

# EUROPE IN A MULTI-POLAR WORLD

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## I

The seismic changes which have transformed Europe as a whole in the past few years cannot be understood purely in terms of developments within Europe. The fact that political union is even on the European agenda reflects deep-seated global economic and political trends as well as internal factors. At the heart of these changes has been the decline of the bi-polar system dominated by the two super-powers – the United States and the former Soviet Union. This has been accompanied by the gradual and uneven emergence of a multi-polar system based on a number of regional economic and (I will argue) increasingly political blocs. Global trends towards economic and political regionalisation are a factor in the thinking of EC political leaders. It is too soon to say definitively whether the attempt through GATT to negotiate a world-wide trade liberalisation will not succeed, but it is clear that the price of failure is likely to be an accelerated drift towards regional trade protectionism ('Fortress Europe', 'Fortress America') with all the implications this has for political and security arrangements.

As well as an emerging European bloc – structured around the European Community but likely to draw in the rest of Western Europe and many of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe – there is also an embryonic North American bloc being formed on the basis of the **US/Canada/Mexico** Free Trade Agreement. But efforts are also being made in Washington to secure the integration – on terms that are far from being agreed – of a series of Central American countries which are likely to revolve, as minor satellites, around the North American regional economy.

An East Asian or Pacific Rim region is also emerging around the economic power of Japan, and to a lesser extent the so-called Newly Industrialised Countries of East Asia including the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). However, some fundamental political issues affecting Japan's political and security role in the region have still to

be resolved before a credible and cohesive grouping similar to the EC or even the NAFTA can develop.

There are other, aspirant, regional groupings which are being formed by other semi-developed capitalist economies – sometimes (as in the case of Turkey and the Turkic speaking central Asian countries) including republics of the former Soviet Union. Similar developments are underway in Latin America (the Andean Pact and the proposed Central and Latin American common markets) and Africa (through the OAU). These, however, are essentially defensive responses to the regionalisation of the advanced capitalist economies.

A key and – as yet unresolved – question is whether the development of this new system of regional blocs during the 1990s will prove to be merely an interim stage in an evolution towards an integrated global economic and political system or whether the regional blocs will prove more durable. Moreover their emergence may be associated – at least initially – with a period of global depression, trade protectionism, and international instability which could set back rather than advance the goal of 'a new global economic order'.

In such a perspective, the international economic and trading system might come to resemble some of the features of intra-imperialist conflict which were characteristic of the pre-1914 world. There is no guarantee that such conflicts will not spill over from the economic to the political and even the military domain, although the inhibitions on unilateral or aggressive action imposed by the mere existence of international bodies such as the UN, the IMF, etc., are considerable.

This is also why the leading capitalist states are keen to establish a new International Order with international structures designed to contain conflicts and minimise instability. This may involve some strengthening of the United Nations as well as, at a regional level, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe as instruments for resolving conflicts. Either way, the present international system, which has been based on the **hegemony** of the United States, as mediated through bodies such as GATT and the International Monetary Fund, is now being eclipsed. There are distinct signs that the GATT itself, which is desperately seeking agreement on a new round of international trade liberalisation may lose authority as a result of a series of inter-regional bloc trade deals which retain elements of protectionism.

Renewed economic expansion and the undoubted opportunities represented by the opening up to western market-style capitalism of the former 'Communist' states would clearly be propitious for the evolution of these new global regions. In these circumstances, the global regions may play a key role in the restructuring of the world economic system so as to contain the frictions generated by 'intra-imperialist' competition. But the initial costs to the advanced capitalist countries arising from the transformation

of the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe – coming at a time of conjunctural global recession and possibly even depression – may simply be judged too great. It seems increasingly unlikely that 'the West' will mount the Marshall Aid scale of assistance needed by the countries of Eastern European and Commonwealth of Independent States if they are to manage a switch to parliamentary-democratic (as opposed to **Pinochet**-style) capitalism.

In the latter event political chaos, civil wars and the rise of nationalist authoritarianism in these states may fatally weaken any tendency to global economic expansion. But even in the relatively benign scenario of sustained expansion, global regionalisation will tend to marginalise further and deepen the subordination of 'Third World' poor countries particularly in Africa and very likely of large areas of Latin America.

## II

In spite of the 'triumph' of the United States in the Cold War, its economic decline has now come to the point where the Bush Administration is being forced to question its 'globalist' political and military pretensions. A major reexamination is already underway in Washington of America's capacity to sustain a world-wide military system of military bases and alliances. The decline of US economic power – as measured in part by its balance of trade and payments deficits but also by the huge and continuing federal government budget deficits – suggests that the United States will be forced to abandon much of its post-war neo-imperial role. The growing inadequacy of the domestic American wealth-producing industrial base to service the international investment, military and other commitments of the United States means that the system is now precariously dependent on the inward flow of short term financing from outside the US, most obviously from Japan.

The decline has necessarily underlined the scale of the change in power relations with some of America's major allies – notably Japan and western Europe. Having at first sought to challenge and contain that shift of power (notably by seeking to counter the growth of European demands for joint leadership with the US of the Atlantic alliance), the Bush Administration appears readier to accept and adapt to the new realities. Nowhere has this foreign policy adjustment been more brusque than in the clear switch by the Bush Administration from any lingering 'special relationship' with Britain. This has now been replaced with at least the attempt at a closer and less patronising relationship with a united Germany.

It would be quite wrong to suggest that the US has voluntarily 'given up' its leadership positions in the **global** agencies of its former economic hegemony – such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade or the Organisation for

Economic Cooperation and Development. It is trying to hold on to its dominant position ~~vis-à-vis~~ its European and Japanese allies and rivals, but increasingly fears it will fail. But the signing of the **Canadian/US** free trade agreement and the efforts in Washington to restructure a closer relationship with Mexico betoken new priorities associated with a narrower and more limited regionalism in some ways reminiscent of pre-war isolationism.

A new 'regionalist' defence doctrine now underpins the Bush Administration's commitment to the Strategic Defence Initiative. SDI and the 'magic pebbles' theory of a North American shield against nuclear attack is in the longer run incompatible with a meaningful commitment to America's global alliances, as the European member states of NATO realised with alarm when Reagan unveiled the first versions of SDI in the early 1980s. United States opinion-formers are actively debating the extent to which the US can sustain anything like its traditional commitment to NATO. This in turn is fuelling the debate about the 'transformation' of NATO in the light of the new security situation in Europe following the disintegration of the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union.

There is a widespread acceptance on both sides of the Atlantic that if NATO is to continue as an active political, let alone military alliance, it must primarily be under European rather than American leadership. However, there are divisions among the Europeans about whether this should be institutionalised within the EC or within the Western European Union, which is a half way house body between NATO and the EC. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the haemorrhaging of the economic (and ultimately political and military) power of the United States have stimulated this debate about future European security policy, more than that, the new security environment in Europe has directly led to discussions about the institutional character on a pan-European association – based on the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe – which would directly link the countries of the European Union (including almost all the states now in the European Free Trade Association (EFTA)).

There are even suggestions that, with the end of the Cold War and the emergence of new nationalist conflicts of the Yugoslav type in the former 'Communist' east, NATO may have to become a servicing agency for a collective (CSCE based) European security order. There is a parallel logic behind the creation of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council linking NATO and the former members of the Warsaw Pact. Significantly, while the active denuclearisation of the other former Soviet republics now uneasily grouped in the Commonwealth of Independent States is being pursued, the NATO states appear content to let Russia act as its nuclear Cossacks on its frontiers with Asia and the Islamic world.

Some argue that this will allow a new 'division of labour' between the United States and its west European allies in running a **military/political**

alliance which may be expected to reorient its 'threat assessment' focus from the Soviet bloc to the alleged 'threats' outside NATO's traditional European arena – notably in the Middle East and Africa. Others believe that the United Nations should be given the political authority and the military capacity to act in crises outside Europe rather than NATO or the European Community as such. In any event, the US military presence in western Europe will in the near future be a fraction of what it was during the Cold War years. The German perspective is that the new European security order should be non-nuclear but this could be reversed if the CIS breaks up into warring nationalist, and nuclear, mini states.

Working out a new partnership between the United States and the emerging European Union will not be easy. Quite apart from the issue of how the costs of such an alliance would be shared, the realities of conflicting interests in key regions of the Third World cannot be ignored. A case in point is the Middle East where the traditionally close relationship between the United States and Israel has pointed up the different priorities it has followed in the region compared with western Europe which places a higher value on its links with the conservative Arab regimes. There are, moreover, potentially serious trade and other commercial conflicts between US and West European interests in these regions which are bound to become increasingly important for foreign and security policy strategists if the early 1990s are years of recession and trade protectionism. There are also a number of political contradictions evident in the unfolding relationship between the European Community and its new client states in Eastern Europe. For although their incorporation in the European free market system is designed to be more or less total, the European Community governments are reluctant to offer the East Europeans a clear promise of eventual political membership of the EC.

### III

This reluctance is all the more striking since the European Community is embarked on a number of ambitious projects which – if they are successful – will bring it much closer to becoming a supra-national quasi-federal European state. This will not only involve the completion in 1993 of the barrier- and frontier-free internal EC market but also the parallel **realisation** of economic and monetary union including – towards the end of the decade – a single currency with all that this implies for control of monetary and even fiscal policy.

Moreover the majority of EC states – whatever the reservations of the British – want to go even further and lay the basis for a political union. In plain language this will lay the basis for a supra-national federal European state which would assume responsibility from national states for a growing range of key political issues including aspects of foreign policy and

defence. This was the overriding – if unfulfilled – objective of many EC leaders at Maastricht.

It should not be thought that the advocates of federalism are bent on the creation of a 'nightmare of a centralist Euro-super state', as Thatcher has alleged. The process envisaged is rather more complex and would involve not only the retention of national states for a range of functions but also encouragement to disperse governmental functions 'down' to regional and other bodies with which the EC institutions would have greater direct contact.

Due for the most part to obdurate opposition from the British Tory government to anything smacking of supra-nationalism and particularly to proposals to extend the role of the European Parliament, the EC remains a clumsy instrument of mainly inter-governmental power. By no stretch of the imagination can it be described as a federal state.

Power – it is true – is being centralised in key areas – including foreign, security and (implicitly) defence policy as well as control of frontiers, and police and legal 'cooperation'. But the increased decision-making authority of the Twelve is, for the most part, to take place outside of the institutions and jurisdiction of the Rome Treaty. To that extent the new centralising powers of the Twelve will not be subject to any effective democratic European, let alone national, parliamentary control.

This said, however, the longer term direction now being taken by European integration is unmistakably towards some form of supra-national federalism. The rearguard action fought by John Major at Maastricht is likely to do no more than delay the emergence of something resembling a United States of Europe by the end of the decade.

Already the signposts are being erected for the next moves to a more federal-style European Union. The process seems certain to embrace not only the existing twelve EC member states but a growing number of other western and even some eastern European countries as well. By the end of the 1990s, there may well be an embryo federal European government (developed probably out of a hybrid mixture of the present EC Commission and the Council of Ministers which legislates for the member states.)

The new executive will in some (as yet very uncertain) way become more fully accountable to the directly elected European Parliament. The emerging European Union could, by the end of the century, expand to include as many as thirty countries.

A majority of EC governments – led by Germany – favours a relatively decentralised form of federation. In part, this no more than reflects the specific historical experience of Germany (whose own decentralised, power-checking constitution was largely imposed on it by the victorious allies after the war against Hitler) but it also reflects the growing political influence of regional power structures in Belgium, Italy, Spain and elsewhere.

Its advocates insist that such a federal-style constitution would not only set a limit to the eventual transfer of sovereignty and political authority to the European Community institutions but would also tend to shift political decision-making below the level of the 'nation state'. The trend throughout the EC states – with a few exceptions – is already towards regionalisation.

In some cases, such as the 'United Kingdom', the phrase 'nation state' is in any case a misnomer since the state – reflecting its imperial formation – is itself multi-national. That is one reason why defeat of a Tory government, the creation of a Scottish assembly and new regional bodies elsewhere in the UK and moves to deeper European political union could interact explosively during the 1990s.

There is nothing inevitable about any of this and it is conceivable that the trend to a European federal union could be reversed and that there could even be a creeping economic and political re-Balkanisation of western Europe. The recent advance of the extreme right wing, above all in France, but to a lesser extent in Germany and Belgium, does also pose a potential threat to the pro-European integrationist centre-right christian democrat 1 social democrat establishment in western Europe.

European capital, however, appears overwhelmingly in favour of the key provisions of European economic and political union. This is hardly surprising since the agenda of economic and monetary union is in **large** measure the consequence of the European internal market and the Single **European Act** of 1986.

**The** European frontier and barrier-free market represents the key strategic objectives of the major formations of capital in Western Europe which have long been convinced that only with a home market of several hundred million consumers can they hope to withstand the global challenge of American and – in particular – of Japanese capital. Equally important, most sectors of European capital want to see the development of some embryo European state. This is in part to act as protector and advocate of its interests in an unstable international environment and in a world economy where commercial conflicts are on the increase. There is a near universal view that even the larger national states lack the power and resources to play this role effectively in future.

However neither the European Union nor even the single market represents the unalloyed interests and priorities of capital. There are deep divisions between different sectors of capital about the balance which should be struck between global trade liberalisation and a greater or less degree of industrial protection. The motor and electronics industries are – for instance – increasingly advocates of European protectionism while the chemical and financial sectors are resolutely in favour of global free trade. It is far from clear where the balance between free trade and advocates of a protected 'Fortress Europe' will lie if the 1990s are years of stagnation or even depression.

The European Union process has also had to take into account the corporatist and social policy commitments of the dominant political formations of both Social and Christian Democracy. These parties are insistent – for example – that the emerging European political union must have appeal to working people (in large measure their electorates) through a mix of policies to appeal to consumers, workers and 'citizens'. Some of these proposals are contained in the controversial EC Social Charter of Workers' Rights which has aroused so much bitter opposition from the British Tory government.

This reflects no more than the existing balance of class and political forces between the right and organised labour (whether social democrat, christian democrat or Communist-led trade unions) in the majority of the EC countries. The great exception is of course Britain where the defeats imposed on organised labour and the left under twelve years of **Thatcherism** have had the result that the **Christian/Social** Democrat consensus on minimal social rights for organised workers and the EC Social Charter as a whole can appear in some way 'radical' or – in the words of Margaret Thatcher herself 'socialism by the back-Dehors'.

The federalist case gives major emphasis to the need to extend the role and political authority of the directly elected European Parliament. Under the European Union treaty agreed in Maastricht, the European Parliament has secured only minimal and largely negative powers over EC legislation. But there is growing pressure particularly in Germany for the further extension of law-making powers to the European Parliament in an early 'review' of the Maastricht treaty. Ultimately the Commission and the Council of Ministers would be subject to greater control and the European Parliament would be given a greater degree of joint legislative powers with the Council.

The majority of EC governments believe the future Presidents of the Commission – which is the day to day EC executive – should be appointed by the European Parliament rather than national states and that the President should select the other Commission members in consultation with national governments. More important, the majority also believe that unlike the situation today, no law should be passed by the Council of Ministers (which is the de facto legislative power at present) in the face of a majority vote by members of the Parliament.

The British government argues that in the interests of democratic accountability and national 'sovereignty', control over EC decision makers should be exercised by national Parliaments. But under the treaties of accession which all countries signed on acceding to the Community, national Parliaments long ago lost the right to amend or reject decisions of the Council of Ministers. It is therefore the merest demagoguery to claim that Westminster (or other national Parliaments) are threatened by the move to give more power to the European Parliament. It is the Council, especially

now that it takes more and more decisions by majority vote, which is truly unaccountable to anyone and which is most threatened by moves to strengthen the European Parliament.

#### IV

With this highly delicate process underway, some EC states appear fearful that any enlargement of the Community would risk complicating or even blocking the whole process of European Community economic and political union. But with the collapse first of the Berlin Wall and then of the Soviet Union, the view has gained ground that both enlargement and moves to federal union are not only compatible but necessary. Some governments, hitherto sceptical of political union, now see it as the best framework for the longer term containment of the economic and political might of a united Germany.

The (now virtually impossible) exclusion of EFTA countries from political membership of the EC to say nothing of the East Europeans would not prevent their being drawn ever closer into the all-enveloping dynamic of the EC single European market. But it would mean that even the relatively privileged 'EFTANS' would be little more than politically neutered client states of the EC powers while the struggling east European economies could end up as the de facto economic satrapies of the European community.

In Eastern Europe, the Czechoslovak government in particular has made it quite plain that it will not be satisfied with mere economic association with the EC and will want to be guaranteed full membership – albeit after an undetermined period of transition. And several EFTA states may soon follow Austria and Sweden's lead and make an all-out bid for full EC membership. The Hungarians and the Poles will not want to be left behind by the Czechs – although the government in Warsaw is under no illusion about the desperate state of its economy and the possible social and political upheavals which may be triggered by its Chicago school style transition to fully market systems. In the civil war ruins of the former Yugoslav state, the Slovenes and Croats are already flirting with the idea of direct links with the EC.

The odds are, therefore, that by the middle of this decade the pressure for an enlargement of the EC to fifteen or even twenty or more member states may become irresistible and this could grow to thirty or more by the end of the decade. The consequences of such a radical shift in the economic and political gravity of the EC could be significant. It would, for instance, increase the relative weight of social democratic and left of centre governments within the Community political institutions and would also involve the integration of avowedly neutral states at a time when the

fundamental direction of Europe's future foreign and security policies will be under debate.

For the left in the European Community, this perspective raises problems and opportunities, while it is not the job of the left to advocate EC membership to the East Europeans (or anyone else), it is the job of the left to defend their right to be members of the Community whether or not their foreign and security policies conflict with the NATO ideologues and whether or not they are paragons of free market virtue in the eyes of the West European establishments.

But quite apart from some concern that an enlarged Community might imperil the existing strategy of the present EC states for closer economic and political integration, other political factors are also in play. A significant section of the Eurocracy – and more importantly of EC national governments – are apprehensive that the accession of countries such as Sweden (even after the defeat of the Social Democrats), Austria and Norway with their traditional commitments to a strong welfare state and ambitious environment protection policies would push the EC as a whole away from free market economic priorities. The emergence of the CSCE as a pan-European security agency would also make the accession of 'neutrals' into the EC less problematic.

We are then facing the likelihood (though not the certainty) of a 'United States of Europe' emerging from the process of European union within the EC and linking a growing number of other East and West European states. These states will be economically bound by the 'single' European capitalist market but they will also have to cede to the European Union a wide range of powers over policies hitherto the prerogative of the national states and of broader alliances such as NATO.

This emerging European state is lending urgency to the demands for some greater system of democratic political accountability by the EC institutions. This demand takes two forms. In countries such as Britain (though very little elsewhere) it focuses on the need for the British state and/or the Parliament at Westminster to exercise greater surveillance and control over decision-making in Brussels.

The trouble with this is that first the treaties of accession, under which the EC member states signed the Rome Treaty as the Community's constitutional doctrine, and then with the Single European Act of **1987**, have enormously reduced the scope of national governments and national Parliaments. Only within a perspective of breaking from the EC and – therefore – challenging the economic integration which has driven the Community – does it make sense to seek to restore some role to purely national Parliaments since the accountability of individual governments to such assemblies is undermined by the fact that the Council, collectively, takes more and more decisions on a majority vote basis.

The only alternative – supported with **greater** or lesser enthusiasm in most other EC countries – is to make the directly elected European

Parliament the main law-making body in the Community. This would also involve the existing executives (both the Commission and the Council of Ministers) being fully and directly accountable to the European Parliament.

However important it is to fight for the extension and radicalisation of democracy within the actual EC institutions, the left must also confront the need for a Europeanisation of the politics and organisations of labour and of the new social 'green' and other allied movements. To date, labour movements have been slow to recognise, let alone respond to, the new realities of integrated EC economies, trans-national companies, the Europeanisation of hours, working conditions, collective bargaining and increasingly of elements of social and labour laws.

The new social movements – notably women, the green movement and the peace movement – have been significantly quicker to see what is happening and to begin to respond on a transnational, European basis. However, until very recently the political left has also been reluctant to come to terms with the enormous implications for both theory and strategy of what is happening in Europe. In a number of countries, modest but significant space has begun to open up for independent 'green/left' socialist movements, both as a consequence of the implosion of Stalinism and the de facto shift to the right by orthodox social democratic labour parties. This is true of Denmark and Holland and in different ways of Belgium, Italy and for a period of Germany.

The construction of a programme (or series of programmes) for the European **green/left** and – more generally for the labour movement – in alliance with the new social movements in both western and eastern Europe is an urgent priority. Ironically, socialists bring to this task a wealth of initiatives and innovatory ideas which can help construct a 'prefigurative' socialist project with real imagination and mass appeal even during the past decade and more of reaction and defeats.

The issue of democracy will have to be at its heart – democracy at the level of the regional, national and European state but also democracy in the workplace and in the community. It should go without saying that the demand for popular control over the process of European integration should encompass but in no way be restricted by the European Community institutions. On the one hand the left cannot afford to adopt an **abstentionist** position on the issues raised by the European Parliament's demands for far greater control over the Commission (and even more important) the Council of Ministers. At present the Twelve are involved in building a bourgeois state without bourgeois democracy and many areas of **decision-making** are deliberately kept secret.

Nowhere is this more blatant than in the proliferating inter-governmental bodies – legally not a formal part of the EC institutions or the Rome Treaty – involved with drawing up arrangements for the free

movement of peoples within the 1992 single market. Not only is this freedom likely to be restricted in the name of state action against transnational crime and terrorism but there are grave dangers that the already illiberal rules applying to immigrants and those seeking political asylum from outside the Community will face a de facto white, ethno-centric Fortress Europe regime.

Security and defence policy also escapes direct democratic scrutiny at present and must be brought within the scope of the European Parliament. But the Commissioners individually as well as collectively should be elected by **MEPs** and not appointed by an indirect and unaccountable process of political office-jobbing.

But the question of democratic accountability is also posed in relation to any new institutions created out of the CSCE, or the Council of Europe, for the putative pan-European confederation. Notably, just before its demise, the Soviet Union, among others, went so far as to propose eventually giving such a body some limited supra-national decision-making powers – for instance in setting higher mandatory trans-national standards of environment protection.

It is against this background of accelerating European integration that the left will also have to review its wider strategy for the labour movement and for socialist politics. In the past 'national' strategies occupied the centre ground of socialist politics with international, including European objectives, at best a side issue. This will have to change fundamentally. Over this decade, the struggle for power will – increasingly – have a European rather than a national focus. In the immediate future, it will be vital for the left to think through its programme of demands and strategic objectives which will – in growing measure – be aimed at the institutions of the emerging European state.

Quite apart from the issues posed by European unification and integration, the single market process makes the development not merely of trans-national collective bargaining long overdue but also the emergence of trans-national unions. This question has been posed most sharply by those trade unionists – notably in the engineering and metal working industries – who have had most practical involvement in a coordinated European strategy to reduce working hours. Even some of the more conservative sections of the trade union bureaucracy – such as the Engineering Union leadership in Britain – now appear to accept the need to move to de facto European trade union and European wide bargaining. The underdevelopment of rank and file (including combine committee) organisation is a pressing problem for the trade union left.

Alongside this there is a need to develop prefigurative policies covering such questions as environmentally and socially sustainable forms of economic growth, transnational democratic planning, new forms of European public ownership, conversion from arms production, the encouragement

of worker cooperatives, the development of the economy of social caring and innovative applications of human centred technologies. As a reaction sets in against the prevailing free market economic liberalism of the 1980s, and as the pressures from protracted recession intensify, it will be essential for the left to begin to articulate a supra-national socialist economic strategy which can both inform specific transitional demands on social democratic and reformist governments and provide the foundations for a European socialist economic alternative.

Such a programme will run completely counter to the rigidly free market and deflationary bias of the present proposals for economic and monetary union. The left must also champion the demand to make the proposed European Central Bank and the Council of Ministers fully accountable to the European Parliament. The alternative economic strategy advanced by the left can have no truck with specious nationalist options such as devaluation or national economic protectionism. The only effective opposition to a reactionary EMU will be the emergence of an effective trans-frontier and supra-national campaign for growth, jobs and higher living standards. This must also include some concept of protected economic zones where the economically less advanced national and regional economies can be safeguarded against distorted developments imposed by the unrestricted impact through the international market of the more advanced capitalist economies. This will be of particular relevance to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the republics of the CIS.

The left has a wealth of experience, ideas and analyses developed and even tested in the hard laboratory of real life during the past decade and more of reaction. There is political space opening up for a credible European left which combined the best of the socialist – including the **marxist** tradition – with the radical impulses from the green and **nationalist/regionalist** movements as well as feminism and the other new social movements.

The past few years has seen the emergence of such a new **green/left**. It received much **inspiration** from the establishment and subsequent development of the **West German Green party**, notwithstanding **that party's** bitter internal division over the relationship of socialist politics to environmental priorities. The recent general election in **Holland** brought modest but significant gains for the Green Socialist Left party (although not 'orthodox greens'). And parallel movements, with rather different origins, notably the Norwegian Left Socialists and the Danish Peoples' Socialists have also made impressive advances in the past few years to the left of the social democratic parties.

This embryo West European left, with which the Socialist Society and the Socialist Movement in Britain seek closer relations, has also established links with new left parties and groups in Eastern Europe. These include the Polish Socialist Party (Democratic Revolution) and those

Russian socialists organised around the ideas of Boris Yagarlitsky. Discussions between **green/socialists** and independent left organisations are taking place in more than a dozen West and East European countries about the political basis for cooperation and joint action.

The failed models of Stalinism and Thatcherite free market capitalism and the superficial platitudes of much social democratic politics creates openings and also dangers. If the left does not organise to respond to the challenges of capitalism at the hour of European union, then the resulting vacuum may be filled by the re-emerging forces of right wing – even fascist – populism of the kind being developed by Le Pen in France and by even more openly neo-nazi tendencies elsewhere.

This is one reason why the left must resist incorporation in a new 'Europeanist' project which merely provides a progressive sounding rhetoric for a protectionist, white, ethnocentric and objectively intolerant, racist and repressive European Union. A more immediate danger for the left particularly in countries such as Britain remains incorporation into nationalist currents opposing European integration in the name of 'sovereignty' or even 'parliamentary democracy'.

Unless the new Europe is part of the world-wide movement for human liberation, it will remain part of the problem and not part of the solution of the crisis of modern society. The contribution which a socialist Europe could make to global emancipation is enormous. This should be the source of our inspiration and hope for the challenges ahead.