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THE EUROPEAN LEFT AND POLITICAL INTEGRATION:
A NEW STAGE IN SOCIAL DEMOCRACY?

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I. INTRODUCTION

Since 1987, when the European Community's Single European Act(SEA) went into effect mandating the creation of a single market by the end of 1992, the quantity of studies on this topic has been prolific. Exploring such issues as the motivations for the launching of 'Europe 1992,' forecasts of economic growth, inter-governmental and business elite relations, etc., these analyses have drawn attention to the simple fact that national policy-making, especially economic, is increasingly influenced by supranational inputs. At the same time, or rather for a somewhat longer period, political scientists have investigated the problematic condition of political parties in advanced industrial democracies. Under several headings - bureaucratic over parliamentary power, neo-corporatist bargaining, party programmes vs. national and international constraints, challenges from new parties and social movements, etc. - the classic linkage role of parties in contemporary representative systems has been called into question.

If we confine the latter concerns to the EC, it is striking that relatively little work has been done on the connection between the role of political parties and the development of a supranational policymaking dimension. It is even more remarkable when we realize that the two EC institutions most involved in these affairs, the Commission and Council of Ministers, are not accountable to national parliaments, much less to citizen control through elections or recall. This is what has been referred to as the EC's 'democratic deficit.' To date, efforts to overcome this 'deficit' have focused on strengthening the European Parliament (EP) relative to the Council of Ministers. Greater power for the EP, though, without effective

effect posited in neo-functionalism is introduced in the context of the increased influence that EC institutions, primarily the Commission and Council of Ministers, and policies associated with the SEA continue to generate. This is referred to as *functional spillover*. The following section builds upon this logic to explain actual behavior by presenting the argument that social democratic parties are in a sense doubly affected by increased power at the supranational level. This is because *Europe 1992* holds the potential for serious setbacks to traditional social democratic agendas, with consequences for labor and other 'social dumping' fears. Thus the diminution of national autonomy along with an agenda seemingly anti-thetical to social democracy is presented as one part of the argument suggesting transnational party development as a response. The second part takes this environmental dimension and applies it to a theory of party change. Without falling into a simplistic notion of spillover *automaticity*, it is asserted that certain problematic internal party dynamics, or pre-conditions, may be resolved by the potential opportunities provided in the altered environment. Specific evidence of increased attention and movement in the domain of transnational party co-operation is then submitted. This is complemented with a focus upon the French Socialist and German Social-Democratic Parties. The conclusion speculates on the future chances of success for the emergence of a truly European social democracy.

There are three main levels of party political activity, usually aimed at the European Parliament. They are the transnational party federations, the political groups in the EP, and the national party organizations. By far the weakest are the transnational party federations, CSPEC in the case of the Socialists. Nugent notes that the principle weakness is that they "are not involved in day-to-day political activity in an institutional setting... therefore [they] have no very clear focus and cannot develop attachments and loyalties" (Nugent, 1990, p. 124). Next are the political groups in the EP. At present, after the 1989 European elections, the Socialist Group is the largest, though short of an absolute majority. The political groups did not form outside of the EP, mobilizing to enter as historically labor parties developed. Rather, they are creatures formed within the EP. Although the groups have formed on the basis of ideological identification, national variations have prevented party group discipline from evolving as much as their national counterparts (Attiná, 1990). This raises, finally, the role of national parties at the EC level. National parties are involved in three main ways. One, selection of candidates at European elections. Second, as is often noted, European elections have been run as national elections, essentially as referenda on the governing party, and therefore with primarily domestic implications. Finally, the national party delegations in the EP groups cannot help but provide an added dimension, sometimes causing great strains. Problems do not arise "so much from the national groups having to act on specific domestic instructions...[as it] is simply that each national party group inevitably tends to have its own priorities and loyalties" (Nugent, p. 131).

if it could provide an explanation for the renewed pace of European integration culminating in the adoption and subsequent implementation of the SEA. The verdict at this time would suggest that other approaches, in particular national elite bargaining (Sandholtz & Zysman, 1989), or intergovernmental institutionalism (Moravcsik, 1991) explain the resumption. And yet the process of accelerated integration, in particular the efforts in the area of monetary union (EMU), suggest that once launched the SEA spawned a host of other complementary initiatives. Apart from streamlining decision-making in EC institutions (especially majority voting on SEA measures in the Council of Ministers), the significance of recent decisions, acting in an integration-enhancing manner (Dehousse, 1989), have rendered these institutions even more critical to the interests of member states. In addition to negotiations concerning EMU and a European central bank, the recent Gulf conflict has contributed to heightened concern for a common foreign and security policy, with France and Germany proposing the incorporation of the Western European Union into the EC. Peters (1990) also suggests that greater use of qualified majority voting in the Council of Ministers "may begin to alter the policymaking dynamics among countries. If countries run the risk of being isolated by bargaining too hard on an issue, they may become more compromising and may become more willing to accept some short-term losses to perceived national interests to avoid losing a vote publicly" (p. 6).

All of this appears to fit in with the neo-functionalist logic of *functional spillover*, in which the 'negative integration' launched by the SEA's creation of a single market, or the removal of discrimination between

functional spillover seems apparent that political elites will take notice

and act accordingly. Keohane and Hoffmann (1989) in fact advise retaining

the notion of spillover, as it is

> an important concept, but it can only be usefully employed
> within a carefully delimited shpere. Before it is used effec-
> tively in research... the conditions under which spillover can
> be expected to operate must be kept in mind. The 'theory of
> spillover' has therefore not been discredited: in the wake of an
> intergovernmental bargain based on subjective similarity and a
> common policy orientation, actors can have incentives to promote
> task expansion into new sectors in order to protect gains
> already achieved. But it remains to be seen, from empirical
> research, how much this theory will explain the institutional
> changes now being observed in the European Community. (p. 33)

Is there evidence of political spillover? Yes, as the above mention of

EMU and other initiatives attest. Also of potential significance, a recent

conference of EC National Parliaments with the EP seems to have narrowed

the chasm between the two levels. Until this meeting, 27-30 November 1990,

increased power for the EP was interpreted as a net loss for national par-

liaments, a zero-sum situation. The Final Declaration, though, recognized the

mutual enhancement of parliamentary power - supranational and national - in

a federal European Union (Agence-Europe, #1668, 8 December 90). Finally,

there is a generally expressed desire by EC social democrats for positive

integration, notably in regards to the EP. Political spillover leads us to

expect such a reorientation of attitudes, and yet, as Keohane and Hoffmann

suggest, it must be asked exactly what conditions generate such a response,

especially in light of decades of conflicting attitudes towards the EC.

After all, "...European integration, like politics in general, ultimately

depends on intentional acts by individual human beings. Integration

cannot... be reduced to anonymous processes whose inexorable 'laws' it is

a mobilizing vision. For many parties in positions of government in the
1980s, programmatic change was necessitated following policies while in
office that appeared to many to blur the distinction between Left and
Right, especially as economic policies seemed aimed at revitalizing capital
accumulation, hardly the policy prescription appealing to traditional social
democratic electorates. For the parties themselves, activists and leaders
alike not only had to integrate a pro-market stance into their programmatic
statements, but at the same time fend off challenges from new parties
stressing non-traditional left-wing issues such as ecology and decentrali-
zation. In many cases, as in France with the Parti Socialiste (PS) or in
Spain with the Spanish Socialist Workers Party (PSOE), a clear party
orientation in general policy matters was absent as Socialist governments
responded to recessionary conditions or crises in balance of payments with
austerity and industrial programs that in many cases hurt their primary
constituents, blue-collar workers.

For the parties that spent most of the 1980s in the opposition, for
instance the German Social-Democratic Party (SPD) or the British Labour
Party, party leaderships were either renewed, as in the case of the Labour
Party, or else forced by electoral rejection to review basic economic
premises. In both cases, not only did remaining social democratic shib-
boleths about nationalizations quietly depart, but more positive sounding
references toward promoting economic growth and competition crept in. By
the end of the 1980s, most major social democratic parties, in government
or in the opposition, had begun to stress the need for the Left to develop
a plan for the regeneration of national economic capacities in a very

because they believed that the country had finally entered a period of 'après-crise' when *rigueur* could be relaxed. But they were thinking of an earlier economic era... At least until a political structure is in place at the European level to match economic and financial integration, party conflict in France cannot be over substantive issues of economic policy. The liberal, deregulatory logic of... 1992...is impeccable.(pp.36-37)

How then might social democratic parties meet the challenge of redefining their contribution in the political and economic realms? The first step is in coming to terms with the European Community and the recent movement toward accelerated integration.

CONCEPTUALIZING PARTY CHANGE

Political history is littered with the memories of bygone political parties, with the disappearance of a political party seen as the ultimate failure to adapt to a changing environment. Analyses of party failure have generally focused on individual parties in national contexts. The reasons for failure are varied, from internal party factors - inept leaders, bad organization, factional splits - to external factors such as a change in the electoral laws, a new political system (as in the change from the Fourth to Fifth French Republics), etc. The ability to adapt and survive may be considered a sign of success, and yet, if success is defined as the achievement of programmatic or ideological goals, the concept of success becomes more complex.

Still, the general thrust of studies concerning party failure has been to locate the dynamics within a national context. Indeed, Wilson (1988) points to the primacy of national conditions for the decline of French parties in

liberal Right parties, especially those which represent large business interests.

Taking into account the considerations above, we can now conceptualize social democratic response and adaptation to growing supranational influence. Two assumptions are made at the outset. First, as the nature and locus of decisionmaking concerning economic and social policies continues to be influenced by the EC, party actors will react by viewing the national environment as increasingly limited and in need of a complementary level of control. Thus the effects of pressures from environmental changes on party organization will demand some response. Second, as major social democratic parties seek to resolve their dilemmas of identity, an effort will be made to target a part of the new supranational environment by the revised party ideology. In other words, as these parties revise their programmes, especially the means to their goals, EC institutions, specifically the European Parliament (EP), will be regarded as providing an opportunity for penetration and control, thus enabling continued party relevance. This control is dependent, though, on a level of transnational party development beyond any historical precedent.

These two assumptions derive from a model of party organization change elaborated by Panebianco in Political Parties: Organization & Power (1988). It is worthwhile to quote a passage that clearly sets out his thesis of change in political parties.

> The most persuasive hypothesis...is that organizational change is, in most cases, the effect of an external stimulus (environmental and/or technological) which joins forces with internal factors which were themselves undermining the power structure.... The external stimulus acts as a catalyzer accelerating power structure transformation (e.g. of resource distribution among

in the party's environment. Although... it is possible that an equilibrium might emerge over time among the various faces and actors making up a party, external changes inevitably will up-set this balance... This dynamic aggregates to the observation that parties adapt to changes in their environments. And... this adaptation should be reflected in changes in a party's organization and rules. (p. 22)

In a similar vein, Wolinetz notes that the "nature and extent of adapta-tion will also be shaped by internal party politics and the 'market' in which parties compete" (p. 119). Commenting specifically on the Kirchheimer catch-all thesis, Wolinetz suggests that by integrating different political markets (i.e., environments) with different internal pressures to explain party change, a device will be provided for "understanding the ways in which a larger range of parties have evolved, modifying emphases and posi-tions but often retaining a programmatic orientation" (p. 125). For the purposes of this article, the evidence of adaptation presented below will suffice as indications of party response. Further research is necessary to account for specific personnel and/or coalitional restructuring within the parties under discussion. Nevertheless, the model presented of party change clearly points to the dynamic interaction between environment and organiza-tion. Panebianco's attention to preconditions for transformation adds a crucial factor for understanding the hypothesized direction of social demo-cratic party change, that is, to seek in the new environment those elements which aid in the resolution of the original internal factors that were "undermining the power structure." Katz and Mair as well point out that environmental changes do not necessarily impact negatively on parties: "Sometimes environmental changes bring new pressures and challenges; other times they represent new opportunities" (p. 22).

Concern with social democratic party programmes, especially ideological underpinnings, are generated from at least two directions. First, the obvious contrast between empirical reality and the premises and policy orientation of the programme usually force modifications because of its electoral liability. Secondly, the membership of social democratic parties, especially among activists, is such that ideological concerns are taken more seriously. Hine (1986) notes that "with the rising number of white-collar and professional groups in the public sector... social democratic parties may contain a more educated, articulate and also a more ideologically-oriented membership than in the past. If so, then it is equally likely that these groups will... play a more prominent role in the grass-roots activities of the party, and ultimately in the decision-making bodies higher up, than their numbers would suggest" (p. 271). There is therefore a high probability that serious concern at party congresses and other party meetings in which such mid-level elites operate over the ideological principles of the party will be manifested. The first step then in realigning party ideology with actual practice and perceived reality should be in the revision of the party programme. I turn first to the French Socialist Party (PS) to investigate this process and the changes taken, and then to the German Social-Democratic Party (SPD). Not only has the hypothesized change become accepted party orientation, but the internal preconditions demanding resolution in this direction were also apparent.

At this point in the early-to-mid 1980s, Mitterrand's views concerning the

EC began to evolve in support of institutional reform. Concerning PS ideological

indifference to the EC (and hostility in some quarters), Haywood (1989) states

that it "would have been foolhardy for Mitterrand or his pro-European ministers

to force the pace on Euro-policy in the early days, given the divergent opinions

of the courants which made up the PS, and the PCF's opposition to the EC. Only

when the reforms proposed in the 1981 manifestos had been tried and found

wanting would the anti-Community elements in the PS be prepared to tolerate a

more openly pro-European approach" (p. 147).

Through this change in governmental personnel and the influence Mitterrand

continued to wield within the the PS, a more receptive attitude towards the EC

emerged, although at this point - 1986 - the party had more pressing matters

to attend to, as they were about to lose the legislative elections of that year.

Because of the unusual nature of the following two years of *co-habitation*,

policy initiatives and other programmatic development in the PS remained virtu-

ally frozen. The reelection of Mitterrand and the PS in 1988 opened up the

process of party renewal again, although the PS, now more than ever, found

itself bereft of a mobilizing principle in the face of the neo-liberal policies

pursued by Prime Minister Rocard. It is in this context of programmatic

confusion and heightened intra-factional dispute over direction and future

presidential candidacies, coinciding with the implementation of the SEA and

publicity surrounding *Europe 1992*, that the PS begins to search for some new

and relevant grounding of its identity.

The 1989 European election, though primarily fought as mentioned above

around national stakes, presents evidence of a re-evaluation by the PS of its

minister from 1984-86 and current president of the National Assembly. Others who identified themselves with "Europe" included the newly elected Socialist mayor of Strasbourg, Catherine Trautmann (who received a standing ovation upon introduction at the Paris rally).

By 1989 European affairs and at least more visible support for transnational party co-operation by the PS was in view. It is also significant to note that the PS had just elected a new party leader, former prime minister Pierre Mauroy, a man who sees his mission as renewing the party's ideology for the 'year 2000.' As a result of the 1989 elections, in which the Socialist Group emerged the largest, a new president of the group was elected, former French cabinet minister Jean-Pierre Cot. Cot has to date embarked upon a high profile strategy to strengthen the powers of the EP, following through as it were the PS campaign proposal. Finally, in November of 1990, the executive bureau of the PS adopted a declaration on the future of the EC, approved by all of the courants save Socialisme et Republique. Essentially the document supported the development of common social, economic and monetary policies while stressing the necessity of democratic control especially at the point at which a common currency was introduced. It called for expansion of majority voting in the Council of Ministers and co-decision and the right of initiative for the Parliament, as well as a uniform European electoral procedure. The adoption of the declaration not only was preceded by several weeks of meetings, but also by theoretical considerations of the implications for social democracy at the European level. Many of these thoughts were published in the party's November 1990 issue of its journal *La Nouvelle Revue Socialiste*. In particular, the party secretary charged with European affairs, Gerard Fuchs, called for serious reinforcement of CSPEC,

together with the SPD's worst showing in over twenty years, stimulated not only leadership criticism but a reflection over the very programme of the party. As the party's basic programme, the one adopted at Bad Godesberg in 1959 was still the repository of principles. In facing the challenge from the Greens, while trying not to alienate centrist blue-collar support, the SPD began in 1985 a review of its basic tenets.

Although a strong supporter of greater EC integration into the 1980s, European unity now began to be seen as more than an external policy and increasingly as a means for solving the economic crisis that also affected Germany. The intentions surrounding the programmatic renewal, though, were caught up in intra-factional dynamics. According to Padgett (1989), elections to the Party Executive at the 1986 conference, "moreover, revealed that in the party at large and in the middle levels of its hierarchy, the New Left was gaining ground" (p. 131). Old and New Left representatives were in place on the leadership, with Hans-Jochen Vogel becoming Party Chairman (Old Left) and Oskar Lafontaine as Vice-Chair (New Left). The question of European unity, interestingly enough, did not become a contentious issue between the two camps, as might have been expected. This assumption was based on the behavior of the new left Greens. Bulmer (1988) has suggested that a "decline in popular support for integration... [may have]... a generational element... symbolized by the questioning of values undertaken by the Greens. Their attachment to integration remains ambiguous because of their criticism of individual policies" (p. 226).

The SPD strategy of incorporating certain issues such as ecology might have diluted support for the EC, yet even after Lafontaine became chair of the programme committee, the Old Left commitment remained. Recently, in regard to

hopes of the economic return, the SPD now appears to see the stake in European decisionmaking as that much more critical. Last year, in fact, the SPD introduced legislation in the Bundestag to create a sub-committee exclusively for EC affairs.

To summarize, in the midst of electoral strategy concerns of the 1980s, when the SPD seemed most affected by electoral flux (some have called it dealignment, (Dalton, 1989)), the party faced a New Left challenge and the risk of losing centrist voters. At the same time, the economic crisis of the late 1970s and early 1980s forced a review of economic policy. With New Left ideas on qualitative and environmentally-conscious growth seemingly reflecting a shift away from the centrist position of past years, and with talk of labor-market flexibility, a commitment to EC-sparked growth with democratic control emerges as a possible alternative strategy. Thus a turn towards a determined European presence for the SPD in the context of the rest of the social democratic group appears to reflect this new programmatic orientation.

Before turning to evidence of actual change at the European level, I want to point out the PS-SPD links that have quickly developed over the past few years, no doubt accelerated by German Unification. France and Germany, by virtue of their economic and political clout, are absolutely crucial in terms of any substantive breakthroughs in EC evolution. Co-operation or common strategies by both parties to achieve the goal of a democratic European Union would be significant. The two parties are indeed deepening their mutual party-to-party relations. The SPD's research center, the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, has had an office in Paris for a number of years, recently sponsoring with its PS counter-

not occupy office. Although the Socialist EP Group does not control a majority, nor is it likely to soon, its size does mean that issue positions by the EP will be influenced by the need for coalitions. The Socialist Group is large enough and if cohesive can play a part in any significant initiative.

Since becoming President of the Socialist Group, Cot has pursued a strategy of calculated confrontation in order to advance the powers of the Parliament. The *Economist* remarked that "confrontation with the commission was the aim of the Socialist Group... The lesson [Cot]...draws is that the parliament can advance its powers only through conflict" (May 12, 1990). Recently, commenting on what he considers to be the insufficient progress toward adopting measures to strengthen the Parliament, Cot stated: "If we want to seriously attack the problem of the democratic deficit in Europe, the Intergovernmental Conference has to change course. Otherwise, the European Parliament will be regretfully obliged to reject the results of the conference, i.e. to create an institutional crisis" (Agence-Europe, #5455, 20 March 1991). The Socialist Group has therefore taken a forceful position on European parliamentary power and legitimacy.

The other area of transnational party activity experiencing change is the Confederation of Socialist Parties of the EC (CSPEC). CSPEC holds the potential to play a crucial co-ordinating role between the EP group, the national party leaderships and Social Democratic governments. It was noted earlier that transnational party federations such as CSPEC are the weakest of the party organizations operating at the European level. Since 1989, however, organizational development leading to a stronger capacity for CSPEC has begun. The February 1990 Berlin Congress of CSPEC adopted a report entitled 'Strengthening the Confederation,' drafted by the Kok (Dutch deputy prime minister)

carry out research on European policies. To date, "these initiatives and people are rarely brought together at a European level. Instead of the 'multiplying effect' of stimulating international contacts, more than often double work is being done... The work of the Confederation could be really strengthened considerably if its own networks of specialists could be created on themes under discussion. In practise, this would mean providing the necessary organizational infrastructure for a selected group" (p. 19).

Overall, the Kok report that CSPEC adopted not only suggests transnational party organizational development, but by recognizing the potential co-ordinating benefits between the EP group and national parties, the fears about the effects of the Single Market that have been expressed in a national context can now begin to consider another complementary avenue for action. Adding to the pressure to bring the national parties into a common position, the Economist reported that in December 1990 "socialist leaders met in Madrid...and agreed to a document which drags the more cautious parties towards federalism" (January 12, 1991). This was the CSPEC Party Leaders Declaration on the Inter-governmental Conferences, at that time just about to begin. The Declaration treats economic and monetary union, which it endorses - "Monetary integration and cooperation and enhanced convergence of economic policies must go hand in hand with an increase of democratic legitimacy of the Community Institutions" - and Political Union. Regarding Political Union, the Declaration called for a), "the development of European citizenship;" b), "a coherent approach to Social Policy;" and c), "a much stronger emphasis on environmental protection." To achieve these objectives, the Leaders endorsed majority voting in the Council of Ministers covering legislation "defining certain fundamental social rights...minimal stan-

recent transnational activity by the social democratic parties of the EC, the

French and Germans as well as their counterparts in the EP and CSPEC, has

commenced only at the end of the 1980s in reaction to exogeneous pressures due

to the social democratic predicament characterized fundamentally by its pro-

grammatic and policy exhaustion. Thus the European-level direction represents

an adaptation emanating from national preconditions found in many of the

nations of the EC. I would have the same evidence, modified by national cir-

cumstance, for the British Labour Party or the Italian Democratic Party of the

Left (formerly the Communist Party). The varying degrees of enthusiasm and

intensity of action is explained by the national determinants Featherstone

analyzed together with the specific nature of intra-party organizational dy-

namics, yet the general preconditions analyzed above pertain to them all.

Political spillover is then not automatic, but in the case of the social

democratic parties it appears that the time has arrived for social democracy to

return to its historic international mission. As far as further progress goes in

this direction, Keohane & Hoffmann sound an important cautionary note: "Until

the end of 1992 spillover pressures are likely to be evident in the European

Community, as the bargain of the Single European Act works itself out. What

happens afterwards will depend on the vagaries of domestic politics, the con-

tinuation of a benign external environment, and the health of the economies of

Western Europe, as well as on the individuals leading European governments, and

the Commission, at that time" (p. 44).

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