

*Paul-H. Claeys* 081  
C 517(3)  
n°1

# GOVERNMENT AND OPPOSITION

VOLUME 14 NUMBER 4 AUTUMN 1979

081  
C 517(3)  
n° 1

JOURNAL OF  
COMPARATIVE POLITICS  
UNIVERSITAS BRUXELLENSIS

# GOVERNMENT AND OPPOSITION

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A quarterly journal of comparative politics, published by Government and Opposition, with the assistance of the London School of Economics and Political Science, Houghton Street, London, WC2A 2AE

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## VOLUME 14 NUMBER 4 AUTUMN 1979

£3.25 Annual subscriptions £12.00 institutions, £11.00 individuals  
US subscriptions, institutions \$38.00, individuals \$34.00, post free;  
\$11.00 per number.

## **Trans-European Party Groupings: Emergence of New and Alignment of Old Parties in the Light of the Direct Elections to the European Parliament**

TWO QUESTIONS ARISE WHEN CONSIDERING THE CHANGES that might be brought about by direct elections and by developments in the new European Parliament. One concerns institutionalized cooperation between political parties. To what extent can the three existing European party federations — Socialist, Christian Democrat, Liberal — be considered as a step towards the formation of genuine European political parties? Are they anything more than alignments of traditional parties coordinating their action at European level? The other question is related to parties or groups which have not until now created close-knit *ad hoc* structures. A special case is that of the Communist parties, which have not organized specific links at Community level. Another problem is raised by non-traditional parties and groups that have in most cases little or no parliamentary representation at either national or European level. Will some of them take advantage of the European sphere of action to make more impression than they have been able to do at domestic level, in cooperation with similarly oriented partners in other member countries?

In formulating these two questions, we take for granted that political forces in the European Parliament will align themselves according to affinities similar to those in the member states. It has sometimes been suggested that the main cleavage in the newly elected Parliament will not be between 'right' and 'left', 'conservatives' and 'radicals', 'traditional' and 'non-traditional' parties, but between pro- and anti-European groups. Our purpose is to examine how cooperation has developed among traditional parties, how non-traditional parties have so far behaved in the European setting, and what hypotheses may be



*Parties affiliated to the three trans-European party groupings*

	<i>Socialist Confederation</i>	<i>EPP</i>	<i>ELD</i>
B	Parti socialiste (PS) Vlaamse socialisten (BSP)	Parti social-chrétien (PSC) Christelijke Volkspartij (CVP)	Parti réformateur libéral (PRL) Partij voor Vrijheid en Vooruitgang (PVV)
DK	Socialdemokratiet (S)	—	Venstre Landsorganisation
D	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD)	Christlich-Demokratische Union (CDU) Christlich-Soziale Union (CSU)	Freie Demokratische Partei (FDP)
F	Parti socialiste (PS)	Centre des Démocrates sociaux (CDS)	Parti républicain (PR) Parti radical socialiste (PRS)
Ir.	Irish Labour Party (Lab.)	Fine Gael (FG)	—
It.	Partito socialista italiano (PSI) Partito socialista democratico italiano (PSDI)	Democrazia Cristiana (DC) Südtiroler Volkspartei (SVP)	Partito repubblicano italiano (PRI) Partito liberale italiano (PLI)
L	Parti ouvrier socialiste luxembourgeois (POSL)	Parti chrétien social (PCS)	Parti démocratique (PD)
N	Partij van de Arbeid (PvdA)	Christen-Democratisch Appel (CDA)	Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie (VVD)
UK	British Labour Party (Lab.) Social-democratic and Labour Party (SDLP, N. Ireland)	—	Liberal Party Organization (LPO)

formulated concerning future cleavages and coalitions. The conceptual tools used to analyse the party federations are those applied to their constituent elements, i.e. the existing political parties: criteria of identification, structural characteristics and functions.<sup>1</sup>

*Criteria:* Most commonly admitted are the criteria put forward by La Palombara and Weiner:<sup>2</sup> continuity in organization; a complete organization, from local to national level; the will to assume and maintain decision-making power; a concern for popular support.

*Structural characteristics:* Parties can usually be considered in terms of several alternatives:

- 1) the prevailing element that is the very substance of the party and on which its legitimacy and development are based: notables, activists, electors.
- 2) the type of organization, its trend towards either the oligarchic or the strataarchic model.
- 3) the scheme of distribution of power and influence within the party both horizontally, between leaders, activists and members, and vertically, between parliamentary group, party machine and clientele.
- 4) the expression by parties or within them of various divisions of their environment, whether the factor of division be class, religion, ethnic affiliation, sex, age etc.

*Functions:* Parties may be labelled according to the emphasis laid on the exercise of one or another of some important functions. These relate to the legitimation of the political system (constituent function), to the recruitment, nomination and election of office-holders (electoral function), to the part played in decision-making within the political system (governing function), to the definition of ideological orientations to be implemented in political action (programmatic function), to the use made of a contested political system for forwarding anti-system demands ('tribunician' function), to interest aggregation and ensuring coordination between scattered decision

<sup>1</sup> The theoretical approach of our research has been presented at the ECPR Workshop on Parties and European Integration, Berlin, 27 March–2 April 1977 and in *Res Publica*, Vol. XIX, 1977, No. 4, pp. 559–77.

<sup>2</sup> J. La Palombara and M. Weiner, 'The Origin and Development of Political Parties', in J. La Palombara and M. Weiner (eds.), *Political Parties and Political Development*, Princeton, N.J., Princeton U.P., 1966, pp. 3–42.

centres, to social promotion, providing jobs and protection (patronage function).

This brief résumé is intended to indicate the framework of our analysis. Within that framework, hypotheses were formulated at the start of our research. Some of them received the outline of an answer in a first report published in June 1978, at a moment when party groupings had accomplished the first steps beyond formal existence.<sup>3</sup> The present paper must be considered only as a summary of observations made to this day, without the possibility as yet of using data from studies and surveys carried on in the nine member countries during the 'European' electoral campaign.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, European party groupings are too recent a phenomenon to allow a reliable testing of any hypotheses at this stage. But their short existence already provides some interesting indications. The same remarks apply to the behaviour of other parties and groups within a yet unstable European political system.

#### THE CONFEDERATION OF SOCIALIST PARTIES OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

This was the first to be created, in 1974. It inherits both the advantages and the disadvantages of the long-standing Socialist International tradition. The International certainly fostered original inter-party cooperation within the liaison Bureau, which was the first experience of institutionalized party implication in the activity of the European Parliament as early as 1957; but its existence tends to lessen the importance of the Socialist Confederation by making it only one among other regional organizations of the International. The Confederation has no statutes, only short rules of procedure. It does not have to choose or admit its members: automatically, parties from member states that adhere to the International are members of the Confederation. As a result, there can hardly be a membership problem in the Socialist grouping, which is the

<sup>3</sup> P.-H. Claeys and N. Loeb-Mayer, *Les groupements politiques dans la perspective de l'élection du Parlement européen, Rapport du 15 juin 1978*, Université Libre de Bruxelles, Institut de Sociologie, 1978.

<sup>4</sup> In particular, the *European Elections Studies* initiated and coordinated by K. Reif and his team at the University of Mannheim are expected to provide important material in this field.



only one of the three where parties from all nine member states naturally find themselves at home. According to the tradition of inter-party cooperation within the International, the key role belongs to national party leaderships. Members of the Socialist group in the European Parliament are not on the executive Bureau of the Confederation (except for the President of the parliamentary group) and they attend Congresses only in an advisory capacity. Although binding decisions can be taken by the Congress under certain conditions (two thirds of the votes on a motion unanimously adopted by the Bureau, where all parties are equally represented), the Confederation has the character of an inter-party cooperation organization, without the proclamation of any vocation to unity and without commitment to the pursuit of European integration.

The production of a common programme is not a statutory obligation, but the Confederation put it on its agenda as early as 1974, when it became likely that a decision concerning European elections would be taken. The Bureau first committed Sicco Mansholt, Dutch former member of the European Commission, to the task of elaborating common Socialist options on European problems. By 1976 it appeared that Socialist Parties were not ready for such integrative methods. Four inter-party commissions – institutions, economic policy, social policy, external relations – started working on the formulation of joint proposals likely to be accepted by all member parties. Although the British and Danish parties did not participate in the commissions, great care was taken not to hurt their positions, and more particularly their institutional minimalism. The aim was not a comprehensive programme, but a common platform on Community problems. However, the compromise draft adopted by the Confederation Bureau in 1977 did not meet with the approval of the different member parties. It became obvious that the will to retain their autonomy and the importance laid on the exercise of the programmatic function did not permit member parties either to subscribe to a common programme or to accept some vague minimum compromise. The Confederation could neither fill party programme requirements nor become a simple electoral machine. Leaders met in June 1978 and adopted a political manifesto. At their Brussels Congress in January 1979, the Socialists approved an 'Appeal to the electorate'. After a reminder that although parties have different historical experiences and operate in different national

contexts they pursue the same goals, the Appeal states commonly agreed principles regarding the right to work, the democratic control of economic and social development, the fight against pollution, the end of discrimination, the protection of consumers, the promotion of peace, security and cooperation, the extension and defence of human rights and civil liberties.

In the course of 1979, several specialized conferences were held. Although their impact on public opinion and even on party militants was next to nil, although they were unequally attended and appreciated, they may turn out to be a step towards the performance of some programmatic function by the Confederation. It has already been noticed that between the common manifesto of 1978 and the 'Appeal to the electorate' of 1979, some results have been obtained in bringing national party positions closer together. It seems probable that the presence in Strasbourg of Socialist personalities and the will expressed by some of them to have important social and economic problems debated in the European Parliament will lead member parties to keep a close control on their parliamentary group and to secure contacts at high level through the Confederation, which might thus come to play an increasing part in the definition of common orientations. However, structural ties are loose enough to allow for divergences without occasioning major crises. Since all parties agree on the fact that the Confederation cannot have any party-political vocation in the near future, it may develop into an organization of close co-operation, a progressive alignment of old parties which will probably keep their characteristic concern for structural and ideological autonomy. It must be added that the relative defeat of most Socialist Parties at the European election is likely to give them further justification for considering power at national level as the one real stake for political action, and Europe not as a goal *per se* but as a crystallization of what the different Socialist Parties are in favour of changing, and a suitable field of action.

#### THE EUROPEAN POPULAR PARTY – FEDERATION OF CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTIES OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY (EPP)

The very fact that the word 'party' was chosen from the creation in 1976 shows that the C-D Federation has ambitions



very different from those of the Socialists. The credibility of the European Popular Party or EPP as such has been much questioned before and during the electoral campaign by opponents who cannot conceive of a party without a complete organization and a comprehensive programme.

Compared with the Socialist Confederation, the EPP bears the mark of the prominent part taken in its creation by the C-D group in the European Parliament. Cooperation between C-D Parties is a post-war enterprise, whereas for the Socialists internationalism has been an integral part of the parties' ideology from the moment of their creation in the last century. In the latter case, close cooperation within the European Community is looked upon as a risk of isolating parties of the richest countries from the wider international family, thus breaking a solidarity which has kept a great symbolic importance. Conversely, for the C-D Parties the building up of a European Community has been a stimulus for the creation of specific organs of party cooperation. The World Union of Christian Democrats was created in 1961 and extends only to South America and to the European parties, which from 1946 had organized contacts within the *Nouvelles Equipes Internationales*, to become the European Union of Christian Democrats in 1965. The fact that cooperation was Europe-oriented from the start and the absence of a long tradition of contacts between party leaderships explain the prominent part played by those directly involved in European affairs: the C-D members of the European Parliament. The members of the European Parliament are statutory members of the EPP Congress; the political Bureau includes the administrative Bureau of the parliamentary group as well as the President or Vice-president of the European Parliament who happens to belong to a member party; the President of the C-D parliamentary group is a member of the EPP Executive Committee. Identification between the EPP and the C-D parliamentary group as two organs of one same whole is further testified by the decision taken by the group in March 1978 to mention 'European Popular Party' as an addition to its denomination.

The party-political character of the EPP is closely connected with its determination to work towards the federalization of the Community: this goal is stipulated in the statutes. The EPP and its member parties are strongly pro-European, and stress the fact that the great 'founding fathers' of the community came

out of their ranks. Their will to resume a key position in the making of Europe has led them to confer on the EPP a specific constituent function, all the more so since this serves to plaster over divergences about the performance of other possible functions, namely that of articulation and aggregation of interests, and that of ideology. The former has the favour of the Italian, Dutch and Belgian Parties, which traditionally aim to represent all social groups and to express the interests of the population as a whole. The German Parties have always wished to see the Federation develop into a programmatic right or centre-right group liable to counter communist and socialist weight in Europe.

If potentially the EPP has the vocation and has given itself the structural possibilities to become something more than a classical organization of cooperation, in fact its unity is maintained largely on condition that the 'European' goal is forwarded without attempting to bridge political gaps between member parties.

The adoption of a common programme is provided for in the EPP statutes. The basis for that programme, i.e. the Christian-Democrat conception of man and society, was laid down in the ideological manifesto of the European Union of Christian Democrats two months before the creation of the EPP. The procedure of drawing up a common programme was the least consultative of the three federations, the original draft being produced by a small commission, and the final result was the vaguest of the documents.<sup>5</sup> It was in fact almost entirely a German-Belgian affair which, after much criticism and some amendments by member parties, was unanimously adopted by an EPP Congress in March 1978, without discussion. Here again arises a fundamental difference between the Socialist Confederation which had to abandon the draft programme without calling a Congress where it might have produced major confrontations, and the EPP which maintained a united front and stifled differences behind a common European will and general concepts such as justice, freedom, personalism and solidarity.

<sup>5</sup> See G. Pridham and P. Pridham, 'The New European Party Federations and Direct Elections', *The World Today*, February 1979, pp. 62-70.



## THE FEDERATION OF LIBERAL AND DEMOCRATIC PARTIES OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY (ELD)

Cooperation between Liberals does not have its roots in a time-worn tradition of party-leadership contacts and of political kinship like that of the Socialists, in a Europe-building vocation around common central values like the Christian Democrats. Contacts first took place alongside the League of Nations when a Liberal World Union was created in 1924. They revived in 1947 with the creation of the Liberal International and the adoption of the Oxford manifesto. The International was a philosophico-ideological more than a political enterprise, being the inspiration of the philosopher Salvador de Madariaga and the main impulse coming from British and Belgian Liberals. The organization brought together individuals, not political parties. As years went by it became a useful meeting ground for Liberal leaders, though national parties as such were not directly committed. It also became more and more concerned with European problems, and associated the Liberal European parliamentary group with its activities. The Federation was created in March 1976 after some 4 years' preparation by a special committee. According to the statutes, Liberal members of the European Parliament are members of the Federation Congress and the President of the group sits on the Executive Committee. Although the group has played a lesser part in the creation of the Federation, ties between the two are as close as in the case of the EPP.

Unlike the EPP, the Federation does not assert itself as a 'party', though its members do not take such pains as the Socialists in denying it a party-political purpose. Their interest seems to lie in intellectual and personal contacts more than in structural organization, which is true to the character of most member parties, closer than others to the model of the party of 'notables'. At the European level, constituent and ideological functions are more intimately linked than in the case of the two other groupings. There is no question of having to choose between the realization of party aims at national level and the construction of Europe; and 'making Europe' is not the dominant theme at the expense of the choice of a European project. As it did initially in the Liberal International, the idea prevails that the present weakness of Liberal Parties does not reflect the true influence of liberalism, which has inspired the Community



treaties and directed the whole European construction. The mission of the Federation is to ensure that Europe develops into a genuine achievement of democratic liberalism.

Preparation of a common programme for the European election is not an obligation according to the Federation statutes. But it became its main concern from the very start, on an ideological basis adopted at the constituent session in Stuttgart. The procedure was both open and efficient: after preparation by workings groups, a 'programme committee' including one representative per member party and chaired by Martin Bange-mann drafted a comprehensive programme which was transmitted by the Executive Committee to member parties. The draft and more than 200 amendment proposals were discussed at the Brussels Congress in November 1977. In several votes, majorities and minorities cut across national parties.

#### THE THREE TRANSNATIONAL PARTY FEDERATIONS

We have tried to sketch out some distinctive features of each of the three federations, relating them to its origins and to the type of party concerned. These features may influence further developments. But in considering the future of transnational groupings, attention must be drawn to common problems encountered by all of them. The main problems seem to be the diversity of national situations, and as a consequence the heterogeneity of parties, and the predominance of domestic considerations in the determination of party action.

*The diversity of national situations:* In each of the member countries, a fairly stable relationship exists between the electoral system, the number and dimension of parties, possible coalitions and party strategies. Moreover, the party system in a democratic country reflects the most salient cleavages of society, thus influenced by historical and cultural legacies.

Examples of the consequences of such diversity may be quoted for each family. The Socialist Confederation is the only one of the three extending to the nine member countries, all of them having known the social class cleavage.<sup>6</sup> But many

<sup>6</sup> As pointed out by D. Marquand in 'Towards a Europe of the Parties', *Political Quarterly*, Vol. 49, October–December 1978, pp. 425–45, Socialist Parties of the Community all belong unmistakably to the same family. On cleavages in European countries, useful data will be found in D. Seiler, *Les Partis Politiques en Europe*, Paris, 1978.

discrepancies between Socialist Parties are due to the split that took place in the workers' movement and to the unequal weight of the Communist group in the different countries. The EPP includes parties from only seven countries, since the British and Danish party systems were unaffected by the religious cleavage. Moreover, Christian-Democratic parties in Italy, Belgium and The Netherlands are used to a pattern of coalition with the Left, whereas the German CDU and CSU stand against the Left as an alternative, much like the Conservatives in Great Britain. The Liberal Federation has no representative in Ireland,<sup>7</sup> whereas in other member countries its affiliates have different orientations according to their situation with respect to religious or class cleavage. Moreover, its parliamentary expression will suffer as a consequence of the British electoral system: the Liberal Party Organization, which is one of the Federation's most active members, will have no representation in the European Parliament.

Alliances, which are an essential element of domestic political life and of the parties' strategy, may have an important centrifugal effect. A well known illustration is that of the controversy among Socialists about allying with Communist Parties. Alliances with Socialists is a subject of discrepancies among C-D and Liberal parties. The very notion of alliance, which is alien to their domestic traditions, makes the British parties uneasy about their European partners. Future coalitions within the European Parliament, if they are to go beyond mere *ad hoc* agreements, will create difficulties within the groupings where member parties are engaged in their own divergent home coalitions.

*The heterogeneity of member parties:* This is the most obvious problem encountered in transnational party cooperation. We think it important to point out that until now there has been no direct relation between the degree of heterogeneity of each political family and the degree of cohesion of the federation. The cohesion and integration potential appear to be related to the combination of two factors. One is the relevance and the importance that parties actually attach to their

<sup>7</sup> A new Irish party, the Community of Democrats of Ireland, has recently applied for affiliation to the ELD. The Federation's Executive Committee decided in June 1979 to postpone its acceptance for some months.



divergences. The other is the result of their benefits-costs appreciation of transnational cooperation.

As concerns *ideology*, all three federations include what may be broadly described as a 'left' and a 'right' wing. Within the EPP, the Italian, Dutch and Belgian parties stand against a bipolarization of political life and advocate the promotion of a powerful European 'popular' party, appealing to all social groups and open to cooperation with parties of the Left. The German parties, which have for some time tightened their links with the Conservatives, would rather see the Christian-Democrats adopt a firmly anti-communist and even anti-socialist line. Parallel to the creation of the EPP, existing contacts were intensified between some C-D and Conservative Parties, and they led to the creation of the European Democratic Union (EDU), which officially saw the light in Salzburg in April 1978. Two members of the EPP — the CDU and the CSU — were among the 10 founding members, the others being the British, Danish, Norwegian, Swedish and Finnish Conservative Parties, the French RPR,<sup>8</sup> the Portuguese Centro Democrático Social and the Austrian Volkspartei. Two more parties from the Nine took part as observers: the Südtiroler Volkspartei (an Italian regionalist party, member of the EPP) and the French PR (affiliated to the ELD).<sup>9</sup> Although they had been invited, the Italian DC, the French CDS and the three Benelux C-D parties refused to attend. The British Conservative Party, which was an active promoter of the EDU, sees it as a workable frame for its European activities, even more so since it was joined by parties from two other prospective members of the Community, Greece and Spain.<sup>10</sup> Compatibility of affiliation to both the EPP and the EDU will much depend on the latter's activity and on the consideration it receives in member parties' policy making. The EPP is thus obviously threatened with a split which reflects the traditional ambiguities of the C-D parties. The

<sup>8</sup> *Rassemblement pour la République*, the latest transformation of the Gaullist party under the leadership of J. Chirac.

<sup>9</sup> *Parti républicain*, majority party supporting President Giscard d'Estaing and allied at national level with the EPP party *Centre des démocrates sociaux* (CDS), though itself a member of the Liberal Federation.

<sup>10</sup> Because of the extension of the EDU beyond the present frame of the European Community we have not, as does J. Lodge ('Political Parties and Direct Elections to the European Parliament', *Contemporary Review*, Year 114, February 1979, pp. 67–73), considered it as one of four main transnational party federations.



apparent unity of the EPP and its party-political vocation seem to be due to a will to postpone certain choices, more than to a greater inner cohesion. The priority given to the construction of Europe puts the accent on a uniting element, delaying the relevance of the divergences.

In the case of the Socialist Confederation, the relevance of the subjects of discussion and the importance conferred on them by member parties are such that the benefits-costs calculation works against unity. The parties differ widely in their views over state intervention in the economy, forms of democratization of enterprises, economic choices, defence, relations with the USA, cooperation with Communist Parties, and over the European construction itself. The variety of problems, and of the answers to each of them, does not allow for a clear-cut distinction between a 'South European socialism' and a 'North European social-democracy', however tempting the simplification may be. The promotion of Europe could not serve as a catalyst for integration since party attitudes range from the anti-Market position of an important section of the Labour Party to the European activism of the German SPD. The diversity of attitudes and the attachment of each party to its ideological specificity and national strategy explain their preference for traditional methods of cooperation, leaving each party a sufficient freedom of decision. Thus while divergences are perhaps no greater than within the EPP, the choice of priorities has made them a greater obstacle. Being at the start less ambitious, the socialist organizational structure might well in the future prove to be less fragile than that of the Christian Democrats.

Although the Liberal Federation includes radical parties with centre-left options and others having more affinities with the Conservatives, it has proved the most efficient of the three groupings in an operational way. It was first in having its programme approved by a Congress, and the programme was both the most extensive and the most democratically adopted. The ability shown by the Federation to achieve closer team work is probably due to the greater freedom of member parties as regards both their base and their social organizations, and also to the fact that they usually play an auxiliary part in political life and therefore have a capacity for compromise. Thus although some member-parties were a long way apart from others, they

were able to overcome their differences fairly easily, because of the rewards expected from belonging to the Federation. There were two exceptions: the French MRG<sup>11</sup> and the Danish Radikale Venstre, which walked out of the Federation. In those two cases the costs of participation obviously exceeded the expected benefits, because of the national relevance and of the sharpness of differences between those two parties and other members.

As concerns *structures*, national parties' links with trade unions and other socio-professional organizations differ. This is particularly the case within the EPP, which as a grouping has reproduced the traditional C-D association of a party with interest and sector groups, but where parties like the French CDS and the German parties do not have established trade union affiliation.

Further problems might arise in the future for the organization of would-be European 'parties' at local level, because of the variety of local organizations according to historical and political traditions in each country. The diversity of electoral systems calls for different models of organization. Parties will not alter their system of internal relations, which have proved adequate at national level, for the sake of a common mould and run the risk of its being less efficient. In this respect, progressive transformation of European groupings into genuine political party structures might eventually be favoured by the adoption of a common electoral law for the next European election in the nine countries. Contamination of national procedures by such a European procedure would almost inevitably bring about a transformation of party organizations and lead towards greater homogeneity.

*The predominance of domestic considerations:* The absence of law-making and government-control powers in the European Parliament has led parties to take little interest in the activity of their representatives. Non-interference by party leaderships is probably one of the reasons why transnational parliamentary groups have shown a high degree of cohesion.<sup>12</sup> It may be that the increasing interest shown by parties in cooperation in the

<sup>11</sup> *Mouvement des radicaux de gauche*, which was part of the *Union de la gauche* with French Socialists and Communists until the legislative elections of March 1978.

<sup>12</sup> The Common Assembly first met in September 1952. Its members have been nominated by the national parliaments until the first direct election that took place in June, 1979. Transnational parliamentary groups have existed since June, 1953.



light of direct election has been motivated by a will to put the groups under closer control, in case of an increase in the European Parliament's powers.

But final decision-making power in the Community belongs to the Council of Ministers. Moreover, the lack of common policies in many fields leaves power in the hands of the national authorities. Thus it is obviously through the traditional national channels that parties can perform their governing function and seek to capture and exercise power. Such power-political considerations explain why parties are mostly nationally oriented, and why in the present state of the European construction their activity and willingness to collaborate with partners within the federations is very much subordinated to the rewards that may be the outcome at domestic level.

What has been the effect of the above-mentioned problems on the development of party groupings until now? Our initial observations<sup>13</sup> seem to have been confirmed both by the facts and by the conclusions of other analysts:<sup>14</sup> cooperation between heterogeneous and nationally oriented parties has produced both a 'nationalist' and an 'integrative' effect.

*The 'nationalist' effect:* Party groupings may be compared to international fora: they 'not only increase cooperation. . . , they also raise the level of national consciousness and rivalry and make any conflict sharper and more salient'.<sup>15</sup> For the sake of their grass-roots workers, members and voters, national parties take pains to make it clear that participation in the grouping does not mean an endorsement of all their fellow-parties' positions. They are anxious to stress their own specificity, especially when it places them in sharp opposition to some of their partners.

We could observe that during the campaign the Belgian PSC candidates, in answer to criticism about the association of their

<sup>13</sup> *Les groupements politiques dans la perspective de l'élection du Parlement européen, Rapport du 15 juin 1978*, pp. 124-127.

<sup>14</sup> G. Pridham, *Christian Democrats, Conservatives and transnational party cooperation in the European Community: centre-forward or centre-right?* Paper presented to the ECPR Joint Sessions, Brussels, 17-21 April 1979, workshop on Conservative Politics, p. 15; 'closer transnational links have both produced a more regular and institutionalised practice of cooperation and also occasionally intensified national points of divergence'.

<sup>15</sup> A. D. Smith, *Nationalism: A trend report and bibliography*, Paris, The Hague, Mouton & Co., Current Sociology, Vol. XXI, 1973, No. 3, p. 120.



party with the rightist CSU, asserted their own conception of the PPE as a 'third force', their refusal of bipolarization, their disapproval of the CSU orientation and their conviction that it was a minority trend within the PPE, and well kept under control. Similarly, French Socialists have been swift to deny that their association with the German SPD can be interpreted as an agreement over a social-democratic programme; and Belgian Socialists, according to reactions from the public, have denied similarity both to the SPD acceptance of a market economy and to the French lack of pragmatism. The British Liberals have pointed out the 'political bigamy'<sup>16</sup> of the French Giscardiens whom they consider as more Conservative than Liberal, and Luxembourg Liberals talk about the same PR as of a 'so-called Liberal Party'. It seems that during the election campaign, affiliation to the groupings has been at least as much a target for opponents as an electoral argument for member-parties. Parties had to hold their ground at national level, and the 'nationalistic' effect developed more than it had earlier.

*The 'integrative' effect:* Conversely, a very important consequence of the formation of groupings and of the European electoral campaign is the international dimension taken by the national parties' actions. All member parties are concerned with their partners' affairs, for the sake of the image of the whole 'family' and also in view of a common interest in the strength of their European parliamentary group. This leads to common working habits, and to some *de facto* acceptance of a certain 'right of intervention' in other parties' affairs.

The German Socialists have accepted that the principle of the *Berufsverbote* be condemned in the 'Appeal to the electorate.' The French Socialist leader F. Mitterrand went to a Labour Party meeting in Yorkshire at the end of the electoral campaign, stressed the importance of close ties between different forms of socialism and gave assurances that the Labour Party would not be isolated within the European Socialist movement.<sup>17</sup> The German CDU has given up sending H.-E. Jahn to the European Parliament after representatives from the Dutch CDA and the Belgian PSC had announced their intention not to sit in the same group as someone with an anti-semitic past. ELD parties

<sup>16</sup> J. Thorpe in *The Liberals for Europe*, 1976, p. 38.

<sup>17</sup> *Le Monde*, 7 juin 1979.

are all concerned with the electoral injustice suffered by their British partners, and they will press for the adoption of a common electoral law based on proportional representation. Liberal parties perhaps have less inclination than the C-D and the Socialists to get involved in one another's domestic concerns: most of them being dependent on more powerful partners in coalition governments, divergences in power-political orientations are less conspicuous. Parties of all three families have cooperated during the campaign, according to orientation and linguistic affinities, mostly through bilateral contacts which have undoubtedly been sponsored by common affiliation to a federation.

#### THE COMMUNIST PARTIES

Among the important European political families, the Communist is the only one which did not undertake the formation of a transnational structure linked with the election to the European Parliament. There are convergent reasons for this manifestation of autonomy by the various Communist Parties (one in each of the nine member countries).

Firstly, European unification has always been understood by Communist Parties as a politico-military undertaking, controlled by the United States, linked with NATO, and intended to prevent the development of socialism in Western Europe. Gradually, however, certain Communist Parties have become aware that European organization, product of the cold war, has become a reality if not a necessity. Today it is no longer a question of struggling against the very nature of economic integration, but rather against the forms which it has taken. Other parties, however, and in particular the British, Irish and Danish Communists, remain relentless opponents of the European Community and they struggle for the withdrawal of their respective countries. These differences have obviously created a barrier to any special links between the Communist Parties of the Nine. Moreover, even those parties which currently accept Europe do not wish to undertake actions limited to the Common Market for fear of reinforcing its existing image.

The second reason is related to the appearance of a new current in the international Communist movement, which came to the fore at the meeting of delegations of Communist Parties from 21 countries of capitalist Europe in Brussels, 26-28 January 1974. They 'expressed their determination to fight



for another Europe, a workers' Europe . . . . This struggle, as they emphasized, is an integral part of the fight for socialism, a socialism which presents general objective characteristics but which nonetheless must express itself in different forms and by different methods depending on the realities of each country'.<sup>18</sup> The opposition of an ever growing number of European Communist Parties (and also those of Japan, Mexico, etc.) to domination by the Soviet Communist Party as well as their new interest in pluralism not only in their respective national political systems but also within the Communist movement must necessarily prevent them from forming a new sub-International. The 'Eurocommunist' label, based on an affirmation of national and cultural specificities, cannot become the pretext for a new uniformity.

Finally, a third reason stems from the great diversity among the different Communist Parties in the EC countries. In two countries, France and Italy, the Communists are powerful and can claim a real political influence. Elsewhere they are only feeble contributing elements to a Left represented by Socialists or Social-Democrats. Their national responsibilities are very different and on the European level only the two most important parties have made themselves heard.<sup>19</sup> Even so, the Italians had to wait until 1969 and the French until 1973 to see their national Parliament decide to send Communist members in their delegation to the European Parliament (since the advent of direct elections, the problem can no longer exist). The European Communist parliamentary group, therefore, had neither the opportunity nor the time to play an integrating role as did the other political families. The situation was further complicated by the divergent attitudes of the two components of the group towards the construction of Europe.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> *Les Communistes Français et l'Europe*, Bulletin of the French Communists of the Assembly of European Communities, No. 1, undated (end 1977?), p. 18.

<sup>19</sup> Besides a Danish representative, the Communist seats at the European Assembly were divided into 4 French and 12 Italian seats (2 of which were Italian left-wing Independents). In 1975, the Dutch also had a Communist delegate.

<sup>20</sup> A. Spinelli, candidate for the European election on the Italian Communist Party list, made the distinction between 'the innovators who, unsatisfied with the Community as it exists, want to progress further, and the immobilists who say: the Common Market as it exists, but not a step further' (declaration made to *Le Monde*, 1 June 1979). The Italian Communists support a development of the EC. The majority of the French Communist Party is very much opposed and remains fervently attached to the idea of national independence.



This autonomy does not mean that there is no cooperation among Communist Parties of the Community. But collaboration takes particular forms, especially that of meetings which bring together all the Communist Parties of capitalist Europe. Examples have been the conference of 11–12 October 1976 on the common agricultural policy (participating countries included Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, West Germany, Greece, Great Britain, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, San Marino, Spain, Italy), or the meeting of Communist Parties from the capitalist countries of Europe on 8–9 September 1977 on the status of women (participants: Austria, Belgium, West Berlin, Cyprus, Denmark, Spain, Finland, France, Greece, Italy, Norway, West Germany, Sweden and Switzerland). Occasionally meetings are limited to the Communist Parties of the Nine when the problems are too specific (as, for instance, the conference of 18 July 1977 on the advancement of the ratification bills for direct elections to the European Assembly).

It is, however, most often in the form of bilateral meetings that collaboration takes place. These meetings give rise to joint declarations which, taken as a group, end up by giving a more or less coherent picture of 'Eurocommunist' positions (including Japan). Sometimes bilateral contacts take on a special importance. Such is the case of the meeting between the French and the Italian Communist Parties which took place on 3 May 1977. They jointly declared that it was absolutely necessary to elevate Franco-Italian relations to a higher level. They also decided upon the formation of a mixed commission whose work project is very ambitious (industrial policy, agricultural problems, teaching, disarmament, the role of multinationals, etc.). The two parties took care, however, to specify that 'the commission would not consider any discussion of ideological problems whatsoever. It goes without saying, but it is still preferable to state it: this commission can in no way be some laboratory of Eurocommunism'. Bilateral contacts between Communist Parties are not, however, always idyllic, an example being the heated controversy which pitted the French against the Spanish Party concerning the entry of Spain into the Community. The former reject Spain's entry in order to protect their farmers' interests.

A new type of bilateral transnational contact involves Communist Parties of Western Europe and certain parties qualified

as 'Socialist or Social-Democrat'; for example, the invitation extended in 1977 by the British Labour Party to the representatives of the principal Eurocommunist parties to attend the proceedings of their party Congress (the Labour Party has, in addition, created a special commission for its relations with Eurocommunism). Another example would be the recent invitation made by the Italian Communists to F. Mitterrand to attend their Party Congress, on 18 March 1977.

The Communist Parties of the Community did not formulate a common platform for the June election. None of them found this fact particularly distressing. For the Italians, the necessary conditions were lacking. For G. Marchais, 'different evaluations do not mean disunion; even more so since the European elections are not the *lutte finale*'.<sup>21</sup> For the Belgian Communist Party, it was preferable that each party determine its policy with respect to the unique characteristics of the country, while avoiding any model and not proposing itself as one.

Active cooperation between parties was thus limited to the publishing of bilateral communiqués which followed one another at an accelerated pace during the months of April and May 1979. These official communications elicited little reaction from the public or in the press. The electoral propaganda was similar only in its criticism of the so-called Socialist or Christian federations and in the publication of the most significant actions of Communist leaders in other countries.

#### THE REGIONALISTS AND THE ECOLOGISTS

As Denis de Rougemont so clearly explained, the simultaneous over-development of industrial civilization and of the nation-state has provoked during these last decades a double reaction of rejection in Europe. This reaction has taken the form either of Regionalism or of Ecologism, two movements which differ from one another in the choice of their principal concern, but which share a common goal: the progressive disappearance of the centralizing state, common barrier to regional and ecological solutions, and the coordination of interests by a flexible federalism, stimulating rather than restrictive.

The term *region* can obviously take on several different meanings: ethnic region, inter-state zone, civic participation space,

<sup>21</sup> *Le Monde*, 24 janvier 1979.



etc.<sup>22</sup> It is the first of these forms which has given rise to the most obvious expressions of Regionalism. Autonomist movements have sprung up all over Europe but they have not always produced true parties, participating in elections and demanding the exercise of political power. True parties do, however, exist. Among the most publicized are undoubtedly, in Great Britain the Scottish National Party and the Welsh party (*Plaid Cymru*), in Belgium the Flemish (*Volksunie*) and French-speaking parties (*Front Démocratique des Francophones – Rassemblement Wallon*), in Italy the autonomist party of Alto Adige (*Südtiroler Volkspartei*). But numerous regionalist movements (the Occitans, the Bretons, etc.) have not durably structured themselves into political parties, even if regional lists are presented periodically to the voters (as, for instance, the Breton *Régions-Europe* list in the election of 10 June). On the contrary, a nationalist governmental party such as Fianna Fail possesses numerous characteristics in common with the parties which have just been mentioned.<sup>23</sup>

Under these circumstances, it is obviously difficult to imagine any transnational organization involving these parties or movements, even more so since their options concerning socioeconomic matters, methods of political action, and views on European integration are extremely diversified. Despite all, contacts are made, liaison offices are organized and joint declarations are published. In this manner, during June 1977, the European Office of Nations without States gathered its members (Basques, Bretons, Alsatians, Welsh, Scottish) and declared that 'the European Parliamentary elections by universal suffrage could give rise to the creation of a Europe of Peoples'. In 1978, the Belgian *Volksunie* as well as a group of other organizations (*Partei der Deutschsprachigen Belgien*, *Fryske Nasjonale partij* (Friesland), *Union Valdôtaine* (Aosta), *Plaid Cymru* (Wales), *Convergencia Democrática de Catalunya*, *Elsass-Lothringischer Volksbund* (Alsace-Lorraine), *Europäische Föderalistische Partei*, *Jugendverband der Südtiroler Volkspartei*, *Union di Populu Corsu* (Corsica), united themselves in a Free European Alliance, and signed a Charter for a Europe

<sup>22</sup> See D. de Rougemont, 'Ecologie, régions, Europe fédérée: même avenir', *Cadmos*, Geneva, Year 2, Spring 1979, pp. 5–12.

<sup>23</sup> See D. Seiler, *op. cit.*, pp. 87 & foll.

of Peoples which represented a statement of faith in a regionalized and federal Europe, but which cannot be considered as a common political programme.

The Ecologists have even more trouble than the Regionalists structuring themselves into political parties, and yet they have regularly proposed lists to the voters for several years now. In Italy the *Partito Radicale* (PR) and in the Netherlands the *Politieke Partij Radikalen* (PPR) are true parties which propose an ecological electoral platform. In France and in West Germany, the 'Green lists' are more dispersed and vary from region to region. A certain coordination did, however, come into being for the European elections. Thus, in France the *Coordination interrégionale des mouvements écologistes* (CIME), created in July 1978, established a single electoral list called *Europe-Ecologie*; this was a direct result of the specific electoral law adopted in France for this election (one national constituency and proportional representation). Similarly, in West Germany, the *Die Grünen* list and the common ecological programme resulted from long discussions among very diversified organizations (*Bundesverband Bürgerinitiative Umweltschutz*, *Grüne Aktion Zukunft*, *Grüne Liste Umweltschutz*, etc.). In Great Britain, certain candidates presented themselves in the name of the Ecology Party. In Belgium, a Flemish list (*Agalev*) and a French-speakers' list (*Ecolo*) went in for the election.

There was some cooperation among the different movements during the campaign. Thus representatives from other countries came to demonstrate their support on the occasion of the presentation of the German programme to the press (Brussels, 5 April 1979) and at the meeting of Europe-Ecologie (St Germain-en-Laye, 21–22 April 1979). As the newspaper *Le Monde* remarked,<sup>24</sup> 'hostility to nuclear energy is the primary point of convergence between Europe-Ecologie and the other European ecological lists'. This is far too little to establish a common political programme.

The future of the Regionalists and Ecologists in the European Parliament will be precarious since they are numerically too few to form a parliamentary group. In this respect, the electoral rule of a necessary minimum of 5% of the votes which was adopted in the Federal Republic and in France played a very negative role in so far as the Ecologists are concerned. If this rule had

<sup>24</sup> 14 April 1979.



not existed, three French and two German Ecologists would have joined the three elected members of the Italian Radical Party and the two sympathisers of the Dutch party D'66 as well as an anti-European Danish Ecologist. If we add the handful of elected Regionalists, it would have been possible for these parliamentarians to benefit from the administrative assistance offered to all European parliamentary groups. The Ecologists will demonstrate at Strasbourg during the opening session of the new Assembly to protest against 'this first scandal of the European elections'.

The Regionalists and Ecologists agree, however, that their presence in the European Parliament, though it may be small, will be useful to propagate their ideas and that, when the moment comes to vote on regionalist or ecological options, they will gather the support of numerous parliamentarians who are scattered in the traditional families but who share their views on these matters.

#### CONCLUSIONS AND HYPOTHESES

The first question we tried to meet concerned the nature of existing party groupings and the chance of their being a step towards the formation of genuine parties. It seems that one of them – the Socialist Confederation – shows little signs of going beyond close cooperation of a traditional sort, while the two others have initiated a new style of cooperation with party-political vocation. But while the Socialists have no problem of affiliation and enough structural flexibility to allow for divergences, in both the EPP and the ELD uncertainties exist about affiliation. As pointed out by G. Pridham, there might be some 're-thinking of group composition and interrelationships, and nowhere is this more likely than on the Centre-Right'.<sup>25</sup> Centrifugal effects are increased by the fact that some important political forces – namely, Conservatives and Gaullists – are anxious not to remain isolated, and are looked on as a much-coveted asset by some EPP and ELD parties. It is our belief that if party groupings are to develop into political parties, a previous redistribution of forces will have taken place.

The future of party groupings and the behaviour of Communist and non-traditional parties, which was the object of our second question, are intimately linked to the activity of the new

<sup>25</sup> G. Pridham, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

European Parliament. If the Parliament centres its work on the daily activities of the Community within the present frame of the Treaties, there will be no need for more than occasional alliances towards the formation of *ad hoc* majorities. This hypothesis is the least threatening for existing groupings, it also puts little pressure on other groups to undertake the formation of a transnational structure. It does not necessitate the search for ideological majorities, and gives more opportunity to national interests to play a part in inter-party negotiations. It might lead to some sort of 'de-ideologization' of political groupings, tending towards the American party model.

If the most pro-European parties in the Parliament press for an increase in the Assembly's powers and competences, it is doubtful whether it would create a new, permanent, type of cleavage, but it would lead to difficulties within all groupings, since at least the French, British and Danish parties will not give up their national concerns for the sake of unification.

Another possibility is that the European Parliament would develop a tribune-like function which it has already exercised for some years.<sup>26</sup> This means that with the extra weight of its legitimacy after direct election, the Assembly debates whatever subject it deems important, not as some huge *Café du Commerce*, but as an elected body with a mission to react to any events and to express the aspirations and the general orientation of the European people. Such a development has been expressly contemplated by some of the new parliamentarians and would give all its significance to the nomination and election of candidates such as Jiri Pelikan.<sup>27</sup> It would bring about great ideological debates and, inevitably, a search for ideological majorities. Federations would have the greatest difficulty in preserving unity in their present composition, with minority currents in each of them looking for outside support, outside parties like Conservatives on one side and Communists on the other exerting influence for the preservation of right or left orthodoxy, non-traditional parties perhaps uniting as a regionalist-ecologist-*autogestionnaire* pole of attraction. This hypothesis would mean a radicalization of European political life.

<sup>26</sup> P. Ventujol, 'La "puissance tribunicienne" du Parlement européen', *Revue Trimestrielle de Droit européen*; Paris, Année 14, No. 3, juillet-septembre 1978, pp. 419-430.

<sup>27</sup> Czech dissident, now naturalized Italian and elected on the Socialist list in Italy.