of the Czech Republic, became non-starters: too weak in their electoral appeal and fragile in terms of their organizational structures. The Czech Social Democratic Party, the only historical Social Democracy which came to power in the region, owes its success to a large extent to the stubborn opposition of the Communists to any reform of their party, which remained the only strong Communist party in the region but is unable to win the support of the majority of leftist voters.

In this analysis, I focus on those parties which after 1989 have demonstrated their lasting relevance on the political scenes of their nations. The minimum criterium is the ability of the party to win enough votes to be continuously represented in the parliaments. In fact, most of the "reformist" Social Democratic parties in Eastern and Central Europe have been able to do more than the minimum. With the exception of Estonia, Latvia and Serbia [2] all the Social Democratic parties in Eastern and Central Europe have won elections and came to power at least once, either separately or in coalitions [3]. They now have their leaders serving as Prime Ministers of Albania, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, Montenegro, Poland and Romania. In addition, Social Democratic leaders have served as elected presidents of their republics: Algirdas Brazauskas in Lithuania (1993-8), Milan Kucan in Slovenia (1990-2002), Kiro Gligorov in Macedonia (1990-8), Aleksander Kwasniewski in Poland (since 1995) and Georgi Parvanov in Bulgaria (since 2001). The political vitality of the Social Democratic parties in Eastern and Central Europe is one of the reasons why

politics of this region differs so sharply from that of the successor states of the USSR, the three Baltic republics showing greater similarity with the rest of the region than with the other former Soviet republics.

Reasons for the success of Social Democratic parties in Eastern and Central Europe are many, from popular frustration with the consequences of neoliberal economic policies to the ability of the Social Democrats to play the democratic game with greater skill than their Right-wing opponents. What concerns us here, however, is a different question. How does the success of East-Central European Social Democratic Parties affect their organisational life? What kind of parties are they now?

1. Members and Leaders

The ruling Communist parties were the *mass parties* not only in the sense of having huge armies of card-holding members but, what is more important, in the very concept of party membership. Before coming to power and in the very early period of their rule they were composed of a relatively small number of ideologically committed activists, performing various tasks for the party, frequently in conditions of illegality. The old communist elite constituted the backbone of the ruling parties, at least until the second half of the communist rule [4]. With the passing of time, the ruling parties absorbed huge numbers of members, many of whom were more motivated by the benefits resulting from joining the party in power than by ideology. Most of those members withdrew from active political life after the fall of regime and many switched to the newly formed anticommunist parties. The reformist Social Democratic parties began their activities with only a small fraction of their former membership. The Social Democracy of the Polish Republic is an extreme case [5]. Its membership immediately after its formation in January 1990 was no more than 50,000, less than five per cent of the membership of the Polish United Workers Party at the final stage of its existence. Other reformist Social Democratic parties experienced a similar process of declining membership, even if not to the same degree. What made the reduction of their ranks less harmful was the fact that all political parties in Eastern and Central Europe were much smaller in size that parties in Western Europe. What Takeshi Hirata called “the absence of mass parties” [6] affects the Social Democratic parties less than those which had been formed on the basis of former democratic opposition.

With much smaller membership, the new parties adopted a very different pattern of requirements. Gone was the category of nominal members whose commitment to the party was weak and to very high degree opportunistic. Members of the reformist Social Democratic parties joined for ideological reasons, which varied from articulate Social Democratic values to the nostalgic commitment to the party of the Left. Having lost state power the parties had very little to offer their members in terms of personal gains. Fewer members meant also more tasks to be performed by them. What became one of the differences between the reformist parties and their predecessors was a much higher degree of every day involvement of the rank-and-file in political campaigns.

In the early period, members of the new Social Democratic parties were almost exclusively former members of the Communist parties. While most of them were not members of the party’s top elite, they had some political skills which they were able

to use in party activities. One of the paradoxes of Post-Communist politics in Eastern and Central Europe is that people who have come from the ranks of the formerly ruling Communist parties adjusted to the rules of democratic politics more easily than those from the democratic opposition who had struggled for democratic change but much too often were unable to perform the role of effective actors in democratic politics.

With the passing of time, membership of the new Social Democratic parties changed. There have been three main changes in this respect. Firstly, younger people, too young to be active before the change of the system, began to join the Social Democratic parties (as well as other political parties). Consequently, the parties in terms of the background of their members became less *Post-Communist* than was the case at the beginning. Secondly, some left-oriented politicians switched from parties of the former democratic opposition and joined the new reformist Social Democratic parties [7]. There are few such members but their presence helps the parties in building their new image. Finally, when some of those parties consolidated their political position in government, many new members joined, partly because of the benefits which a party in power is in the position to offer.

"Old" members, those who belonged to the reformist Social Democratic party from its beginning tend to become a minority. According to the leaders of the Alliance of Democratic Left in Poland, about 70 per cent of its members had not belonged to any party before joining. Nonetheless, the veterans are heavily overrepresented in the ruling organs of the parties. With very few exceptions, leaders come from the ranks of the founders of the reformist Social Democratic parties. They are professionals with political experience often from the old regime. Most of them belonged, however, to the middle rank of party officials before the change of system or had joined the political elite only after the fall of Communism. Among the few exceptions the most prominent are Algirdas Brazauskas, formerly the First Secretary of the Lithuanian Communist Party, Gyulia Horn, the last Foreign Minister of Hungary before the transition and member of the Political Bureau, and Leszek Miller, the youngest member of the Political Bureau and one of the secretaries of the Polish United Workers Party in the last year of its existence. On the other hand, however, none of the presidents of the reformist Social Democratic parties comes from outside the ranks of former members of the Communist parties. Continuity between the old Communist parties and the reformist Social Democratic ones is more pronounced in the composition of the party elites than in the ideologies and policies those parties represent [8].

In sociological terms, members of the Social Democratic parties of Eastern and Central Europe are not representative of the general society. They tend to be much better educated. Most of them are professionals and other white collar workers, with very few blue collar workers and farmers belonging to these parties. On the other hand, there has been an interesting trend among businessmen, some of whom have joined the Social Democratic parties once they had become parties of power. Certainly, the new Social Democratic parties are not, and do not claim to be, parties of the "working class".

Most of the party members are people of medium age, but the parties make great efforts to attract the younger generation. While very few people below 30 years of age

have been able to enter the party's top elites, they are somehow more visibly present in the medium levels of party structures.

Neither are the parties very successful in attracting women. Among their rank-and-file women constitute a distinct minority; the average share of women among party members is around twenty per cent. They are somehow more visible among party leaders, but the official target of 30-50 per cent of women amongst party leadership seems to be beyond reach for all parties under discussion. It may take another generation before female Social Democrats of Eastern and Central Europe begin to play a role similar to that of their Scandinavian colleagues.

2. Democracy within the Party

When the reformers criticized the state of affairs in the ruling Communist parties, the lack of internal democracy was one of the constant topics. How far have the Social Democratic parties departed from the vices of their predecessors in this respect?

Here, one has to distinguish two aspects: formal rules and their practical implementation. The former can be presented as proofs that the new parties have learned from the past and have accepted the rule of inner-party democracy. Members are free to express divergent views and there has been nothing like the ideological purges, so typical of the old Communist parties. Criticism of party leaders takes place in various forms, not only in party meetings but in the press as well. Elections to party offices are done by secret ballot, even if only one candidate is nominated for a job. There are, however, symptoms of oligarchisation of the new parties.

One of them is what Attila Ágh has called the *overpaliamentarisation* of party politics, leading to *eliticisation of democratization* [9]. These trends are not specifically Social Democratic but affect all political parties in Eastern and Central Europe.

Overparliamentarisation sometimes takes the form of giving parliamentarians automatically seats in the central organs of the party. In Poland, both in the Social Democracy of the Polish Republic and in the Alliance of Democratic Left there has been the rule that parliamentarians become members of the National Council of the party unless they are rejected by more than half of the delegates to the party congress in a secret ballot. Such rejection has never taken place, making membership in the top party body an automatic consequence of being a parliamentarian. Since it is the party Council which approves ultimately the list of candidates for parliamentary elections, incumbent parliamentarians are in the best position to be renominated. On top of this, party activists who are not parliamentarians are extremely rarely elected to the executive organs of the party. The stronger the parliamentary position of a party is, the more pronounced this mechanism of parliamentarisation of party life is.

Another mechanism of curtailing inner-party democracy is the system of behind-closed-door agreements concerning party elections. A party president has almost never been elected in a truly contested election and when such election did happen, like when the SDRP elected Aleksander Kwasniewski as its first president in 1990, the counter-candidates were nominated among a pool of considerably less important personalities, only to give the election a democratic facade. Negotiated outcome extends sometimes beyond the choice of the top leader. At the first congress of the Democratic Left Alliance in Poland, seats in the National Council were distributed

among provincial party councils (in proportion to party membership) and candidates were nominated regionally, upon consultation with the regional groups of delegates. Such mechanisms, while technically speaking democratic, have guaranteed that members of the National Council will be selected by regional party leaders.

The third mechanism curtailing inner-party democracy is the position of top party leaders. Contrary to the pattern that existed in ruling Communist parties, Social Democratic leaders depend on the support of the broader party elite and have to cultivate this support. There is little, however, that the rank-and-files can do to affect the choice of the top leadership. Elections to party offices are indirect and none of the parties has made any use of American-style primaries. Consequently, the party elite keeps the strategic decisions in its hands.

3. Clientelism and Social Democracy

Some commentators writing on political parties in Eastern and Central Europe argue that clientelistic relations are more common among the post-communist parties due to "the strong embedness of these parties and to the continuity of the administrative, economic and cultural elites on the national and local levels" [10]. I have doubts about this generalization, particularly as the periods of Right-wing cabinets in several states of the region produced numerous instances of flagrant clientelism. However, the main point is that Social Democratic parties have not been able to protect themselves from this disease.

They probably cannot protect themselves from it for two reasons. Firstly, being the parties in power in the majority of Eastern and Central European states they control enormous resources and have to make sure that such control is in the hands of people who can be trusted. From this, there is only a very short way to appointing individuals whose main or even only qualification is party membership and good relations with party leaders. Secondly, difficult social and economic conditions in most of Eastern and Central Europe produce a very heavy pressure on office-holders to produce jobs for those whose party work has been instrumental in bringing the party to power. Since Social Democratic parties have large number of professionally qualified people, it is often difficult not to offer them jobs compatible with their experience and qualifications but denied them when the Right-wing was in power.

Whatever justification is offered for practices of political clientelism, it cannot be denied that these practices profoundly affect the inner life of the party. Party members and activists when appointed to administrative positions at various levels of state at administration, or of territorial self-government, feel loyalty to their patrons and cannot be expected to act in full independence within the party. Consequently, clientelism strengthens the oligarchic tendencies in the party. No social democratic party has been able to discover the fully effective way of dealing with this problem. That is not a specifically Social Democratic disease does not make the question less severe.

4. Financing the Party

Money is a necessary but also a very delicate element of party politics. The times when political parties were mostly financed by membership fees are gone and will

not return for the simple reason that in mass society public relations have become too expensive. Social Democratic parties like all the others have to finance their activities from sources different from membership fees, but unlike some conservative parties cannot count on huge contributions from wealthy businessmen. Neither can they count on the financial support of trade unions which has been so vital for the financial well-being of several Western Social Democratic parties.

Consequently, the Social Democratic parties of Eastern and Central Europe have to depend heavily on funds provided by the state. In this they do not differ from other parties in the region or from their equivalents in Western Europe [11]. There are four main forms by which political parties draw their financial support from the state.

Firstly, some countries of the region have adopted laws which give regular state subsidies to the parties which meet certain criteria of vitality (in Poland it is the electoral strength measured by obtaining a minimum of three per cent of valid votes cast in the last parliamentary election).

Secondly, in addition electoral committees which won seats in the Parliament are entitled to receiving reimbursement of their campaign expenses in proportion to the number of seats won. Technically, this is not a subsidy for political parties, since electoral committees representing citizens can also qualify, but in reality most of this money goes to committees established by political parties or their coalitions.

Thirdly, parties tax their representatives (parliamentarians, local councilmen, holders of politically appointed state positions). Such taxation can be quite heavy. In Poland, parliamentarians and high state officials from the Alliance of Democratic Left pay 10 per cent of their gross salaries (before taxes) to the party.

Fourthly, the parties make use of the facilities provided by the state to parliamentarians (offices, telephones, mail, etc.). In a strictly technical sense this is not what is intended when parliamentarians are given these facilities, but in the real world it is impossible to say when they are used for parliamentary and when for the party purposes.

Providing state money to political parties is unpopular among citizens for three reasons. Firstly, many citizens believe that parties should take care of themselves financially and do not see any reason why public money should be spent on them. Secondly, in conditions of scarcity, it is often said that the state has more important burdens than financing parties. Thirdly, public financing of the parties gives a privileged position to the already existing (and relatively strong) parties and magnifies difficulties confronting late-comers.

There are, however, strong arguments in favour of such a policy. Public money tends to reduce the dependency of political parties on funds provided by big business and makes it easier to prevent corrupt practices. Financing parties from public sources tends also to reduce the difference between "rich" and "poor" parties, making their financial condition dependent on the support given them by the voters.

In Eastern and Central Europe, there has been criticism of the state of affairs in which the parties which had emerged through the transformation of previously ruling communist parties were able to keep their assets inherited from their predecessors. The situation in this respect differs from country to country. In most of them, laws were adopted under which the state confiscated all or most of the assets of the Communist

parties. It would be interesting to find how substantial has been the share of property these parties were allowed to keep. Also, it would be interesting to find if and to what degree the new political parties, with no ties to the official parties of the Communist period, benefited – directly or indirectly – from state financial decisions when they were in power in the early years of democratic transformation. Party finances in general constitute a domain too rarely studied.

5. Is there Soul in this Body?

Historically, the socialist and Social Democratic parties were known for their rich intellectual life. People like G.D.H. Cole and C.A.R. Crosland in Britain, Jean Jaurès in France, Karl Kautsky and Eduard Bernstein in Germany, Otto Bauer and Karl Renner in Austria, Rosa Luxemburg and Kazimierz Kelles-Krauz in Poland, represented the combination of two roles – that of party leader and that of theoretician. Today, socialist leaders rarely involve themselves in theoretical debates. Tony Blair and Gerhard Schroeder in their "Socialist Manifesto" returned, however, to this tradition.

In Eastern and Central Europe Social Democratic parties suffer from what some observers define as "de-ideologised party life" [12]. Parties at their congresses deal with pragmatic questions and leave theory to the intellectuals. Their programs are focused on practical goals and means to achieve them, not on long term visions of the future. Political leaders do not express themselves on issues of Social Democratic theory. Few first class intellectuals are members of Social Democratic parties and those who are, are rarely elected to higher party positions. Readership of theoretical journals, where such journals exist, is small. This state of affairs is sometimes criticised at party congresses or in the press but nothing changes.

The distinctly unideological character of Social Democratic parties in Eastern and Central Europe has its roots in the past. On one hand, there was a natural tendency to react to the over-ideologisation of party life during the Communist period. If such reaction was psychologically understandable, it certainly went too far and lasted too long.

Another reason for de-ideologisation of the Social Democratic parties is an almost panicky fear of their leaders that ideological dispute may lead to disunity. Party unity is seen as the most important condition of political success, which often leads to watering-down of theoretical controversies. A serious split resulted from unresolved ideological debate between traditionalists and reformers in the Bulgarian Socialist Party [13]; the split in the Party of Democratic Left in Slovakia had a more pragmatic character, mostly resulting from the frustration born during the party's participation in the center-right government.

All these concerns played some role in the withering away of the ideological content of the new Social Democrats, but they cannot fully explain this phenomenon.

The main reason for the de-ideologisation of the Social Democratic parties in the Post-Communist states is the very nature of the transformation itself. Before it had begun, there were interesting debates within the "revisionist" circles in the ruling Communist parties on such issues as democratic socialism, the role of the market, representation of workers' interests, etc. [14]. Most of these issues lost their relevance

with the passing away of the old regime. The switch to free market economy made the old debate about "market socialism" irrelevant. Democracy has been established and the debate on its role in socialism has been substituted for by the pragmatic discussion on how best to organize the new democratic state. The issues which still divide Eastern and Central European societies are not specifically related to the socialist tradition. The perspectives of European integration, the role of the nation to the state, relations between the state and the churches, as well as other dividing issues are not specifically related to the Communist experience. On these issues, Social Democrats support the system of values characteristic of the broadly defined democratic current: they are for European integration, for equality of citizens regardless of their ethnic background, for freedom of conscience and neutrality of the state vis-à-vis all churches. While these are important issues, they do not define the ideological identity of Social Democracy as a separate current.

Neither does the economic program. Social Democrats, when in power, govern with respect for the rules of the market economy. Their support for state interventionism is not particularly great, certainly no greater than that of many Right-of-center parties. They support the policies of using public finances for protecting the poorer strata, but so do other parties. In fact, the relative importance of the policies of social redistribution results more from the history (institutions and patterns of behaviour formed during the communist system) than from the ideological orientation of any particular party.

Ideologically, new Social Democrats have adopted a kind of political correctness which makes it difficult for them to stress their ideological identity in a way which would separate them from the mainstream. This is one of the reasons of their political success, but also the main reason of their ideological weakness. The time will come when new divides emerge and Social Democratic parties will have to redefine their ideological identity. For the time being, however, they are strong because – and not in spite of – their nonideological pragmatism.

Notes

[1] Of the formerly ruling parties, only the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party underwent the process of internal reform *before* the fall of the regime. At its XIIIth Congress on October 6, 1989, the old party was dissolved and a new one, the Hungarian Socialist Party was established. It came into being as the result of the gradual coming to power of the reformist faction led by Gyula Horn and Laszlo Kovac, respectively the first and the second chairmen of the HSP. For the analysis of the Hungarian road to the emergence of a new Social Democratic party see A. ÁGH, "Partial Consolidation of the East-Central European Parties: The Case of the Hungarian Socialist Party", *Party Politics*, 1995, 1/4, p. 491-514.

[2] Serbia is a special case. Its Socialist Party does not belong to the category of reformist Social Democracies and is not recognized as such by the parties of the Socialist International. It is not an orthodox Communist party either. Because of its heavy dependence on ethnic nationalism and its undemocratic behavior when in power, the best term to define it would be *national socialist*.

[3] In this respect Slovakia is a special case. Its reformist Social Democratic party (SDL – Party of Democratic Left) has never been strong but after the 1998 election it joined the multi-party coalition and participated in government until the election of September 2002. On the eve of the election, the party suffered a split, which resulted in none of the two factions winning enough votes to enter the parliament. Partly as the result of the collapse of the SDL, the unreformed Communist Party won seats in the parliament.

[4] There are interesting differences between Communist parties of the region in this respect. In Poland, pre-war Communists were almost totally eliminated from the leadership of the Polish United Workers Party in the late sixties, replaced by the generation of combatants of the Second World War and, particularly in the eighties by the post-war generation. A similar process took place in Hungary, but in Bulgaria pre-war Communists retained their positions until after the fall of the regime. One way of interpreting national differences in this respect is to point to the impact of political crises. Parties more strongly affected by political crises (like the Polish United Workers Party) tended to retire their leaders faster than those which functioned in stable conditions.

[5] On the formation and evolution of the SdRP see J. J. WIATR, "From Communist Party to "The Socialist Democracy of the Polish Republic"", *in* K. LAWSON (ed.), *How Political Parties Work: Perspectives from Within,* Westport-London, Praeger, 1994, p. 249-261; S. R. DAY, *The Process of Social Democratization: From Leninist-Type to Social Democratic Type Parties in Central and Eastern Europe (A Comparative Based Approach Focusing Specifically on the Social Democracy of the Republic of Poland),* unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Warvick, 1998.

[6] T. HIRATA, "The Emergence of the Party System and the Electoral Volatility in Central Europe", *Central European Political Science Review*, 2000, 1/2, p. 78.

[7] For Polish details, see S. DAY, "From Social Democracy of the Polish Republic (SdRP) to Democratic Left Alliance (SLD)", *in* H. KUBIAK and J. J. WIATR (ed.), *Between Animosity and Utility: Political Parties and Their Matrix,*Warsaw, Scientific Publishers Scholar, 2000, p. 85-106.

[8] In reference to the Democratic Left Alliance this point is stressed by B. DRWESKI, "Du parti "ouvrier" à la "gauche démocratique": les métamorphoses d'un parti de pouvoir polonais (1989-2001)", *in* J.-M. DE WAELE (ed.), *Partis politiques et démocratie en Europe centrale et orientale,* Bruxelles, Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 2002, p. 71-82.

[9] A. ÁGH, "From nomenklatura to clientura: The emergence of new political elites in east-central Europe", *in* G. PRIDHAM and P. G. LEWIS (ed.), *Stabilising Fragile Democracies: Comparing new party systems in southern and eastern Europe,* London-New York, Routledge, 1996, p. 55.

[10] M. DAUDERSTADT, A. GERRITS and G. MARKUS, *Troubled Transition: Social Democracy in East Central Europe,* Bonn-Amsterdam, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 1999, p. 92.

[11] T. FRICZ ("What Will Happen to the Parties?", *Central European Political Science Review,* 2000, 1/2, p. 92-120) is right when he stresses the universal nature of this tendency among contemporary parties.

[12] See M. DAUDERSTADT, A. GERRITS, and G. MARKSUS, *op. cit.*, p. 92. They mention some "ideological platforms" formed by party intellectuals in Bulgaria, Hungary, and Poland,

but correctly stress the marginality of these tendencies within the Central European Social Democratic parties.

[13] See D. Kanev, "La transformation du parti communiste bulgare", *in* J.-M. De Waele (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 83-99.

[14] On the ideological debates within the Polish United Workers Party see R. Taras, *Ideology in a Socialist State: Poland 1956-1983*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1984. On the Czechoslovak "revisionist" debate see G. Golan, *The Czechoslovak Reform Movement,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1971.

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Social Democracy in Europe

Socialist and Social Democratic parties leave few political observers and citizens indifferent. For several years, a certain number of actors on the political scene have presented it as a political family in crisis, lacking in imagination and dynamism, incapable of renewal and doomed to fade into insignificance. Others, on the contrary, describe it as a grouping with a promising, even brilliant future.

This book does not set out to confirm either of those two visions. Its aim is to analyse in-depth the transformations which are affecting, at the current time, the different aspects of Social Democracy: new organisational models, changes in political and electoral performance, changing relations with the trade unions and civil society associations, reactions to the emergence of new political rivals and new values, new ideological trends and political programmes, etc.

For the first time, the analysis does not concern exclusively Western Europe, but also deals with the Social Democratic parties of the consolidated democracies and the organisations that claim to be part of democratic socialism in Central and Eastern Europe, and highlights the specific characteristics and points in common.

At the dawn of the 21st century, it is therefore the challenges and the different responses to those challenges that are analysed by several of the leading European specialists in Social Democratic parties in Europe.

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