

Socialist PARTIES



AND EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

A COMPARATIVE HISTORY

Kevin Featherstone

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FOREWORD

Europe today is confronted by new challenges as it faces the final decade of this century. The twentieth century has witnessed profound changes in the economic and political status of the continent; two tragic world wars have been followed by the emergence of two new external superpowers, dominating the destiny not only of the European peoples but also of the entire planet. Currently, the centre of economic gravity is also shifting from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

The twentieth century is distinct, however, in having witnessed a concerted attempt at uniting peacefully the peoples of Europe in order to overcome mutual economic and social problems, with the aim of political unification. The history of this uniting of Europe has been a long and gradual process, often involving the clash of different opinions and interests.

Lasting co-operation can only be built on an understanding of how different attitudes have arisen; supranational unity cannot erase the varied experiences of cultures as old as those of Europe. Increasingly, however, economic and social progress requires a common response to shared problems. In contemplating the way forward, we must understand how the present has been created: agreement between parties and peoples presupposes an empathy, as well as a will to change.

Socialists have actively participated in these debates. Yet, they are still struggling to reconcile the competing concerns of, on the one hand, the realisation that the problems ahead increasingly cannot be solved at a national level – that a supranational approach is a practical necessity – and, on the other, the deep-rooted fear that domestic interests will not be respected sufficiently or that the democratic process will not be safeguarded. When the choice has been made in favour of the supranational approach, they will have also to accept that it is only by means of supranational parliamentary action and a parallel political organisation that they can safeguard the democratic socialist influence.

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Thus, in the world of the future, Socialists and others will have increasing need of their internationalism. I would urge all those concerned with the political debate to reflect on the experiences of those who have sought to unite Europe for its mutual benefit. Whilst not necessarily endorsing all the interpretations of this book, I do share its central conclusion that supranational and international co-ordination is more, not less, relevant to future progress.

The recent past cannot be ignored, careful reflection upon it is a worthy activity. Studies like the present one are a valuable attempt to provide a guide to the part played by Socialists in the quest for peaceful and productive co-operation in Europe.

Dr Sicco L. Mansholt
President of the Commission of the
European Communities, 1972-73;
Vice-President of the EEC Commission 1958-72;
Honorary President of the Socialist International.

PREFACE

This book is a study of the socialist parties in the European Community and of how they have come to develop very different approaches to the issues of supranational integration in the post-war world. It seeks to explain why a group of political parties, professing a commitment to a cross-national ideology, have differed so sharply in their reactions to the creation of European unity.

A comparative study such as this is an ambitious task, and one fraught with dangers. Differences of culture and of history have shaped the various political contexts which have prompted the policy differences. The issues covered have often proved controversial, and the policies have been subject to both short and long term pressures, producing a dynamism of change. The policy differences between the parties have undoubtedly been the basis of many conversations between academics and party personnel, provoking different interpretations and opinions. To the researcher, the terrain is thus a forbidding one.

The issues involved in the comparison are very important ones, however, and deserve careful study. Cross-national studies are a necessary challenge to researchers in comparative politics; academic progress has need of direct comparisons which transcend the individual context. Given the scope of this book – both in terms of historical period and geographical spread – it cannot aspire to be anything other than a study of the major themes which help to explain the most relevant policy differences. Individual country experts will no doubt feel that specific material has been neglected or even lost, but it is hoped that something has been gained by the comparative framework. The aim is to consider how far cross-national factors can explain the policy differences, and the extent to which pressures unique to the individual national context have been responsible.

The present study derives, not unusually, from the author's interest in the subject-matter over a number of years. An initial

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interest in the European policy of the British Labour Party was extended to one which sought a broader scope for comparison. An attempt has been made here to avoid the confusions and emotions which have underpinned some of the controversies between supporters and opponents of European integration and which have cast their cloud over a necessary debate. Only the reader can judge the result.

The research for this book would not have been possible without the generous support of a grant from the Economic and Social Research Council (ref. no: E0023 2115). This facilitated travel to each of the ten countries covered in detail, and it provided for some necessary back-up assistance. The linguistic and research assistance provided was invaluable and the author would like to record his gratitude to those involved: Linda Archibald, Marion Guth, Miriam Pertaub, and Chris Smith (Stirling); Agi Csonka (Copenhagen); Philip Pieterse (Erasmus); and Alessandra Telmon (Rome). A debt is also owed to Dimitri Katsoudas (KPEE, Athens); Otto Schmück, Dr Beatrix Wrede-Bouvier, Helga Köhnen (Bonn); Giovanni Salimbeni (Rome); Tony Brown (Dublin); Hans Jorgen Nielson and Tove Lisa Schou (Copenhagen); and, Alex Falconer (MEP) and John Lambert for their help and advice during the fieldwork. The facilities extended to the author by various libraries were also much appreciated: particularly the Internationaal Instituut Voor Sociale Geschiedenis (Amsterdam); the National Library of Ireland and the Library of Trinity College Dublin; Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale (Rome); Bibliothek der Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung (Bonn); Institut Emile Vandervelde (Brussels); Bibliotheque Nationale and Archives de l'Etat (Luxembourg); and Arbejderbevaegelsens Bibliotek og Arkiv (Copenhagen).

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Finally, on a personal note, I would like to thank my family and friends for their help and encouragement whilst preparing this book. The book is dedicated to the memory of M.J.D., who died too soon.

Kevin Featherstone
Stirling, December 1986

ABBREVIATIONS

CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CSPEC	Confederation of the Socialist Parties of the European Community
EC	European Community
ECSC	European Coal and Steel Community
EDC	European Defence Community
EEC	European Economic Community
EFTA	European Free Trade Area
EMS	European Monetary System
EMU	Economic and Monetary Union
EP	European Parliament
EPC	European Political Community
EPC	European Political Co-operation (refers to foreign policy co-operation)
Euratom	European Atomic Energy Authority
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
OEEC	Organisation for European Economic Co-operation
WEU	Western European Union

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1 INTRODUCTION

Democratic Socialism is international because it recognises that no nation can solve all its economic and social problems in isolation. Absolute national sovereignty must be transcended. From 'The Aims and Tasks of Democratic Socialism', adopted by the Socialist International at its Frankfurt Conference of 1951.

Supranational integration has been one of the most distinctive features of the politics of Western Europe since the end of the Second World War. Indeed, during these years few other policy issues arising initially in the sphere of foreign affairs have impinged so deeply upon the domestic domain of the countries concerned and have prompted such wide-ranging changes in the political and economic life of Europe. The process of integration – that is, the participation of previously independent nation-states in schemes of co-operation involving a transfer of national sovereignty to the supranational level – has involved a variety of proposals, but its most notable feature has been the creation of the European Community (EC). Moreover, the political debate over participation in the integration process, and indeed over its objectives, has often proved controversial and novel.

The history of this process of peaceful integration has been marked however, by a varying response on the part of the Left. Whilst 'socialism' has long professed an internationalist vocation, the reality of the integration process in Western Europe has been based not on revolutionary or socialist ideals, involving an overthrow of capitalism, but rather on the foundations gradually established by bourgeois and reformist political forces. But, not only has the revolutionary Left been ostracised from the quest for unity, the non-communist Left has been divided in its reactions. In the first two decades after the end of the war, the Left was forced, by and large, to respond to the proposals initiated by others and it failed to establish a co-ordinated attempt to re-direct the process

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that had been set in motion towards its own distinctive objectives. The form of integration pursued owed more to the ideas of the Centre, and indeed of the Right, than it did of the Left.

The response of the non-communist Left – specifically the member-parties of the reformulated Socialist International – was anything but uniform. The West German SPD opposed the various attempts at integration made during the period of Schumacher's leadership, largely because of fears that they might hinder the prospects for German re-unification. Later the SPD was to become an enthusiastic participant in the institutions of the European Community. The main socialist party in Italy – the PSI – also opposed European integration until the latter half of the 1950s, as it wished Italy to adopt a neutralist stance and because it saw such unity being formed under the political hegemony of one of the two superpowers, the USA. The French Socialists in the SFIO supported European integration in the 1950s and 1960s, but the Parti Socialiste was much more critical of the existing process in the 1970s. By contrast, in the smaller Benelux states the socialist parties have been long-term supporters of the European idea, but even their support was probably more qualified than was that of their centre-right opponents at home.

The British Labour Party had received repeated calls from socialist parties on the continent urging them to support the various initiatives being made, but the party opposed participation in the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), the European Defence Community (EDC), Euratom, and, initially, the European Economic Community (EEC). The majority feared that such schemes would undermine national sovereignty, hinder the prospects for socialism, and weaken the links with the Commonwealth. In the 1973 enlargement of the EC, however, opposition was expressed not only in the British Labour Party but also in the socialist parties of the other new member-states. In Ireland, the Labour Party led the campaign against accession, but after a decisive referendum vote in favour of Community membership, the party participated fully and increasingly enthusiastically in EC institutions. In Denmark, the leaders of the Social Democrats advocated EC membership, but sizeable dissent was expressed within the party's ranks. In Norway, the Labour Government advocated EC

entry, but the electorate rejected its advice in a referendum.

The second enlargement of the Community, beginning with the accession of Greece in 1981, also highlighted a varying response on the Left. After the fall of the Colonels in 1974, the main Greek socialist party, PASOK, was at first totally opposed to Community membership, but after accession it sought to revise, rather than reject, relations with the rest of the EC. Earlier commitments to hold a referendum on the issue were replaced by an acceptance of membership by the Papandreou Government. By contrast, the socialist parties in both Portugal and Spain strongly and consistently supported accession to the Community, which came in 1986. To them participation in the EC was seen as helping to secure the democratic structure of their political systems, as a means by which the economy could be further modernised, and as a basis for establishing closer relations with the rest of Europe, after the ostracism they had experienced as a result of their periods of dictatorship.

By the mid-1980s a fragile consensus had appeared amongst the socialist parties of the EC to accept membership. The British, Danish and Greek Socialists had, by and large, dropped their opposition in principle to Community membership. The consensus was not, however, very substantial: the socialist parties of the twelve Community nations had different ideas on the kinds of policies the EC should pursue and varying attitudes to the reform of the Community's structure. The referendum held in Denmark on the reforms agreed by the December 1985 EC summit ('European Council') meeting in Luxembourg, gave a clear illustration of the differences amongst European Socialists on questions of increased supranationality. These differences continue to require observation and explanation.

The following study seeks to analyse these policy differences by examining the way in which they have developed in each of their separate national contexts. The chapters that follow are national case studies of how socialist parties – defined here, with the exception of Greece, as member-parties of the Socialist International in the countries concerned – have developed their European policies since the period before the Second World War. Separate case studies of the Portuguese and Spanish socialist parties have not

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been included, due to the fact that their debates over EC membership have been held over a much shorter period. A brief study of both parties is presented in Chapter 12. Each of the case studies begins with references to the domestic context within which each party operates; such general comments vary in length according to the presumed familiarity of foreign readers with the politics of these countries. Each chapter spans the period from the inter-war years to the mid-1980s, and focuses on the relevant socialist parties of that period. Attention is given to the years prior to the 1940s and after in order to examine the degree of continuity in policy and to account for the changes prompted by the Second World War.

Attention has been centred on the parties which were or came to be members of the Socialist International, as these have been the major actors involved on the non-communist Left. Moreover, the attention their debates on European policy have received from political scientists and historians has not so far been very extensive.¹ This is despite the fact that the differences in policy between the various socialist parties clearly requires analysis and explanation, to meet the curiosity of observers, participants and policy-makers.

The discussions follow the various stages in the history of European integration. Attention is given to general policy on Europe prior to 1939, and in particular, where appropriate, to the initiative of Aristide Briand, French Foreign Minister, made in a speech delivered to the League of Nations on 5th September 1929. Briand had been a leading socialist figure, but he was excluded from the main socialist party in 1906, and he later became increasingly identified with the centre ground. At Geneva, Briand talked vaguely of 'some kind of federal link', primarily geared to economic co-operation, but he also said that, 'from the political or social point of view, the federal link could be beneficial, without interfering with the sovereignty of any of the nations which might form part of an association of this kind.'² As a result of his speech, Briand was asked by twenty-seven nations to prepare a memorandum which was then circulated to them on 17th May 1930. The memorandum was still nothing more than a bare outline, but the lukewarm and contradictory responses of the other European states meant that the proposals were effectively dead long before Briand ceased

to be Foreign Minister in 1932. The proposals are useful, however, as a means of illuminating the nature of the attitudes towards unity that existed during this period.

With respect to the post-1945 period, the case studies focus on the initiatives which came to be associated with the names of Robert Schuman, Jean Monnet, René Pleven (each involved in the French Government), Paul-Henri Spaak (Belgium), Johan Willen Beyen, Sicco Mansholt (Netherlands), and supported by Konrad Adenauer (West Germany), Alcide De Gasperi (Italy), Joseph Bech (Luxembourg), and others. It is interesting to note that of these figures, only Spaak and Mansholt were Socialists. The discussions cover early post-war attitudes and the policies adopted during the formative years of the Marshall Plan (which led to the establishment of the OEEC in 1948); the Council of Europe (1949); NATO (1949); the European Coal and Steel Community (foreshadowed in a speech by Schuman in May 1950); the European Defence Community (for which a draft treaty was signed in March 1953, but not ratified by France); and, the European Atomic Energy Authority (Euratom) and the European Economic Community (EEC) the treaties for which were both signed in Rome in March 1957. The case studies are also concerned with the evolution of the EEC (now the 'European Community') in the 1960s (marked by the 1965-66 crisis over agriculture, which saw De Gaulle's use of the 'empty chair' policy), the 1970s (witnessing enlargement in 1973 and the recurring difficulties in establishing new policies for the future), and the 1980s (with its debates over 'European Union').³ It is said that the European Community today is at a 'turning point'; how the socialist parties react to this situation will naturally be shaped by the legacies of the past.

Clearly in the context of a comparative study such as this there are limitations on the discussions of each party and of each national context. The aim is, however, to develop a comparative analysis based on a set of common themes. The study will consider how far each party's policy has been shaped by uniquely national factors and how far by a cross-national socialist ideology. In doing so, account will be taken of the relevance of a number of themes of potential relevance; including, the extent to which policy positions can be explained by reference to left-right differences in ideology;

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the experience of government and of opposition; the influence of socialist-inclined trade unions; the policy differences within each party, including divergencies of view between elites and the mass membership; and the impact of public opinion and of political groups and parties outside the socialist orbit.

The European Community (EC) remains distinct in the world today in terms of the extent of its supranational juridical authority, the intensity of its economic and social integration, the existence of a directly-elected representative assembly, and the ambitions it holds for the future.⁴ Its institutional structure causes some confusion to its observers: it is based on the Council of Ministers (composed of a ministerial representative from each national government, which is ultimately responsible for legislative decisions in the non-budgetary sector); the Commission (a technocratic civil service responsible for policy proposals and executive implementation); the European Parliament (with 518 Members, which has been given increased budgetary powers, but remains largely an advisory body); and the Court of Justice (responsible for the interpretation of the Treaties in an autonomous legal system wherein Community law has direct applicability in the member-states). Of its other bodies, the most important is the European Council (the formal title given to the regular summit meetings of heads of government), established on a regular basis in 1974. The Commission is based in Brussels, where the Council of Ministers also meets most often. The European Parliament's plenary sessions are now held in Strasbourg, but most of its committee meetings take place in Brussels. The 'Single European Act' signed by EC governments at the end of 1985 and early 1986 revised some of these institutional relations.

The scope of this book straddles debates on a number of different topics: the nature of the socialist ideology in modern Western Europe, the relationship between socialism and the nation-state, the process by which political forces become involved in attempts at supranational integration, and the history and future prospects of the European Community. Debates over participation in the integration process have inevitably highlighted differences in the meanings attached to key concepts in these areas. Before turning to the historical concerns of the case studies, it is as well therefore