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**The British Labour Party in the First Elective Legislature of the  
European Parliament (1979-1984)**

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ANNO ACCADEMICO

2014-2015

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## Summary

The objective of this work is to assess the behaviour of the British Labour Party Members of the first elective European Parliament (1979-1984), in order to understand how did they manage the conflictual relationship between national identity and membership of the EP Socialist Group. To achieve this goal, we will refer to two independent variables: the first is the political distance that developed between Labour and Conservatives in that period, which hindered the possibility to stably make common front in Europe, while the second one is the cleavage separating Labour from the Confederation of the Socialist Parties of the European Community (CSPEC). Our hypothesis is that put in the middle between their fellow socialists and compatriots, Labour MEPs chose to not side permanently neither with the Conservatives nor with the other socialists. In voting resolutions related to the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), to the Community budget and to the area of defence, security and political cooperation, Labour MEPs were at least in principle loyal to the Socialist Group. However, when an important national interest was at stake, they were also able to assume an independent position, either acting alone or aligning with the Conservatives for defending a common purpose.

Our methodological approach will be mixed-methods research. In short, mixed-methods research consists in employing both quantitative and qualitative analysis tools in the same study. We will start from qualitative analysis and then use quantitative. Philosophically, our methodological choice is based on the Pragmatic paradigm, which authorizes us to gather all the possible data – regardless of their typology – in order to best answer the initial research question. The whole investigation will be framed into the Rational Choice Theory.

After a more accurate explanation of our methodological and theoretical assumptions, we will examine the main features of the Labour and Conservative parties during the historical period we are interested in, with a particular focus on their European attitude. Then, we will scrutinize their respective positions on the CAP, on the issue of the Community budget and in the field of security, defence and political cooperation. In the second chapter, we will present the CSPEC, emphasizing its relations with the Labour Party and the European Socialists' attitude towards the three policy areas of our interest. The last part will begin with an overview of the main features of the first elected European Parliament, followed by the analysis of a number of roll-call votes regarding the three subjects. This quantitative analysis – complemented by a more accurate analysis of the texts of some particularly relevant resolutions among those we selected – will provide ultimate evidence of our hypothesis.

# Introduction

## *I. Britain and the first direct elections to the European Parliament*

The first direct elections to the European Parliament (EP) represented a moment of extraordinary importance in the recent history of our continent. Less than thirty years after the signing of the Treaty of Paris (1951) that instituted the European Coal and Steel Community, the European Economic Community was ready to provide itself with a democratically elected parliament, on the model of its nine member states. The Treaty of Rome already provided for the organization of universal suffrage elections regulated by a single set of rules, attributing to the same Assembly the responsibility to present proposals in that sense (1957)<sup>1</sup>.

Nevertheless, we had to wait until the 1974 Paris summit of the heads of state and government to see actual pronouncements on the EP elections. The summit gave a significant input to the development of both the supranational and the intergovernmental side of the integration: on the one hand it was established to institutionalize the meetings between heads of state and government, creating the European Council; on the other hand, the conclusive document of the meeting underlined the necessity to achieve European elections as early as possible<sup>2</sup>. At that time, the EEC was a small but heterogeneous group of states, localized in the geographical space between the two super-powers. The six founding members – France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands – constituted the hard-core of the Community. The first enlargement, in 1973, brought into the young EEC three other members, Denmark, Ireland and – perhaps most importantly – the United Kingdom. The object of our research will precisely be Britain, whose relationship with the European institutions has never been as positive as that of most of the other member states. As argued by Ulrich Grudinski in an article written less than two weeks before the elections, the majority of the British people judged Britain's European commitments “*as being in conflict with its ancient insular need for protection*”<sup>3</sup>. Britain was the last member state ratifying the 1976 Council of Ministers' Act establishing European elections. Furthermore, the United Kingdom decided to designate its MEPs through its usual first-past-the-post electoral system,

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<sup>1</sup> EUROPEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY, *Trattato che istituisce la Comunità Economica Europea*, Rome, 25 March 1957, 11957E/TXT, p. 324.

<sup>2</sup> SWEENEY, Jane P., *The First European Elections: Neo-Functionalism and the European Parliament*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1984, p. 80.

<sup>3</sup> GRUDINSKI, Ulrich, “More influence for Britain in Europe”, website of the “Centre Virtuel de la Connaissance sur l'Europe” (CVCE), 27 August 2013, [http://www.cvce.eu/obj/more\\_influence\\_for\\_britain\\_in\\_europe\\_from\\_the\\_frankfurter\\_allgemeine\\_zeitung\\_28\\_may\\_1979-en-171e462c-ce04-42b0-aeb8-b5f3132f632d.html](http://www.cvce.eu/obj/more_influence_for_britain_in_europe_from_the_frankfurter_allgemeine_zeitung_28_may_1979-en-171e462c-ce04-42b0-aeb8-b5f3132f632d.html), (page consulted on the 28th of March 2015), p. 2.

although the British European deputies would have been eighty-one, far less than those habitually elected at the Commons. Consequently, it was necessary to create *ad hoc* districts for European elections, a long process that delayed by one year the already scheduled electoral round. Eventually, the first European Parliament was elected between the 7<sup>th</sup> and the 10<sup>th</sup> of June 1979<sup>4</sup>.

The question at the basis of this study regards the Labour Party, which had ruled Britain up to the month before the first European elections. In the period between 1964 and 1979, Labour had been in office for eleven years out of fifteen. In May 1979, Margaret Thatcher won her first national elections. The “Iron Lady” will remain Prime Minister for eleven years and Conservatives will hold office for eighteen years in a row. Mrs Thatcher has undoubtedly been one of the most controversial political leaders in British history. Due to her anti-socialist and pro-capitalist orientations, Labour violently criticized her at home. Between the 1970s and the 1980s, as we will see more in detail in the next chapter, the points of view of the two parties vis-à-vis several important European issues were quite similar. However, their reform proposals were very different and, above all, their respective approaches to the general European question were almost opposite. While Conservatives after the elections decided to create an autonomous political group within the European Parliament, the European Democratic Group, Labour – that was already a member of the supranational Confederation of the Socialist Parties of the European Community (CSPEC) – chose to join the transnational Socialist Group, the most numerous of all. Between the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, the Labour Party experienced a very sharp political radicalization. Under the leadership of Michael Foot and Tony Benn, the party – although remaining a faithful supporter of parliamentary democracy – assumed a radical left-wing political orientation.

The aim of the research is to analyse the way in which the British Labour members of the first elected European Parliament managed the complex relationship between national identity and membership of the Socialist Group in a political and historical conjuncture marked on the one hand by a political incompatibility with their Conservative compatriots and on the other hand by a profound cleavage separating the Labour Party from the rest of the European socialist movement. In our opinion, the value of this study lies in the objective to explain the behaviour of a group of MEPs that had to work in a situation very difficult to handle. In the EP, the Labour MEPs were on the one hand willing to defend their own national priorities and on the other hand members of the Socialist Group, even though the relationships between

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<sup>4</sup> SWEENEY, Jane P., *op.cit.*, pp. 80-81.

their own party and the Confederation were anything but positive.

To explain our dependent variable, that is the behaviour of the Labour Party MEPs during the first elective legislature of the EP, we will refer to two independent variables. The first one is the deep cleavage existing between the two British political parties at that time. The radical socialist stance and the anti-EEC posture assumed by Labour were incompatible with the Conservative pro-European attitude and with Thatcher's free-market ideology. The second explanatory factor is the political distance separating Labour from the CSPEC, mainly due to Labour nationalism and anti-Europeanism.

Our hypothesis is that even if Labour MEPs chose to not side permanently neither with the Conservatives, given the irreconcilability of their political positions at that time, nor with the other European socialists, due to the nationalist and anti-EEC stance embraced by Labour in that historical conjuncture, they remained in principle loyal to the EP Socialist Group, with which they shared a common ideological patrimony and several policy objectives. However, when the issue at stake was considered as particularly significant for the defence of British interests, they were ready to depart from the official group position in order to fulfil their national priorities and – if necessary – to make provisional alliances with the Tories.

## ***II. Employing quantitative and qualitative data in the same research: the Mixed Methods Research and the Pragmatic paradigm***

In order to investigate the way in which the first elected Labour Party MEPs managed the complex relationship between their national and political belongings during their experience in the first elected European Parliament, we have chosen to adopt mixed-methods research as a methodological approach. Mixed-methods research consists in employing both quantitative and qualitative analysis tools in the same study. According to Burke Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, mixed-methods research is *“the class of research where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or languages into a single study”*<sup>5</sup>. From a philosophical point of view, we are going to put our research under the Pragmatic paradigm. Assuming a pragmatic worldview means focusing in a prominent way on the research question and on the best possible instruments to be utilized in order to develop a satisfactory answer<sup>6</sup>. As argued by Creswell and Plano Clark, *“the focus is on the consequences of research, on the primary importance of the question*

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<sup>5</sup> BURKE JOHNSON, Robert & ONWUEGBUZIE, Anthony J., “Mixed Methods Research: A Research Paradigm Whose Time Has Come”, *Educational Researcher*, 2004, vol. 33, n° 7, p. 17.

<sup>6</sup> CRESWELL, John W., & PLANO CLARK, Vicki L., *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research*, Thousand Oaks, SAGE publications, 2011, pp. 41-43.

*asked rather than the methods, and on the use of multiple methods of data collection to inform the problems under study*"<sup>7</sup>. Our idea is to embrace a form of methodological pluralism, whose aim is to *"re-frame the concept of research in the social and behavioural sciences by de-emphasizing the terms quantitative and qualitative research and, instead, subdividing research into exploratory and confirmatory methods"*<sup>8</sup>. In our case, the exploratory phase will be carried out through qualitative analysis, while quantitative tools will be employed to confirm the qualitative findings. To sum up, mixed-methods research is on the one hand a methodological approach, that justifies through Pragmatism the mixing of quantitative and qualitative data within the same inquiry, and on the other hand a method<sup>9</sup>. A method can be defined as *"a procedure used to gather, analyse and interpret the data"*<sup>10</sup>.

However, our decision to put together quantitative and qualitative approaches can be affected by some methodological and epistemological problems. The most important one is the incompatibility thesis, according to which *"qualitative and quantitative research paradigms, including their associated methods, cannot and should not be mixed"*<sup>11</sup>. The incompatibility thesis comes from the underlying conflict between the assumptions at the basis of the two approaches: quantitative methods are inherently positivistic, whereas the qualitative ones are traditionally labelled as interpretivist<sup>12</sup>. This dichotomy resides in the very nature of the two research methodologies and is a consequence of their almost opposite ontological and epistemological views<sup>13</sup>. As argued by Denzin and Lincoln *"Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry. In contrast, quantitative studies emphasize the measurement and analysis of causal relationships between variables, not processes"*<sup>14</sup>. Nevertheless, in our view – which is supported for example by Bryman<sup>15</sup> – there might be a relation of complementarity between quantitative and qualitative approaches, in the sense that the results produced by the former can be clarified by those coming from the latter and vice versa.

This study will proceed as follows: first, we will carry out the qualitative phase – based on the

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>8</sup> ONWUEGBUZIE, Anthony J. & LEECH, Nancy L., "On Becoming a Pragmatic Researcher: The Importance of Combining Quantitative and Qualitative Research Methodologies", *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 2005, vol. 8, n°5, p. 382.

<sup>9</sup> CRESWELL, J. W., "Controversies in Mixed Methods Research" in Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S., *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Thousand Oaks, Sage Publications, 2011, p. 271.

<sup>10</sup> CRESWELL, John W., & PLANO CLARK, Vicki L., *op.cit.*, p. 38.

<sup>11</sup> BURKE JOHNSON, Robert & ONWUEGBUZIE, Anthony J., *loc.cit.*, p.14.

<sup>12</sup> ONWUEGBUZIE, Anthony J. & LEECH, Nancy L., *loc.cit.*, p. 375.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 376-377.

<sup>14</sup> DENZIN, Norman K. & LINCOLN, Yvonna S., *loc.cit.*, p.17.

<sup>15</sup> BRYMAN, Alan, "Integrating quantitative and qualitative research: how is it done?", *Qualitative Research*, 2006, vol. 6, n°1, p. 105.

analysis of party documents, manifestos, newspaper articles and academic sources – and then the quantitative one, in which we will present numerical data concerning the number of times in which Labour Party MEPs voted with their fellow socialists, voted alone or sided with the Tories during the first elective legislature of the European Parliament. However, the quantitative analysis will be complemented by the analysis of the texts of some particularly relevant resolutions related to the Common Agricultural Policy, to the issue of the Community budget and to the area of defence, security and political cooperation, in order to provide a deeper understanding of the reasons why Labour MEPs chose to approve or to reject them.

### ***III. The Rational Choice Theory***

Rational Choice will be the theoretical framework we will use to orient our mixed-methods research. According to Creswell and Plano Clark a mixed-methods study should be carried out through a “*theoretical lens*”, which in turn has to be framed into the worldview we chose to adopt, in this case Pragmatism<sup>16</sup>. Being connected with economics, Rational Choice is a theory that belongs to social sciences. The Rational Choice assumptions will not only orient our study but also shape our interpretation of the collected data<sup>17</sup>. In general, Rational Choice is an approach that focuses on individuals and on their attitude as rational actors. According to the definition elaborated by Paul K. MacDonald, Rational Choice is:

*“A theory of social behavior whose distinctive theoretical assumption is that actors in the theory behave according to the rationality assumption. The rationality assumption consists of three components: purposive action, consistent preferences, and utility maximization. Purposive action posits that most social outcomes can be explained by goal-oriented action on the part of the actors in the theory, as opposed to being motivated by habit, tradition, or social appropriateness. Consistent preferences refers to preferences that are ranked, are transitive, and do not depend on the presence or absence of essentially independent alternatives. Utility maximization posits that actors will select the behavior that provides them with the most subjective expected utility from a set of possible behaviors”<sup>18</sup>.*

Thus, Rational Choice postulates the existence of rational individual actors, whose main goal

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<sup>16</sup> CRESWELL, John W., & PLANO CLARK, Vicki L., *op.cit.*, pp. 38, 41.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>18</sup> MACDONALD, Paul K., “Useful Fiction or Miracle Maker: The Competing Epistemological Foundations of Rational Choice Theory”, *The American Political Science Review*, 2003, vol. 97, n°4, p. 552.



is to maximize a hypothetical utility function. To achieve this goal, they will shape their behaviour in order to satisfy their personal interest, basing their choices on a rigorous cost-benefit analysis of the alternatives at their disposal. As suggested by Jon Elster, each individual orders the different available courses of action according to his or her subjective preferences<sup>19</sup>. Then, he chooses to act in compliance with the alternative that is more likely to produce his or her preferred outcome<sup>20</sup>. Hence, the selected behaviour will be the one that brings agents as close as possible to the maximization of their interest at the lowest cost. Oppenheimer synthesizes Rational Choice by arguing that it establishes a connection between the subjective preferences of the individual and the choices he will make, which will be oriented towards the pursuit of specific objectives<sup>21</sup>. Rational Choice could be not only a normative theory, which aims at prescribing what individuals should do in order to achieve their goals, but also a descriptive theory, in the sense that it provides us with the possibility to predict individual actions by looking at how they are used to behave<sup>22</sup>. This latter assumption is based on the fact that individual preferences are – as argued also by MacDonald – consistent, namely that if an individual chooses *a* instead of *b*, then he or she, in the future will not choose *b* if *a* is also at his or her disposal<sup>23</sup>. The consistency of individual preferences creates a pattern of choice followed by the individual, whose behaviour can thus be forecasted<sup>24</sup>.

We will analyse Labour MEPs' conduct during the first elective legislature of the European Parliament starting from the belief that their actions and decisions were aimed at maximizing their own interest and the interest of their group. The voting behavior of Labour MEPs will be interpreted in this light, given that, according to Oppenheimer "*Rational Choice theory's role in political theory is built on dual foundational presumption that explaining individual behavior is the key to understanding the functioning of political institutions and that these behaviors can be aggregated to understand the behavior of the group*"<sup>25</sup>. The willingness to explain social phenomena by making reference solely to individual actions, goals and beliefs is known as methodological individualism<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> ELSTER Jon, "Introduction", in Elster J., *Rational Choice*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1986, p. 4.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>21</sup> OPPENHEIMER, Joe A., "Rational Choice Theory", website of the Department of Government and Politics of the University of Maryland, 25<sup>th</sup> of November 2008, <http://www.gvpt.umd.edu/oppenheimer/research/rct.pdf> (page consulted on the 25<sup>th</sup> of April 2015), p. 2.

<sup>22</sup> Elster Jon, *loc.cit.*, pp. 1-2.

<sup>23</sup> SEN Amartya, "Behaviour and the Concept of Preference", in Elster, J., *op.cit.*, p. 61.

<sup>24</sup> ELSTER Jon, *loc.cit.*, p. 2.

<sup>25</sup> OPPENHEIMER, Joe A., *op.cit.*, p. 2.

<sup>26</sup> ELSTER, Jon, "The Case for Methodological Individualism", *Theory and Society*, 1982, Vol. 11, n°4, p. 453.

### ***III. Review of the studies and materials concerning British politics in the EC in the 1970s and in the 1980***

Since the 1960s – as showed by Helen Parr in her analysis of the Wilson’s Labour government attitude towards the possibility of Britain joining the EU – a number of British politicians looked at the European Economic Community (EEC) as a mere instrument to impose the hegemony of their country on continental Europe<sup>27</sup>. Parr analysed the strategies chosen in order to achieve membership starting from the behaviour of the individual governmental agents and in particular of the Prime Minister. This research shows the instrumental reasons at the basis of Wilson’s pursuit of EEC membership. The Labour leader wanted to join the Community in order to give a new economic and political horizon to his country<sup>28</sup>. However, since the first British application to join the EEC, a number of issues creating tensions between the parts and thwarting the possibility of a British membership began to arise. As clearly maintained by Stephen Wall throughout his book, the ultimate federal aim of the Community – which is clearly at odds with the British desire to safeguard national sovereignty – has always been an issue<sup>29</sup>. Wall has also emphasized specific policy differences, concerning for example the management of the Common Agricultural Policy and the budgetary question. In particular, this latter issue will dominate Thatcher’s decade<sup>30</sup>.

For our research purposes it will be useful to examine the ideological and political stances assumed by the Labour and Conservative Parties in that particular historical phase and the roots of the Euro-sceptic sentiments in the UK. In this respect, the academic literature agrees on the fact that politically speaking between the late 1970s and the early 1980s the two parties moved towards two completely opposite directions. Peter Morris has provided an interesting account of how the European issue has been dealt with by the Conservative Party since the end of the Second World War. The Tories, who did not endorse the European project when it was initially proposed, started to move towards a more positive approach towards the Community on grounds of national convenience. Eventually, they embraced a full Europeanism under the leadership of Edward Heath that evolved again into a more instrumental vision of the EEC during the first years of the Thatcher’s decade<sup>31</sup>. When Mrs Thatcher entered into open conflict with the European institutions, part of the Conservative

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<sup>27</sup> PARR, Helen, *Britain’s Policy towards the European Community. Harold Wilson and Britain’s world role, 1964-1967*, New York, Routledge, 2006, p. 163-166.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>29</sup> WALL, Stephen, *A Stranger in Europe. Britain and the EU from Thatcher to Blair*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2008.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 216, 224.

<sup>31</sup> MORRIS Peter, “The British Conservative Party” in Gaffney J., *Political parties and the European Union*, London, Routledge, 1996, pp. 122-137.

Party begun to move towards a form of anti-Europeanism similar to the one professed by Labour in the early 1980s<sup>32</sup>. Stephen George and Deborah Haythorne have traced the history of the Labour Party in Europe from the early 1950s to the early 1990s. According to them, the roots of Labour's anti-Europeanism shall be found in the nationalist and imperialist tendencies characterizing the British working class, which made the whole party unfit to the European project<sup>33</sup>.

The figure of Margaret Thatcher constituted something innovative in the British political panorama. As pointed out by Andrew Gamble, Thatcher's ideology and style of leadership were not only opposite to those usually assumed by the Labour Party, but they were also at odds with the Conservative tradition<sup>34</sup>. The Prime Minister, since the very beginning of her mandate, decided to pursue a monetarist economic policy, starting – as documented by David Childs – a fight with no holds barred against the Trade Unions for the sake of market liberalization<sup>35</sup>. Thatcher era coincided with one of the worst phases of Labour history, with the party falling in the ends of the radical left wing. Andrew Thorpe's analysis of Labour in this difficult decade showed that the party was affected by an internal split between left and right wings. The analysis of Thorpe – similarly to the one carried out by Helen Parr – focuses on the individuals involved in the management of this delicate situation, stressing the role of the most prominent Labour politicians in shaping the deep divisions within the party and in hindering the organization of a successful opposition to Thatcher<sup>36</sup>. Most importantly for our purposes, in 1980 the Labour Party officially declared its commitment to withdraw from the EEC<sup>37</sup>. An interesting analysis of Euro-scepticism in the UK is offered by Anthony Forster, whose main methodological assumption is that the evolution of the Euro-sceptic phenomenon needs to be traced assuming a multidimensional perspective, focusing on an array of different elements that played alternatively a more or less relevant role in shaping Euro-sceptic positions. The main finding of Forster's analysis is that Euro-scepticism emerged in Britain since the early 1960s and Labour and Conservatives embraced it more or less alternately, at least until the late 1980s. According to Forster, the evolution of Euro-scepticism in Britain may be explained by making reference to the changing nature of the EU itself, which – from

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* p. 31.

<sup>33</sup> GEORGE Stephen, HAYTHORNE Deborah, "The British Labour Party" in Gaffney J., *Political Parties and the European Union*, London, Routledge, 1996, p. 110-121.

<sup>34</sup> GAMBLE, Andrew, "The Politics of Thatcherism" in Hall, S., Jacques, M., *The Politics of Thatcherism*, Trowbridge, Lawrence & Wishart, 1983 pp. 118-122; GAMBLE, Andrew, *The Free Economy and the Strong State. The Politics of Thatcherism*, Hong Kong, Macmillan Education Ltd, 1990, pp. 54-60.

<sup>35</sup> CHILDS, David, *Britain since 1945. A Political History*, New York, Routledge, 2012, p. 210.

<sup>36</sup> THORPE, Andrew, *A History of the British Labour Party*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, pp. 209-229

<sup>37</sup> GEORGE Stephen, HAYTHORNE Deborah, *loc.cit.*, p. 116.

time to time – has been criticized both on rightist and on leftist grounds<sup>38</sup>. Also Daniel Stevens argued that the European issue has experienced a deep evolution in British politics. The analysis of Stevens is based on a deductive reasoning, through which he tries to apply a pre-existing theory (the Issue Evolution Theory) to the political parties and to the public opinion of the UK. This research demonstrated that the European attitude of Labour and Conservatives has gone through different phases, because of the process of mutual influence between electors and party elites and according to the historical development of the issue itself<sup>39</sup>.

The European Parliament – since the beginning of its history as an elective body – experienced a number of evolutions and revolutions, which have been analysed by several scholars. In their work on the political parties in the European Parliament, Simon Hix and Christopher Lord provide a multitude of data on the historical development and on the functioning of transnational parties in the EP. The book presents a complete overview of the Euro-party groups' historical cohesion trends – that is of their internal unity and capacity to take decisions independently of outside interferences – of their composition in the first elective legislature and – most importantly – of their relationship with the national parties of which they are composed, Labour and Conservative included<sup>40</sup>. Hix & Lord, in this work, underline the deep division on the very issue of European integration that historically affected the Socialist Group since the first enlargement<sup>41</sup>. In another work, Simon Hix, this time with Abdul Noury and Gérard Roland, investigated even more in depth the issue of coherence, focusing in particular on the interference of national party groups in the EP functioning. For our purposes it is interesting to note that when issues of national relevance are at stake, the Euro-deputies tend to defend their national party interest, even if this means voting against their own Euro-party group<sup>42</sup>. However, in a related work, they also maintained that since the first EP elections the cohesion of the EP party groups has constantly increased, despite the growing internal fragmentation caused by the always higher number of national shareholders<sup>43</sup>.

As far as concern the European socialist movement, Jane Sweeney, in her analysis of the

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<sup>38</sup> FORSTER, Anthony, *Euroscepticism in Contemporary British Politics. Opposition to Europe in the British Conservative and Labour Parties since 1945*, London, Routledge, 2002, pp. 129-131.

<sup>39</sup> STEVENS, D., "Issue evolution in Britain: The debate on European Union integration, 1964-2010", *European Journal of Political Research*, 2013, Vol.52, n°4, pp. 536-537.

<sup>40</sup> HIX, Simon, LORD, Christopher, *Political Parties in the European Union*, New York, St. Martin's Press, 1997, pp. 21-53.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>42</sup> HIX, Simon, NOURY, Abdul, ROLAND, Gerard, *Democratic Politics in the European Parliament*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2007, p. 133.

<sup>43</sup> HIX, Simon, NOURY, Abdul, ROLAND, Gerard, "Power to the Parties: Cohesion and Competition in the European Parliament, 1979-2001", *British Journal of Political Science*, 2005, Vol. 35, No.2, pp. 231-232.

attitude of the three main CSPEC socialist parties – British Labour, French Parti Socialiste and German SPD – vis-à-vis European integration, showed in detail their respective differences and the particularly wide cleavage between Labour and the rest of the group, which was mainly due to the latter’s nationalism<sup>44</sup>. Labour’s pledge to defend the global role of the UK was also highlighted by Pascal Delwit<sup>45</sup>. As documented by Hix and Lesse, the European socialist coalition encountered huge difficulties in drafting a common document for the 1979 elections. Eventually, they managed to present just an “Appeal” to the electorate, which was not a proper manifesto, while the other major European political families had agreed on a shared program. The divisions among socialist parties were still too relevant<sup>46</sup>. Lastly, also Luciano Bardi provided an account of the socialist tendency to fragmentation in the first EP elective legislature. On the basis of the roll-call votes registered during the first elective legislature, Bardi demonstrated that the degree of cohesion of the Socialist Group between 1979 and 1984 was comparatively lower than that of the other main Euro-parties, even though it was still a high one in general terms<sup>47</sup>.

Up to now, one of the most interesting analyses of Labour in the first elective legislature of the European Parliament has been provided by Anita Pollack, who underlined both the disagreements between Labour and the European socialist movement and the fact that Labour MEPs developed through time a form of loyalty towards the Socialist Group<sup>48</sup>. This kind of ambivalence has also been stressed in the already mentioned work by George & Haythorne, who underlined the development of authentic linkages between the Labour MEPs and their fellow socialists since the first elective legislature of the EP<sup>49</sup>. However, our analysis will demonstrate that this has never been a complete fidelity, because Labour MEPs remained committed to the defence of British interest.

To achieve our research goals, the literature exposed thus far will be complemented by non-academic materials. We will extensively refer, across the various sections of this study, not only to pamphlets and electoral manifestos published by Labour, Conservatives and CSPEC, but also to newspaper articles and relevant speeches delivered by relevant politicians of all the three groups taken into account in our study.

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<sup>44</sup> SWEENEY, Jane P., *op.cit.*, pp. 43-72

<sup>45</sup> DELWIT, Pascal, *Les Partis Socialistes et l’intégration européenne: Belgique, France, Grande-Bretagne*, Bruxelles, Editions de l’Université de Bruxelles, 1995, pp. 135-136.

<sup>46</sup> HIX, Simon & LESSE, Urs, *Shaping a Vision. A History of the Party of European Socialists: 1957-2002*, Brussels, Party of European Socialists, 2002, pp. 25-43.

<sup>47</sup> BARDI Luciano, “Transnational Trends. The Evolution of the European Party System” in Steunenberg B., Thomassen J., *The European Parliament. Moving toward Democracy in the EU*, Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2002, pp.63-83.

<sup>48</sup> POLLACK, Anita, *Wreckers or Builders? A History of Labour MEPs 1979-1999*, London, John Harper Publishing, p. 6-69.

<sup>49</sup> GEORGE Stephen, HAYTHORNE Deborah, *loc.cit.*, p. 117.

# 1. Britain and Europe

The aim of this chapter is to present the first explanatory variable we chose to consider in our study. Between the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, the two main British political parties were located at the two opposite ends of the political spectrum. This distance also affected their points of view towards the EEC, with the Tories eager to exploit the Common Market to improve British trade and industry and Labour committed to withdrawal from an organization grounded on principles they did not share. Although sharing the objective to reform the EEC, the two parties, as will be documented by our analysis of their points of view on three particularly contentious EEC policy areas, will often disagree on how to do this. In our opinion, this huge political divide made it impossible for the first elected Labour MEPs to stably make common front with the Conservatives in order to defend Britain in Europe.

This part will be organized as follows: first of all, we will present the first attempts of the UK to become a member of the EEC during the 1960s, showing the positions of Labour and Conservatives concerning the 1975 referendum on Community membership. Then, we will concentrate on the main features of the two main British political parties between the late 1970s and at the early 1980s, with a particular focus on their European attitudes. Lastly, we will examine in detail the policy areas of the EEC budgetary policy, of the Common Agricultural Policy and of security, defence and political cooperation, which were given particular importance both by Labour and Conservatives.

## *1. British attempts at achieving EEC membership*

The United Kingdom officially joined the EEC on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 1973. Britain concluded successfully the negotiations to access the Community under the Conservative government of Edward Heath. For Heath, Prime Minister from 1970 to 1974, obtaining the membership of the Common Market was indeed a top priority, to be put at the centre of government agenda<sup>50</sup>. Britain's road to membership was long and difficult. The French president De Gaulle imposed twice his veto on British accession, being convinced that the UK was economically too weak to join the Common Market and politically too close to the United States to participate in the project of a Europe independent from the two blocks<sup>51</sup>. The conservative Harold Macmillan, Prime Minister between 1957 and 1963, carried out the first

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<sup>50</sup> MORRIS Peter, *loc.cit.*, p. 126.

<sup>51</sup> PARR, Helen, *op.cit.*, p. 147.

failed attempt in 1963. From a political point of view, Macmillan's decision to pursue EEC membership represented a real turning point for Britain. Both Labour and Conservatives, since the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, decided not to avail the European integration project, still convinced of the possibility of an autonomous world role for the UK<sup>52</sup>. Macmillan's will to join the EEC was determined by factors of political nature. In short, Macmillan had realized that in a world dominated by the two superpowers Britain would have not been able to play an autonomous role and to influence the US and the USSR<sup>53</sup>. Therefore, joining Europe was understood as a way to give a new international horizon to the country, which at that time was dramatically losing its autonomous weight<sup>54</sup>. Moreover, the perspective to concentrate British external relations on the Commonwealth was not realistic, after the end of the imperial preferences and the declining importance of the former colonies in terms of trade<sup>55</sup>.

Harold Wilson – the Labour leader who gained office in 1964 – also sought to achieve EEC membership between 1966 and 1967. Again, Charles De Gaulle opposed British application, still persuaded of the political and economic unreliability of the UK. Wilson was not a member of the small pro-Marketeer wing of the Labour Party and his decision to apply was primarily determined by strategic considerations. Wilson, by joining the EEC, hoped to achieve three interrelated political objectives: stealing to Conservatives a traditional policy commitment, reunify its party and distract the public opinion from an array of political disasters both at home and abroad<sup>56</sup>. Labour's general attitude towards the EEC was already pessimistic. In 1962, the Labour Congress declared that certain conditions had to be fulfilled in order to obtain the party's approval of EEC membership. Eventually, the Congress agreed on a document asking for safeguards for the Commonwealth and EFTA commitments, freedom to plan the economy and to pursue an independent foreign policy and protection of British agriculture. *De facto*, this statement amounted to a refusal of British participation to the European common market. The Labour leader Hugh Gaitskell stressed the non-necessity of EEC membership and his reluctance to participate in an organization shaped by Adenauer and De Gaulle<sup>57</sup>.

Edward Heath, on the other hand, had been a wholehearted pro-Marketeer since the

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<sup>52</sup> MORRIS, Peter, *loc.cit.*, p.125.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128.

<sup>54</sup> PARR, Helen, *op.cit.*, p. 2.

<sup>55</sup> FORSTER, Anthony, *op.cit.*, p. 24.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>57</sup> PIERONI, Alfredo, "La maggioranza laborista contraria all'ingresso dell'Inghilterra nel MEC", website of the "Centre Virtuel de la Connaissance sur l'Europe" (CVCE), 17 September 2012, [http://www.cvce.eu/obj/la\\_maggioranza\\_laborista\\_contraria\\_all\\_ingresso\\_dell\\_inghilterra\\_nel\\_mec" in corriere della sera\\_4\\_ottobre\\_1962-it-78bfa57f-345f-4a9b-ab58-3f84460ec8ab.html](http://www.cvce.eu/obj/la_maggioranza_laborista_contraria_all_ingresso_dell_inghilterra_nel_mec_in_corriere_della_sera_4_ottobre_1962-it-78bfa57f-345f-4a9b-ab58-3f84460ec8ab.html) (page consulted on the 1<sup>st</sup> of April 2015), p. 2-3.

establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community<sup>58</sup>. After De Gaulle's departure, the political environment became favourable to a new British attempt to join the EEC. Heath managed to establish a close relationship with the new French president Pompidou. Eventually, after having held a referendum on the topic, France decided to agree on British membership<sup>59</sup>. In 1971, Heath's government had to face an internal opposition at the Commons in voting on the principle of British entry into the Common Market, with thirty-nine Conservative MPs voting against their own government. At the same time, sixty-nine Labour MPs, led by the future president of the European Commission Roy Jenkins, voted with the government and against their own party. Another group of twenty Labour deputies abstained<sup>60</sup>. The Parliamentary Labour Party split on the issue despite the fact that – two months before voting – the National Executive Committee (NEC) had approved a motion against British entry on the terms negotiated by the government. Both the Trade Unions and the rank and file of the party shared the NEC's point of view<sup>61</sup>. On Labour side, therefore, the already existent internal conflict between pro and anti-Marketees reached a peak.

Wilson promised that a future Labour government would have held a referendum on British membership<sup>62</sup>. In 1975, when Callaghan and Wilson eventually arranged the referendum after having slightly renegotiated membership terms, the internal split resurfaced. The centre and the right of the party – including the incumbent Labour government – supported British membership, together with Conservatives and Liberals, while the left opposed it vigorously<sup>63</sup>. In short, the moderates dominated the government and the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP), while the party structure had fallen in the hands of the left<sup>64</sup>. The opposition of the National Executive Committee to EEC membership was clearly expressed in an official statement concerning the referendum on membership released in March 1975. In this document, the NEC reiterated its anti-EEC commitment, because “*the terms, even as renegotiated, do not satisfy Britain's requirements*”<sup>65</sup>.

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<sup>58</sup> MORRIS, Peter *loc.cit.*, pp. 128-129.

<sup>59</sup> DINAN, Desmond, *Ever Closer Union. An Introduction to European Integration*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010. pp. 45-46.

<sup>60</sup> CHILDS, David, *op.cit.*, pp. 164-165.

<sup>61</sup> PELLING, Henry, REID, Alastair J., *A Short History of the Labour Party*, Chatham, Macmillan Press LTD, 1996, p. 142.

<sup>62</sup> FORSTER, Anthony, *op.cit.*, p. 48-50.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 151.

<sup>64</sup> DELWIT, Pascal, *op.cit.*, p. 157.

<sup>65</sup> NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, “Labour Party-Special Conference on the Common Market. The Labour Party and the Common Market, Statement by the National Executive Committee for the special conference”, website of the “Centre Virtuel de la Connaissance sur l'Europe” (CVCE), 13<sup>th</sup> of September 2013, [http://www.cvce.eu/obj/statement\\_by\\_labour\\_s\\_national\\_executive\\_committee\\_on\\_the\\_referendum\\_on\\_the\\_united\\_kingdom\\_s\\_accession\\_to\\_the\\_european\\_communities\\_26\\_march\\_1975-en-a824f9d6-2ae7-487d-a591-](http://www.cvce.eu/obj/statement_by_labour_s_national_executive_committee_on_the_referendum_on_the_united_kingdom_s_accession_to_the_european_communities_26_march_1975-en-a824f9d6-2ae7-487d-a591-)



The point of view of Conservatives on Europe in 1975 was very clearly articulated in a brochure published by the party during the referendum campaign<sup>66</sup>. In this very detailed document the case for staying into the EEC was very strongly defended. The most impressive point is probably the one related to national sovereignty. As we will see, the NEC was convinced that the intrinsic federal and supranational tendencies of the Community represented a huge danger for British autonomy and national sovereignty. The Conservatives, at least in that moment, had a completely different opinion, especially as far as concern the actual ability of a state to act independently from the other countries:

*In the modern world it is worth distinguishing between the substance and the symbols of sovereignty. The substance is the freedom to act independently of other nations — something which is now seldom possible for any single country. Certainly, any British Government has little or no absolute freedom of action of this kind. So many vital decisions are governed by external factors — such as OPEC oil and financial power — to say nothing of the views and policies of our allies. Britain and the other member states of the Community are therefore pooling their national sovereignty in certain agreed areas in order to secure a wider and more effective common sovereignty. In doing this, we are far better placed to defend our national interests and to influence international events than we would be on our own<sup>67</sup>.*

## **II. The Labour Party between the 1970s and the 1980s: the rise of the left**

Since the early 1970s, the Labour Party started to politically move towards the left, going against the more moderate social-democratic revisionism that had characterized its previous decade<sup>68</sup>. In this section, we will try to expose the main features of Labour in one of the most complicated historical phases of its whole history. Starting from the beginning of the 1970s, we will illustrate the ideological and political evolution of the party until the first half of the

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[390f9c4a7a69.html](http://www.cvce.eu/obj/yes_to_europe_the_conservative_guide_for_the_1975_referendum_campaign-en-390f9c4a7a69.html) (page consulted on the 26<sup>th</sup> of April 2015), p. 2.

<sup>66</sup> THE CONSERVATIVE RESEARCH DEPARTMENT (1), “Yes to Europe: The Conservative Guide for the 1975 Referendum Campaign”, website of the “Centre Virtuel de la Connaissance sur l’Europe” (CVCE), 13<sup>th</sup> of September 2013,

[http://www.cvce.eu/obj/yes\\_to\\_europe\\_the\\_conservative\\_guide\\_for\\_the\\_1975\\_referendum\\_campaign-en-639fb9e5-ca77-4653-8870-6cfd7f0782c6.html](http://www.cvce.eu/obj/yes_to_europe_the_conservative_guide_for_the_1975_referendum_campaign-en-639fb9e5-ca77-4653-8870-6cfd7f0782c6.html) (page consulted on the 26<sup>th</sup> of April 2015).

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>67</sup> STEINNES, Kristian, “Between Independence and Integration: European social democratic parties and direct Election to the European Parliament in the 1970s.”, in Thiemeyer G., Raflik J., *European Political Parties and the First Direct Elections to the European Parliament*, Baden-Baden, Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 2015, p. 66.

1980s, when the internal left had to give up party leadership. Our aim will be to stress the attitude of the party towards the EEC as shaped by the left-wing majority sitting in the National Executive Committee, and the internal cleavages provoked by this same issue. We will also examine the campaign and results of the 1979 European elections, underlining the main factors at the basis of Labour defeat.

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In 1973, the Labour Party drafted an extremely radical manifesto for the 1974 general elections, in which new extensions of public ownership and welfare services were proposed. This occurred despite the growing public distrust towards additional nationalizations<sup>69</sup>. David Marquand, a former Labour MP (he served at Westminster from 1966 to 1977), provided us with a clear account of what was happening into the Labour Party in the mid 1970s. According to him,

*Welfare-state social democracy was a creed of abundance, presupposing economic success. Its appeal was dimmed by the economic failures of the last decade-and-a-half, and still more by the fact that those failures took place under predominantly social-democratic regimes. At the same time, the version of welfare-state social democracy practised in this country since the War ran out of moral steam. The predominant elements in that version were Keynesianism and Fabianism — both manipulative creeds, which held that society could be reformed only from above. (...) characteristic instruments were centrally – operated controls, complex bureaucracies and big investment projects, not local initiatives, innovating individuals or small cooperatives<sup>70</sup>.*

Welfare-state social democracy was a very important Labour ideological principle that, according to Marquand, at some point became infeasible. Several Labour politicians refused to accept this historical verdict and – according to Marquand – assumed a rather paternalistic attitude vis-à-vis British citizens, being convinced that in order to improve social wellbeing it was still necessary to employ huge amounts of public money<sup>71</sup>. Even when it became patent that the public opinion was against this old and bureaucratized model of welfare, Labour

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<sup>69</sup> JEFFERYS, Kevin, *The Labour Party Since 1945*, Hong Kong, Macmillan Press Ltd, 1993, pp. 85-86.

<sup>70</sup> MARQUAND, David, “Inquest on a Movement. Labour’s Defeat & Its Consequences”, *Encounter*, July 1979, pp. 9-10.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibidem*.

decided to carry on with it, by increasing even more the importance of the state in the economic and social relations<sup>72</sup>. The failure of the Labour leadership to modernize its basic assumptions led the party into a sort of “*proletarianism*”, whose main features were the complete rejection of middle-class values and a thorough and exclusive identification of the party with the working class<sup>73</sup>.

Labour’s defeat in the 1979 general elections was tremendous. The Conservatives obtained an absolute majority at the Commons, increasing dramatically their seats. The neat Conservative victory was due not only to the bad records registered by Labour and Liberals, but also to the generalized loss of consensus of the nationalist parties in Wales and Scotland<sup>74</sup>. The electoral defeat marked the ultimate split within Labour leadership. Tony Benn, supported by a majority in the NEC, led the left wing. Benn, at the beginning of the 1980s, managed to obtain the draft of a “*rolling manifesto*”, a sort of permanent electoral program to be constantly updated and always ready to be adopted for a hypothetical general election<sup>75</sup>. In this document some of the dominant Labour topics of the decade were presented, most notably the campaign for unilateral nuclear disarmament, the abolition of the House of Lords, the renegotiation of the Common Agricultural Policy and of course a massive enlargement of state ownership. On this last point, the party had already agreed in 1979, during the Brighton conference, during which it was established to renationalize what Thatcher’s government was bringing back to private hands<sup>76</sup>. The left reached a peak in its influence on the party in 1980, with the election of the Marxist Michael Foot as a leader. The defeated candidate of the moderate wing of the party, Dennis Healey, was supported by the former leader and Prime Minister James Callaghan<sup>77</sup>. Foot was a sixty-seven years old influent exponent of the most extreme left of the party – committed to withdrawal from the EEC and to the other policy objectives listed into the rolling manifesto – whose candidature was supported by Tony Benn<sup>78</sup>. Under Foot’s leadership, the Labour Party increased its use of anti-capitalist, anti-EEC and pacifist narratives.

The new Labour asset and policy quickly became unbearable for several right-wingers. When, in 1980, the Labour Conference passed a resolution asking for withdrawal from the EEC

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<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 13-14; Fielding S., McHugh D., “*The Progressive Dilemma and the social democratic perspective*” in Callaghan J., Fielding S., Ludlam S., *Interpreting the Labour Party. Approaches to Labour politics and history*”, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2003, p. 138.

<sup>74</sup> PELLING, Harry, REID, Alastair J., *op.cit.*, pp. 159-160.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.* p.163

<sup>76</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>77</sup> JEFFERYS, Kevin, *op.cit.*, pp. 109-110.

<sup>78</sup> CHILDS, David, *op.cit.*, p. 211.

without a referendum<sup>79</sup>, a group of them – led by David Owen, William Rodgers and Shirley Williams – decided to quit Labour and to create a new centre-left force, the Social Democratic Party (SPD)<sup>80</sup>. The EEC issue was one of the most important reasons why they taken such an extreme decision. The SPD was officially founded in March 1981. The former President of the European Commission Roy Jenkins, who terminated its mandate in January 1981, joined with enthusiasm the three dissidents in their new political project<sup>81</sup>. The new party was committed to enhance British international standing, by increasing its role in the NATO, in the UN, in the Commonwealth and of course in the EEC<sup>82</sup>. At the beginning, the SDP seemed to have a chance to revolutionize the rigid two-party system of Britain. One of the first move of the Social Democrats was to form an alliance with the Liberal Party for the 1981-1982 by-elections round. The results were quite impressive, with the new coalition electing several candidates at the Commons, including Roy Jenkins. At the end of 1981, the SPD parliamentary group was composed by twenty-nine MPs. The majority of them came from the Labour group<sup>83</sup>. After these staunch defenders of the EEC abandoned Labour, the internal left was definitely free to fully commit the party to withdraw from the Common Market. This pledge was eventually included into the manifesto for the 1983 general elections<sup>84</sup>.

The EEC issue's capacity to create divisions into the Labour Party has already been underlined. Now we can add a few more points on this same topic. After the defeat at the 1975 referendum, the anti-Marketeers had lost most of their enthusiasm for the battle they were fighting<sup>85</sup>. However, they still dominated the National Executive Committee, which believed the first direct elections to the European Parliament to be a threat to national sovereignty<sup>86</sup>. The risks for national autonomy and sovereignty that the process of supranational integration could bring about were emphasized by the Party Annual Conference in a document released in 1977. According to the Conference, "*The powers of the House of Commons to amend or repeal European legislation must be maintained if the rights of the electors are to be preserved*"<sup>87</sup>. According to the document, the EEC membership had had a negative effect first of all on the general food prices and on the trade balance. Moreover, the incompatibility between the "*liberal-capitalist ideology*" embraced by the EEC and a genuine

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<sup>79</sup> GEORGE Stephen, HAYTHORNE Deborah *loc.cit.*, p. 116.

<sup>80</sup> CHILDS, David, *op.cit.*, p. 211-212.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>82</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>83</sup> PELLING, Harry, REID, Alastair J., *op.cit.*, pp. 164-167.

<sup>84</sup> GEORGE Stephen, HAYTHORNE Deborah, *loc.cit.*, p. 115-116.

<sup>85</sup> PELLING, Harry, REID, Alastair J., *op.cit.*, p. 154.

<sup>86</sup> SWEENEY, Jane P., *op.cit.*, p.70.

<sup>87</sup> THE LABOUR PARTY (1), *Labour and Europe. Recent Statements of Policy*, London, 1978, B/079/11/78, p.10.

commitment to socialism was stressed<sup>88</sup>. The following Annual Conference, in 1978 asked to the NEC to make sure that the next general elections manifesto contained several anti-EEC commitments. Among the other things, the assembly asked to the next hypothetical Labour government to reform the CAP, to curb the powers of the Commission by amending the Treaty of Rome and to prohibit the expansion of the European Parliament powers, while opposing any move towards an economic and monetary union<sup>89</sup>. The PLP, on the matter of direct elections to the European Parliament, experienced a very sharp split. The act committing Britain to universal suffrage direct elections was endorsed, in first reading, by one hundred and thirty-two Labour MPs, while one hundred and twenty-six voted against, with fifty-one abstentions<sup>90</sup>. The second reading saw sixty-two votes against and one hundred abstentions within the PLP<sup>91</sup>.

Thus, regardless of Labour arguments and complaints, the European elections were eventually held. Labour arrived at its first European electoral round as a defeated party, having lost general elections to Thatcher just a month before. The manifesto that Labour presented for this occasion was a short-document summing up the full disapproval of the party for the European integration process. When the European elections manifesto was drafted, the party leader was still the moderate James Callaghan, who had imposed the use of a more temperate tone for the general elections manifesto<sup>92</sup>. Nevertheless, the document for European elections reflected the thinking of the anti-Markeeter majority of the NEC, which had even refused to give a role in its drafting to the Parliamentary Labour Party<sup>93</sup>. The strongly anti-EEC orientation of the European manifesto created therefore a conflict between the NEC and the government. Even if this latter document will be examined in detail in the following sections, we can immediately underline some of its main points.

Already in the introduction, it is clearly stated that the manifesto “*is not a program of government*” and that the elections are for the “*European Assembly*”, clearly distinguished from the proper “*Parliament*” sitting in Westminster<sup>94</sup>. Then, a number of reforms and criticisms concerning not only the specific policies of the EEC but also the EEC in itself are presented. The main idea is that the Common Market had to be reformed starting from its

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<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>90</sup> DELWIT, Pascal, *op.cit.*, p. 161.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>92</sup> GORDON, Ian, “The United Kingdom”, in Reif K., *Ten European Elections: Campaign and Results of the 1979-1981 First Direct Elections to the European Parliament*, Aldershot, Gower Publishing Company Limited, 1985, p. 177.

<sup>93</sup> SWEENEY, Jane P., *op.cit.* p. 100.

<sup>94</sup> THE LABOUR PARTY (2), *Manifesto of the British Labour Party for the European Assembly Elections*, Brussels, 24<sup>th</sup> January 1979, p.1.

constitutional agreement, the Treaty of Rome, with the aim to transform it in a “*much looser grouping of European states – one in which each country is able to realise its own economic and social objectives, under the sovereignty of its own Parliament and people*”<sup>95</sup>. The reference is probably to the Alternative Economic Strategy, a left-wing economic policy plan based on nationalizations and protectionism that Labour was advocating in that moment<sup>96</sup>. As explained in the manifesto, the Treaty of Rome did not fit to Labour’s economic plans because it hindered the implementation of strategies based on economic planning and nationalizations<sup>97</sup>. According to the manifesto, the economic challenges that Britain and Europe were facing at that time could be won only through the attainment of a democratic control of the economy, with “*the British government having the freedom to apply Labour’s industrial policies*”<sup>98</sup>. The document ends with a sort of “soft” ultimatum: “*We declare that if the fundamental reforms contained in this manifesto are not achieved within a reasonable period of time, then the Labour Party would have to consider very seriously whether continued EEC membership was in the best interest of the British people*”<sup>99</sup>.

The results of the June 1979 European elections were as dreadful as those of the previous general elections for Labour. As underlined by Forster, the main problem faced by anti-Marketeers of both parties was to convince their electorate to go to the polls. The Labour Party had largely opposed the very existence of the European Parliament as an elective organ for the whole decade. Thus, it suffered from a lack of credibility when it asked votes to elect its representatives in Strasbourg<sup>100</sup>. Eventually, the voting turnout was of 32.7 per cent, the lowest registered in all the EEC member states<sup>101</sup>. This went all to the advantage of the Conservatives that obtained sixty of the seventy-eight available seats for the United Kingdom (Northern Ireland was given the possibility to elect autonomously three MEPs representing its territory). Labour only conquered seventeen places at the new elected assembly, while the last British seat was gained by the Scottish National Party<sup>102</sup>. As underlined by an article published in “*Le Monde*” immediately after the vote, the bad record of Labour was also due to:

*“(...) the electoral system (it is the only country in the Community which has first-past-the-post voting), which wipes out minorities, as*

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<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>96</sup> GEORGE Stephen, HAYTHORNE Deborah, *loc.cit.*, p. 116.

<sup>97</sup> THE LABOUR PARTY (2), *op.cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p.4.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>100</sup> FORSTER, Anthony, *op.cit.*, p. 66.

<sup>101</sup> GORDON, Ian, *loc.cit.*, p. 166.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibidem.*

*well as by low voter participation. Labour voters, still stunned after losing the general elections, did not bother to turn out”<sup>103</sup>.*

Another factor must be underlined in order to explain Labour failure at the first European elections. The National Executive Committee, because of its anti-market position, prohibited the dual mandate for MPs<sup>104</sup>. This choice – from an electoral point of view – was incredibly damaging. Given that among the MPs there were several experienced and popular politicians, it would have been important for Labour to have one of these men or women leading the campaign, as Brandt and Mitterrand did for their respective parties in Germany and France<sup>105</sup>. Labour candidates, excluding Barbara Castle, were largely unknown to the electorate<sup>106</sup>.

Even after the heavy defeat at the 1979 European elections, Labour’s attitude towards the EEC did not change, due to the authority assumed by the left in shaping party policy. In a fiery pamphlet published in 1980 by the Labour Common Market Safeguards Committee, *The Common Market: Enough is Enough*, the points made in the 1979 manifesto were reiterated and, if possible, strengthened. The Safeguards Committee was a very influent anti-EEC group that included, already in the mid-seventies, around fifty MPs<sup>107</sup>. Among the most significant members of the Committee, there were people like Peter Shore, Barbara Castle and Tony Benn that took the lead of the Labour Party between the late 1970s and the early 1980s<sup>108</sup>. According to the pamphlet,

*“The terms upon which we are members of the EEC are very heavily to our economic and political disadvantage, while our partners are wholly unwilling to contemplate anything but cosmetic change. We have no alternative but to take unilateral action to safeguard our position. The only ways in which we can do this are undoubtedly going to go so much against the letter and the spirit of the Treaty of Rome and our Treaty of Accession that the option of Britain’s withdrawal altogether from the EEC must now be seriously*

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<sup>103</sup> DELARUE, Maurice, “Setback for the Left in the European elections”, website of the “Centre Virtuel de la Connaissance sur l’Europe” (CVCE), 26<sup>th</sup> August 2013, [http://www.cvce.eu/obj/setback\\_for\\_the\\_left\\_in\\_the\\_european\\_elections\\_from\\_le\\_monde\\_12\\_june\\_1979-en-s5c15f22d-f982-40e7-8c19-0eadb9a001df.html](http://www.cvce.eu/obj/setback_for_the_left_in_the_european_elections_from_le_monde_12_june_1979-en-s5c15f22d-f982-40e7-8c19-0eadb9a001df.html) (page consulted on the 4<sup>th</sup> of April 2015), p. 3.

<sup>104</sup> GORDON, Ian, *loc.cit.*, p. 172.

<sup>105</sup> SWEENEY, Jane P., *op.cit.*, p. 135.

<sup>106</sup> GORDON, Ian, *loc.cit.*, p. 175.

<sup>107</sup> FORSTER, Anthony, *op.cit.*, p. 52.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibidem*.

considered”<sup>109</sup>.

During the first part of the 1980s, the *Labour Weekly*, the official Labour’s newspaper, hosted several articles and comments supporting the withdrawal policy and fomenting Euro-sceptic sentiments among the militants. In June 1983, for example, an article challenging all the criticisms usually raised against the possibility to withdraw was published. The main contention of the piece is probably the idea that EEC membership is a very costly business that had not brought any substantial benefit to the UK, not even from the point of view of foreign investment and food supply. Actually, it was stated that without the burden represented by the Common Market, Britain could have been able to buy food in the international market under more favourable conditions, reorienting its trade patterns towards the former colonies<sup>110</sup>. In another article published a few months later, in preparation to the 1984 European elections, the EEC project was again judged as a failure, unable to encompass the whole continent while fostering the interest of the big multinational companies at workers expenses<sup>111</sup>.

The searing defeat at the 1983 general elections brought to an end the dominance of the left-wing on the Labour Party. Again, Labour had presented an electoral manifesto in which withdrawal from the EEC was presented as an ineluctable process to be started as soon as possible<sup>112</sup>. Even if the Tories obtained just a few more votes than in 1979, their parliamentary majority increased from forty-three to one hundred and forty-four seats<sup>113</sup>. Having obtained little less than the twenty-eight per cent of the votes, Labour got its worst electoral result since 1918. This was due mainly to the low share of votes obtained among its traditional supporters<sup>114</sup> and to the presence of the Liberal-SPD alliance, supported by many former Labour electors<sup>115</sup>. The process of internal renewal started almost immediately after Foot’s resignation. At the 1983 Brighton Annual Conference, Neil Kinnock, a young member of the moderate left of the party, conquered the leadership. Roy Hattersley, an MP supported by the right, managed to obtain the office of deputy leader<sup>116</sup>. Kinnock, in turn, sought immediately to marginalize the old ruling class and to put a more heterogeneous centre-left

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<sup>109</sup> THE LABOUR COMMON MARKET SAFEGUARDS COMMITTEE, *The Common Market: Enough is Enough*, London, June 1980, p. 4.

<sup>110</sup> “The ten big Euro-scares”, in *Labour Weekly*, 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1983, p. 24.

<sup>111</sup> GOULD, Bryan, HOLLAND, Stuart, PRESCOTT, John, “Crisis in Europe” in *Labour Weekly*, 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1983, p. 15.

<sup>112</sup> PELLING, Harry, REID, Alastair J., *op.cit.*, p. 170.

<sup>113</sup> CHILDS, David, *op.cit.*, pp. 221-222.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>115</sup> DELWIT, Pascal, *op.cit.*, p. 165.

<sup>116</sup> JEFFERYS, Kevin, *op.cit.*, p. 115.



coalition of interests at the basis of his power<sup>117</sup>. This new shift towards the centre of the political spectrum also involved the EEC. Hattersley clearly affirmed that the commitment to retire from the EEC had proved very detrimental in electoral terms<sup>118</sup>. Kinnock inaugurated a new phase in Labour's European policy, in which withdrawal was not advocated anymore even if the EEC was still regarded with suspicion<sup>119</sup>. Labour had not yet embraced a true pro-Market attitude, but it had started to abandon the negative stance of the past and to embrace a more pro-active approach.

### ***III. The Conservative Party between the 1970s and the 1980s: Thatcher's era begins***

In this section we will discuss the political and economic aims of the new British right, underlining the revolution that Thatcher imposed not only to the Conservative Party but also to British politics as a whole. Then, we will present Thatcher's general European attitude and her policies regarding the EEC. Finally, we will show the contents of the European electoral campaign conducted by the Tories in 1979, highlighting their positive approach to Europe.

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Margaret Thatcher obtained the Conservative Party leadership in February 1975, defeating the former Prime Minister Edward Heath. She has been the first and only woman to guide the Tories. She has also served as British Prime Minister from 1979 to 1990. Again, she has been the first and only woman to hold that office up to now. Mrs Thatcher undoubtedly represents one of the most controversial figures in British politics. From an economic point of view, she was an ardent supporter of free-market strategies. Convinced of the necessity to drastically reduce fiscal pressure, she tried to "roll-back" the state by diminishing its autonomous presence in the national economy<sup>120</sup>. This commitment against further nationalization and public interventions was coupled with a parallel struggle against trade unions, whose privileges and prerogatives were considered as an unjustifiable brake to economic growth<sup>121</sup>.

Historically, the will to build up a strong and efficient state has been one of the cornerstones of Conservative thinking<sup>122</sup>. In the Conservative intellectual tradition, the state is the vehicle through which authority is maintained throughout society. Public authority exists only if the same state is able to keep a firm control on society<sup>123</sup>. Starting from this premise, the New

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<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 116.

<sup>118</sup> PELLING, Harry, REID, Alastair J., *op.cit.*, p. 172.

<sup>119</sup> GEORGE, Stephen, HAYTHORNE Deborah, *loc.cit.*, p. 111.

<sup>120</sup> GREEN, Ewen H.H., *Thatcher*, London, Hodder Arnold, 2006, p. 27.

<sup>121</sup> CHILDS, David, *op.cit.*, p. 210.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 119.

<sup>123</sup> GAMBLE, Andrew, *op.cit.*, p. 35.

Right, which developed on both sides of the Atlantic, drafted a political strategy aimed at conciliating conservatism and liberalism. The main American exponent was of course Ronald Reagan, while in the UK Margaret Thatcher and her cabinets embodied the policies and principles of this innovative right-wing political movement. “Thatcherism” is a political tendency that can be framed into the New Right paradigm, which, in Thatcher’s own words,

*“stands for the wider and wider spread of ownership of property, of houses, of shares, of savings. It stands for being strong in defence – a reliable ally and a trusted friend”*<sup>124</sup>.

Thatcherism has had the capacity to link the *“traditional Conservative concern with the basis of authority in social institutions and the importance of internal order and external security with a new emphasis upon re-establishing free markets and extending market criteria into new fields”*<sup>125</sup>. On the one hand, there was the will to create a *“freer, more open and more competitive economy”*, on the other hand the objective was *“restoring social and political authority throughout society”*<sup>126</sup>. According to the New Right supporters, the authority of the British state had been endangered by its excessive involvement in public life in general and by its interference in the economy in particular:

*“Social democratic policies led to the morass of inflation, mass unemployment, excessive taxation and a swollen public sector. As the state became more and more interventionist so the authority of governments became progressively weaker in the face of powerful trade unions and other sectional interests”*<sup>127</sup>.

This willingness to destroy the social democratic institutions and the policies put in the field since the end of the Second World War is one of the most striking features of Thatcherism<sup>128</sup>. With the 1980 Employment Act and the Tebbit’s Employment Act of 1982, Thatcher’s government tried to give employers some weapons to fight against trade unions, enhancing also the legal responsibility of the unionists in case of illegal class actions. Closed shop and picketing practices were strongly limited and regulated by law<sup>129</sup>.

The opposition to any state involvement in the economy can be considered as the main point

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<sup>124</sup> GREEN, Ewen H.H., *op. cit.*, p. 27.

<sup>125</sup> GAMBLE, Andrew, *loc. cit.*, p. 121.

<sup>126</sup> GAMBLE, Andrew, *op. cit.*, p.29.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.* p.28.

<sup>128</sup> GAMBLE, Andrew, *loc. cit.*, p. 113.

<sup>129</sup> CHILDS, David, *op. cit.*, p. 210.

of the New Right political program<sup>130</sup>. This latter idea was upheld by all Thatcher's executives. The public presence in the economy had to be limited to police functions, meaning that the state had to establish clear rules disciplining economic interaction and then enforce their respect<sup>131</sup>. This was believed to be the most important reason why the good and free functioning of the economy needed a strong and reliable state. The theory at the basis of Thatcher's economic policies was monetarism, developed by the American economist Milton Friedman. In a few words, monetarists believe that the amount of spending in the economy is determined by the money supply<sup>132</sup>. The Conservative right was convinced that it was necessary to reduce public welfare programs in order to drastically cut taxes. In this way, individuals could have spent autonomously their money and, according to monetarism, generate better results than those that would have been obtained if their money were spent by public authorities<sup>133</sup>. As argued by Michael Blaney, the money supply was "*expected to take on the role that was formerly played by incomes policies*"<sup>134</sup>. Monetarists were convinced that in order to stabilize economy the true priority was controlling inflation, regardless of the costs in terms of unemployment<sup>135</sup>. The basis of this revolution, at least in the UK, must be found in the alleged failures of Keynesian economics, which was held responsible for British incapacity to compete with West Germany, Japan and United States in the world markets<sup>136</sup>. To complete our brief analysis of the revolution imposed by Thatcherism, it is worth underlining the distance of this last movement even from traditional British Conservatism. Conservatives have traditionally been the party of "*the community rather than the market, the party of protection, imperialism, paternalism, and intervention, not the party of free trade, cosmopolitanism, self-help, and laissez-faire*"<sup>137</sup>. Thatcher had indeed been criticized by a large group of Tory influent politicians and even former leaders – Heath and Macmillan – because of her alleged adherence to a form of radical liberalism, which was at odds with "true" Conservatism. Thatcher was even used to quote the economic and political thought of liberal intellectuals such as von Hayek, Adam Smith and J.S. Mill in her speeches. For a party that had spent the nineteenth century fighting against liberal anti-interventionism, this new pattern could appear as extremely contradictory<sup>138</sup>.

Margaret Thatcher's opinion on the EEC was very different from the one shared by the

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<sup>130</sup> GAMBLE, Andrew, *op.cit.*, p. 28.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.* p.30.

<sup>132</sup> CHILDS, David, *op.cit.* p. 206.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>134</sup> BLANEY, Michael, "Conservative Economic Strategy" in HALL, Stuart, JACQUES, Martin, *loc.cit.*, p. 136.

<sup>135</sup> GAMBLE, Andrew, *op.cit.*, p. 41.

<sup>136</sup> CHILDS, David, *op.cit.* p. 205.

<sup>137</sup> GAMBLE, Andrew, *loc.cit.*, p. 119.

<sup>138</sup> GREEN, Ewen H.H., *op.cit.*, pp. 31-34.

majority of the Conservative Party between the 1970s and the 1980s. In 1979 Conservatives were formally and effectively committed to EEC membership and conducted their European electoral campaign on these premises. According to some commentators, Thatcher never really liked the EEC but she tried to exploit membership to the advantage of British firms<sup>139</sup>. During her first years as a politician, Thatcher had supported the project of British entry into the EEC in a very pragmatic way. She immediately regarded the huge Community market as an interesting opportunity for Britain. Nevertheless, as several commentators and politicians noted during the 1975 referendum campaign, she was not committed to the European ideal as such, like Edward Heath, but just to the economic benefits of membership<sup>140</sup>. As explained by Desmond Dinan, Thatcher saw the EEC as an intergovernmental organization whose sole task was to remove barriers to commerce and investment, leaving to the governments the responsibility to coordinate economic and foreign policies<sup>141</sup>.

At the beginning of Thatcher's first mandate, Conservatives were definitely considered – at least in the UK – a pro-European party<sup>142</sup>. Since the early 1960s the Tories had started to look at the EEC as a new horizon for Britain, in a world dominated by the US and the USSR<sup>143</sup>. Macmillan was not an EEC supporter and his government had even given a crucial contribution to the establishment of EFTA in 1960<sup>144</sup>. As before argued, the reasons at the basis of Macmillan's policy shift were of political and strategic nature. Conservatives pro-European stance was further strengthened by Labour's attitude on the issue. When a group of Labour politicians committed to the EEC decided to quit the party to found the SDP, anti-Europeanism assumed an even more extremist attitude, which was immediately emphasized by Conservatives that at the same time underlined their positive approach to the issue<sup>145</sup>.

In the following years, the relationships between Britain and the rest of Europe reached first a positive peak, with the signing of the Single European Act (SEA) to which Thatcher's government gave a substantial contribution (1986), and then a negative extreme, with the belligerent speech given by the British Prime Minister in Bruges (1988). Eventually, as argued by several commentators, Europe was one of the main reasons why Thatcher had to resign in 1990<sup>146</sup>. The SEA accepted some of the proposals made by the British government – which were focused on the completion of the single market and on the enhancement of

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<sup>139</sup> DINAN, Desmond, *op.cit.*, p. 62.

<sup>140</sup> GREEN, Ewen H.H., *op.cit.*, pp. 172-173.

<sup>141</sup> DINAN, Desmond, *op.cit.*, p. 62.

<sup>142</sup> MORRIS, Peter, *loc.cit.*, p. 129.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 126.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 130.

<sup>146</sup> GREEN, Ewen H.H., *op.cit.*, pp. 171; CHILDS, David, *op.cit.*, pp. 253-256.

foreign policy cooperation – but at the same time contained several disposition related to qualified majority vote in the Council and to a stronger role for the EP and the Commission. These last two points, of course, did not like to the British Prime Minister<sup>147</sup>. As argued by Morris, the SEA – which resulted mainly from intergovernmental cooperation – was successfully shaped also thanks to the important contribution of Thatcher and her party<sup>148</sup>. In the following years, Thatcher realized that Europe was starting to move towards a more federalist direction, and this was totally at odds with the intergovernmental idea she professed<sup>149</sup>. The Bruges speech marked the lowest point of the relationship between Thatcher and Europe, symbolized by the famous sentence “*we have not successfully rolled back the frontiers of the state in Britain, only to see them reimposed at a European level with a European super-state exercising a new dominance from Brussels*”<sup>150</sup>. When the EEC debate started to focus on EMU, Thatcher complaints became even louder, due to the alleged risk posed to national sovereignty by a project aimed at putting in common member states’ monetary policies<sup>151</sup>.

The 1979 European elections represented an enormous success for the Tories, attained just one month after their conquest of a clear majority at the Commons. As already mentioned in the previous section, the Conservative Party gained sixty of the eighty-one seats available to Britain<sup>152</sup>. The electoral manifesto drafted for this occasion was aimed at highlighting the advantages of EEC membership for the UK. In particular, the document tried to fit the new Conservative project for Britain into the EEC, showing the Community’s capacity to liberalize and deregulate European markets, enhancing free competition<sup>153</sup>. Moreover, the Conservative manifesto rejected the threats to national sovereignty coming from an elected European Parliament – which is called “Parliament” and not “assembly” as in the Labour manifesto – stating that:

*“The Parliament already has the power it needs and when directly elected there will be a growth in its political influence. The first essential is to use these powers more effectively in establishing proper democratic control at every level of Community decision-making in*

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<sup>147</sup> DINAN, Desmond, *op.cit.*, pp. 78-83.

<sup>148</sup> MORRIS, Peter, *loc.cit.*, p. 131.

<sup>149</sup> GREEN, Ewen H.H., *op.cit.*, pp. 171.

<sup>150</sup> THATCHER, Margaret, “Speech to the College of Europe (“The Bruges Speech”)", website of the Margaret Thatcher Foundation, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/107332>, page consulted on the 5<sup>th</sup> of April 2015.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 85-89.

<sup>152</sup> GORDON, Ian, *loc.cit.*, p. 166.

<sup>153</sup> THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY (2), *Conservative Manifesto for Europe 1979*, London, May 1979, SW1P 3HH, pp. 16-17.

*the interests of ordinary people*”<sup>154</sup>.

The elected parliament was thus seen as a resource rather than as a problem, able to enhance internal democracy in the Community. The Conservative Party committed itself to reform some aspects of the EEC, underlining the necessity to strike a better deal on budgetary contribution and to revise CAP expenditure, in order to decrease total spending and direct more money on other policy areas<sup>155</sup>. Conservatives were in favour of stronger foreign policy coordination between member states of the Community and between the Community and NATO<sup>156</sup>. As noted by Gordon, Labour manifesto did not share this latter idea<sup>157</sup>. The way in which Conservatives presented their point of view towards the EEC and its institutions was the result of a precise strategy embraced by the party already several years before the elections, when the Conservative leadership identified the EEC membership as the best strategy to boost the political and economic interest of the UK.

At the 1975 referendum, the eighty-five per cent of Conservative electors voted in favour of continued British membership<sup>158</sup>. The referendum campaign had a fundamental role in strengthening Conservative pro-European attitude<sup>159</sup>. Conservatives decided as early as in 1976 to support the principle of direct elections to the EP, starting to prepare their European electoral campaign in that same year<sup>160</sup>. In a document published by the Conservative Political Centre in 1976, the support to direct elections was reiterated, underlining the importance of the EP as an instrument to enhance EEC internal democracy<sup>161</sup>. The Conservative Party, contrarily to what Labour did, decided to allow its MPs to run for European elections, believing that it would have been a good way to establish a good connection between Westminster and Strasbourg<sup>162</sup>. Nevertheless, a few doubts on the effective feasibility of the double mandate – based on the experience at the non-elected parliament – were expressed:

*“Even now it is difficult for British members of the European Parliament to carry out their legislative and constituency functions effectively, with constant travelling to and fro. It would, however, be*

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<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>155</sup> THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY (2), *op.cit.*, pp. 13-14-19.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

<sup>157</sup> GORDON, Ian, *loc.cit.*, p. 178.

<sup>158</sup> MORRIS, Peter, *loc.cit.*, pp. 126-129.

<sup>159</sup> GORDON, Ian, *loc.cit.*, p. 167.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>161</sup> CONSERVATIVE POLITICAL CENTRE, *Our Voice in Europe: A discussion document on direct elections to the European Parliament*, Crawley (Sussex), March 1983, CPC n°583, p. 6.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.



*unreasonable and unduly authoritarian to suggest that British MPs should be prevented by law from standing for election*”<sup>163</sup>

In a speech given a few days before voting, Thatcher made clear that there were a few important issues to be solved between the EEC and the UK, emphasizing again budgetary contribution. But still,

*“the difference between us and Labour is that we shall work as genuine friends and partners to build and strengthen the Community, not, like many Labour candidates, as a Trojan Horse secretly moving to destroy it”*<sup>164</sup>.

The idea to create a single cohesive team working in Brussels and in London was clearly articulated<sup>165</sup>. In view of the 1983 general elections, the government wanted to re-emphasize its positive attitude towards the EEC. In the pamphlet “Britain in the European Community: A Positive Approach”, the point of view of the British executive towards the policy areas in which the EEC was engaged is presented. As in the manifesto, particular attention is given to the way in which the general government objectives can be realized thanks to the common market membership<sup>166</sup>. For example:

*“The Community is the world’s largest trading unit. It exercises an influence on the terms governing world trade far greater than any member state could exert on its own. This influence must be directed towards the treaty objective of contributing to the progressive abolition of restrictions on international trade (original text underlined) on a basis of reciprocity and mutual advantage”*<sup>167</sup>.

#### ***IV. The EEC Budget***

Even when Britain finally joined the EEC, controversies arose during the negotiations concerning first of all the British contribution to the Community budget and secondly the complicated issue of the effective usefulness of the Common Agricultural Policy for the United Kingdom<sup>168</sup>. This occurred despite the goodwill of the Prime Minister Edward Heath, determined to eliminate every obstacle on the road to membership. Both the main British

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<sup>163</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>164</sup> THATCHER, Margaret, “Party Election Broadcast”, website of the Margaret Thatcher Foundation, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/112202>, page consulted on the 7<sup>th</sup> of April 2015, p. 2.

<sup>165</sup> THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY, *op.cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>166</sup> THE FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE, *Britain in the European Community: Positive Approach*, London, 1983, Dd 8333507 Pro 19040.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>168</sup> DINAN, Desmond, *op.cit.*, p. 45.

political parties believed the contribution of their country to the EEC budget to be unfair. The claim was that the UK did not receive from the Community-financed policies an amount of benefits sufficient to justify the financial burden, due to the fact that the Community expenditure was concentrated on the CAP<sup>169</sup>. Yet, as we shall see, although Tories and Labour shared the objective to decrease British budgetary contribution, their respective commitments were based on very different motivations.

When Harold Wilson returned to power in 1974, his government asked for a renegotiation of the British EEC entry terms, whose unfairness had been denounced by Labour since the conclusion of the accession talks. Obtaining a rebate on the contribution to the Community budget became one of the chief aims of Labour negotiators<sup>170</sup>. At the Dublin European Council of March 1975, the UK obtained some concessions and an array of transitional provisions that concealed the real costs of membership until the end of the decade<sup>171</sup>. As explained by the same government in a White Paper reporting on the negotiations, it was established that any member state had a right to refund if its contribution was disproportionate with respect to its economic growth or share of Community GNP<sup>172</sup>. Lately, as argued by Dinan, Wilson's achievement proved to be just a ploy to obtain the popular approval of British membership at the referendum<sup>173</sup>. In a handbook published in preparation to the 1979 European elections, the same Labour Party underlined the insufficient result achieved by Wilson's government on the budgetary issue:

*“Despite this (the renegotiation of entry terms) and subsequent Government efforts, the budgetary system has continued to operate to the disadvantage of the UK. In 1976, Britain made the third largest contribution to the budget (about £200 million) though it ranked seventh among the nine in terms of per capita gross domestic product”*<sup>174</sup>.

According to this same brochure, the reason why the UK budgetary contribution to the budget was so unfair had to be found in the way in which the EEC spent the money it was provided with. In particular, the huge weight of the CAP in Community expenditures was to the detriment of the UK, which imported a high percentage of its food from third countries and

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<sup>169</sup> SWEENEY, Jane P., *op.cit.*, p. 101.

<sup>170</sup> FORSTER, Anthony, *op.cit.*, p. 49.

<sup>171</sup> WALL, Stephen, *op.cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>172</sup> CHILDS, David, *op.cit.*, pp. 181-182.

<sup>173</sup> DINAN, Desmond, *op.cit.*, p. 62.

<sup>174</sup> THE LABOUR PARTY (3), *Labour Party Campaign Handbook: The EEC*, London, 1979, B/011/79, p. 20-21.



had a lower number of people employed in the primary sector<sup>175</sup>. The point of view on budget expressed by Labour in the European elections manifesto is equally sharp:

*“The Labour Party believes that the Community budget should promote a fairer distribution of resources within the EEC and the convergence of the economic performance of member states. We also feel that justice and equity demands that contribution and receipts should be related in some way to each country’s wealth. However, at the moment, the way the Community raises and spends its money disregards all of these principles. (...) we are seeking a more equitable collection of Community funds so that it is closely related to the GDP per head of member states. What is more, however, we shall be looking for a sharp reduction over the years, in real terms, in the absolute size of the budget itself”*<sup>176</sup>.

Labour’s case for reforming and reducing EEC expenditure was not determined by a willingness to parsimoniously manage public money but by the desire to decrease as such the financial endowment of the Community<sup>177</sup>. On the contrary, as before showed, at the national level Labour was advocating massive programs of public ownership and state intervention in the economy<sup>178</sup>. One can therefore argue that Labour’s pledge to reduce the EEC budget was an attempt to decrease the overall influence of the Community on member states and to free resources useful to the pursuit of the interventionist strategies advocated in the European manifesto<sup>179</sup>.

The true “budgetary question”, however, was raised and resolved by Margaret Thatcher. A few months after her first electoral victory, in occasion of the November 1979 Dublin European Council, she immediately asked for a reimbursement of the money that Britain had paid to the EEC in the last years without obtaining any substantial benefit<sup>180</sup>. According to Gamble, this willingness to clash with the other members of the Community demonstrated that the new British government had already decided to privilege the partnership with the US to the collaboration with the continental allies<sup>181</sup>. At first, Thatcher obtained two provisional rebates on British contribution, in 1979 and in 1980, and eventually – at the 1984

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<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>176</sup> THE LABOUR PARTY (2), *op.cit.*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>177</sup> SWEENEY, Jane P., *op.cit.*, p. 101.

<sup>178</sup> See page 16.

<sup>179</sup> THE LABOUR PARTY, (2), *op.cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>180</sup> GREEN, Ewen H.H., *op.cit.*, p. 176.

<sup>181</sup> GAMBLE, Andrew, *op.cit.*, p. 106.

Fontainebleau Summit – a definitive settlement<sup>182</sup>. This latter result was achieved after several years of harsh dispute between European institutions and British government, during which, in 1982, the UK even decided to block the procedure of agricultural prices fixing until the resolution of the budgetary question<sup>183</sup>. As we shall see in the last chapter of this work, the British budgetary question provoked also an inter-institutional crisis within the same EEC at the end of 1982, with the EP opposing the Council's decisions to satisfy Thatcher's requests. Already in 1983, the Commission issued a Green Paper in which the need to adjust imbalances in the various budgetary contributions was recognized<sup>184</sup>

Between Labour and Conservatives there was therefore substantial agreement on the unfairness of the British contribution to the budget and also on the fact that the CAP system was the root cause of the problem<sup>185</sup>. The two parties also agreed on the necessity to establish objective criteria to collect Community revenues, relating the contribution of each state to its wealth or population. The Tories, however, during the years in which the budgetary question was being discussed, carried on supporting the Community, even though they were always keen to underline the absolute necessity to solve the problem as soon as possible:

*“The Community must find a lasting solution to its budget problem. Its future development will be in jeopardy unless the financial burdens and benefits of Community policies are distributed fairly among the member states. (...) The balance of Community spending policies must be improved. More of taxpayers money should go on developing social, regional, energy, industrial and other policies. The rate of growth of CAP expenditure must be controlled”*<sup>186</sup>.

For Conservatives, differently from Labour, the commitment to reform the EEC budget was a direct consequence of the general pledge to fight against undue public expenditure<sup>187</sup>. Thatcher believed that this was also a question of fairness and equality among members. Without providing a lasting solution to the budgetary problem, according to the Prime Minister, the British public opinion would have started to oppose the Community, putting at risk its future developments<sup>188</sup>.

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<sup>182</sup> GREEN, Ewen H.H., *op.cit.*, pp. 176 – 177; DINAN, Desmond, *op.cit.*, pp. 61-64.

<sup>183</sup> DELWIT, Pascal, *op.cit.*, p. 164.

<sup>184</sup> WALL, Stephen, *op.cit.*, pp. 18-19.

<sup>185</sup> SWEENEY, Jane P., *op.cit.*, p. 101.

<sup>186</sup> THE FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE, *op.cit.*, p. 17.

<sup>187</sup> GORDON, Ian, *loc.cit.*, p. 178.

<sup>188</sup> DINAN, Desmond, *op.cit.*, p. 62.

## ***V. The Common Agricultural Policy***

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) was inaugurated in the 1960s and became very rapidly the most important field of action of the new Community created by the Treaty of Rome (1957). The main sponsor of the new common policy was the French President Charles de Gaulle, for whom the establishment of the CAP was a precondition to complete the fundamental customs union, at the basis of the Common Market<sup>189</sup>. Indeed, the French President was not a Euro-enthusiast. As it is well known, he supported the intergovernmental management of the Community, while opposing any federal or supranational development of the EEC, as illustrated by the famous “empty chair” crisis of 1966<sup>190</sup>. De Gaulle was convinced that, if provided with a CAP, the EEC could represent for his country a huge consumer market for agricultural products<sup>191</sup>. Moreover, France in that moment had a very big and antiquate agricultural sector that in this way could be strongly subsidized and protected from free-market pressures<sup>192</sup>. The CAP – whose basic principles had already been laid down in the Treaty of Rome – was officially completed at the end of 1964, with the dispositions concerning cereal prices. In 1962, the six member states had already found an agreement on a price support system covering the eighty-five per cent of the Community agricultural production<sup>193</sup>. According to the Treaty of Rome, the CAP had to have an important role in funding the Community, but finding a compromise on this point was not easy. In 1970, during the important The Hague Conference, the EEC members reached an agreement on the so-called “own-resource” system, thanks to which the Community was given a certain financial autonomy. It was established that EEC own money had to come from the duties on industrial goods and from the agricultural levies plus a small amount of the VAT revenues of each member state, not exceeding the one per cent<sup>194</sup>.

The CAP became extremely unpopular in the UK for several reasons. According to its critics, the CAP would have increased food prices, distorted national production by fostering the development of the highly subsidized cereal cultivations to the detriment of the others. Moreover, it would have obligated to abandon the system of deficiency payments to farmers, imposing also a huge burden on the UK in terms of payments<sup>195</sup>. The British agricultural sector was quite small in comparison to those of other EEC members, most notably France and Italy. As a consequence, it was understood that the CAP – on which about the seventy-

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<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>190</sup> PARR, Helen, *op.cit.*, p. 49.

<sup>191</sup> DINAN, Desmond, *op.cit.*, p.32.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>194</sup> DINAN, Desmond, *op.cit.*, p. 44.

<sup>195</sup> PARR, Helen, *op.cit.*, p. 20.

five per cent of the whole Community budget was spent – would not have had a relevant impact on British economy as a whole. Due to the “own resource” system on which the EEC balance sheet was based, the costs to be born by the UK became higher and higher. As explained by the Labour Common Market Safeguards Committee:

*“Our notional 1% VAT contribution is higher because we consume an above average proportion of our GNP and our payments to the EEC budget from import levies and dues are greater because we import both more food and more other products from the rest of the world than the EEC average. The result is that we receive less than 10% of the EEC budget disbursement, but we pay in about 20% of the total revenue. This is why we have to pay in such a huge net amount every year – about £1,000m in 1979, rising to £1,300m in 1980”<sup>196</sup>.*

Even the White Paper prepared by Heath’s government to present the terms of entry into the EEC admitted that the CAP would have been an expensive business for the UK<sup>197</sup>. During the years, the CAP and the allegedly unjustified burden it imposed on the British balance sheet in terms of contributions to the EEC budget became a major issue for Labour and Conservatives. They both assumed an overly critical attitude vis-à-vis the agricultural policy of the Community, agreeing on the necessity to reform the system as soon as possible.

The CAP issue was also discussed by the Labour government during the renegotiation rounds leading to the 1975 referendum on membership<sup>198</sup>. On that occasion, Wilson achieved limited concessions on the access of foreign products into the Community market, as pointed out in the booklet in which Labour government invited to vote “Yes” at the referendum:

*“The Government also won a better deal on food imports from countries outside the Common Market, particularly for Commonwealth sugar and for New Zealand dairy products”<sup>199</sup>.*

Those renegotiated terms, however, did not satisfy Labour militants. An official statement from the 1977 Annual Conference accused the CAP of having “*distorted the patterns of farmer returns*” and to have “*inflated the level of producer prices in a way which has been wholly irrational for British agriculture*”<sup>200</sup>. The point of view expressed in the European

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<sup>196</sup> THE LABOUR COMMON MARKET SAFEGUARDS COMMITTEE, *op.cit.*, p. 10.

<sup>197</sup> FORSTER, Anthony, *op.cit.*, p. 42.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 48-49.

<sup>199</sup> HER MAJESTY GOVERNMENT, *Britain’s New Deal in Europe*, Hastings, 1975, p. 9.

<sup>200</sup> THE LABOUR PARTY (1), *op.cit.*, p. 6.

elections manifesto was not less radical. In the document, the irrationality of the CAP functioning was sharply underlined. It was claimed that the Common Agricultural Policy was too much oriented towards the producer, which benefitted from the rich European subventions, while the consumer was obligated to pay for subsidizing “*backward agriculture through inflated food prices*”<sup>201</sup>. The manifesto loudly asked to reduce the level of support prices in order to block the accumulation of food surpluses, to diversify the support strategy according to the exigencies of the specific territories and to attribute to national governments the responsibility of proposing structural and social reforms related to the first sector<sup>202</sup>. In the section on agriculture there was also a proposal to withdraw altogether from the CAP if these and other fundamental reforms would not have been achieved<sup>203</sup>.

As for every other controversial issue concerning the EEC in that period, the Tories assumed a critical but reformist stance without embracing Labour’s threatening and pessimistic attitude. The Conservative manifesto for the 1979 general elections contains a clear pledge to reform the CAP and to impose a “*freeze in CAP prices for products in structural surplus*”<sup>204</sup>. This commitment was reiterated also in the manifesto for European elections, in which the case for a Common Agricultural Policy within the EEC was plainly supported but the negative consequences of the CAP on consumers and taxpayers were underlined, exactly as Labour did<sup>205</sup>.

A point on which the two parties sharply differed was the policy to adopt on the Green Pound. The Green Pound was the currency unit employed to calculate both the British contributions to the Agricultural Fund and the repayments obtained. The Tories wanted to devalue the Green Pound in order to enhance the competitiveness of British products in the European market<sup>206</sup>, while Labour did not want any devaluation, claiming that such a decision would have increased food prices even more<sup>207</sup>. The Conservative Research Department, in a reserved document distributed to Conservative candidates a few weeks before European elections, added that Labour proposals for CAP reform were largely unrealistic. For example, Labour’s request to cut support prices was believed to be at odds with the rising costs of production borne by producers, while the request to increase national schemes of support was

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<sup>201</sup> THE LABOUR PARTY (2), *op.cit.*, p. 8.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>204</sup> THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY (1), “1979 Conservative Party General Election Manifesto”, web database of Conservative Party manifestos, <http://www.conservativemanifesto.com/1979/1979-conservative-manifesto.shtml> (page consulted on the 8<sup>th</sup> of April 2015).

<sup>205</sup> THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY (2), *op.cit.*, pp. 13-14.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>207</sup> THE LABOUR PARTY (2), *op.cit.*, p. 8.

considered too expensive<sup>208</sup>.

At the beginning of the 1980s the CAP system became totally unmanageable, due to the huge accumulation of surpluses and the impossibility to give consistent financial support to any other policy<sup>209</sup>. In his book on Britain in the EEC, Stephen Wall, a former British civil servant, revealed that at the beginning of the 1980s reforming the CAP was a tremendously difficult task:

*“Helmut Schmidt had told Mrs Thatcher in 1982 that the British could not carry the day by saying that the burden represented by the CAP was ridiculous and should be got rid of: the CAP was the price that had to be paid, however monstrous it was, in order to obtain the adherence of some of the Community’s members. The French and Italians, for example, would always say that they had joined the Community knowing that the CAP was there to help them. Mrs Thatcher acknowledged that, given that the structure of the budget of the CAP had been wrong from the start, it would now be very difficult to make fundamental changes”<sup>210</sup>.*

Between the 1970s and the 1980s, despite the pressures for reform, the CAP remained largely unchanged. Thatcher’s approach to the issue became always more truculent, as well as her general relationship with the EEC partners and the common institutions. She also had a quarrel on the issue with Jacques Chirac, the French Prime Minister of the time, whose chief aim was safeguarding the CAP from British attacks<sup>211</sup>. Another attempt to reform the expensive common policy was made by the President of the Commission Jacques Delors, whose reform package for the multiannual financial framework contained an array of measures aimed at partially redesigning the CAP<sup>212</sup>. These last efforts, like all the others carried out until that moment, did not produce the expected results.

## ***VI. Security, Defence and Political Cooperation***

The European Political Cooperation (EPC) was launched by the foreign affairs ministers of

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<sup>208</sup> THE CONSERVATIVE RESEARCH DEPARTMENT (2), “Briefing Note for Candidates: The Labour Manifesto”, website of the Margaret Thatcher Foundation, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/118903> (consulted on the 13th of April 2015), p. 12.

<sup>209</sup> DINAN, Desmond, *op.cit.*, p. 63.

<sup>210</sup> WALL, Stephen, *op.cit.*, p. 26.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74.

<sup>212</sup> DINAN, Desmond, *op.cit.*, p. 335.



the six EEC countries in October 1970<sup>213</sup>. At the beginning, it was a quite loose system of coordination, with reunions between foreign ministers held every two years. New ideas for strengthening political cooperation among European states started to emerge in 1981 when, due to the new tensions arising between USSR and US, the Genscher – Colombo proposals, gathered into the “Draft European Act”, were presented. This latter document was at the basis of the 1983 Stuttgart Solemn Declaration on European Union, signed during a European Council reunion held in the German city<sup>214</sup>.

The European Parliament, which at the beginning of the 1980s was striving to obtain greater powers in the EEC institutional asset, was not satisfied with the Stuttgart document. Altiero Spinelli, one of the founding fathers of modern Europe, was the main developer of the “Draft Treaty Establishing the European Union”, adopted by the EP in February 1984. Political cooperation, defence and security were among the most important fields in which the Spinelli Group sought to extend the authority of the new EU, coherently with the spirit of a Treaty that tried to draw a federalist trajectory for the future of the continent. Dinan underlined that the Stuttgart Declaration had not been able to establish a closer collaboration among member states on foreign policy and security issues<sup>215</sup>. The underlying objective of the Spinelli Treaty was to transform the three communities (CECA, EEC, Euratom) into a single federal entity provided with a bicameral legislative structure constituted by the Parliament and the Council<sup>216</sup>. The Draft Treaty proposed to advance European integration not only with respect to the powers attributed to the institutions but also from the point of view of policy-making, enhancing the authority of the new Union in an array of areas. As a matter of fact, the EU envisaged by the Spinelli Group was a supra-national entity, provided with an autonomous juridical personality (article six), whose inhabitants were granted citizenship rights independent from their national ones<sup>217</sup>. Thus, on political cooperation, Spinelli proposed to give to the new European Union even more extensive powers than those listed in the Stuttgart Declaration<sup>218</sup>. The EU had to constitute, in a few words, a supranational framework able to embed the foreign policies carried out by its member states, with extensive responsibilities in terms of coordination. This was, according to Stephen Wall, an attempt to “absorb” political

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<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68.

<sup>216</sup> POLLACK, Anita, *op.cit.*, p. 55.

<sup>217</sup> EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, “Draft Treaty Establishing the European Union”, website of the “Centre Virtuel de la Connaissance sur l’Europe” (CVCE), 18 December 2013, [http://www.cvce.eu/en/obj/draft\\_treaty\\_establishing\\_the\\_european\\_union\\_14\\_february\\_1984-en-0c1f92e8-db44-4408-b569-c464cc1e73c9.html](http://www.cvce.eu/en/obj/draft_treaty_establishing_the_european_union_14_february_1984-en-0c1f92e8-db44-4408-b569-c464cc1e73c9.html) (page consulted on the 20<sup>th</sup> of April 2015), pp. 5-6.

<sup>218</sup> WALL, Stephen, *op.cit.*, p. 43.

cooperation into a federal structure<sup>219</sup>.

In negotiating the Single European Act (SEA), the British government assumed a prominent role in establishing the main guidelines to draft the chapter on political cooperation, presenting, in 1985, its own reform proposal. The policy – according to the UK – had to be officially formalized and its influence on security matters extended. It was also suggested to establish a small secretariat and to create a compulsory mechanism of consultation among heads of government before taking autonomous decisions in the foreign policy field. The British suggestions were largely received by France and Germany and approved at the Milan European Council of June 1985, the same in which it was officially decided to hold a new Intergovernmental Conference (IGC)<sup>220</sup>. The SEA shaped political cooperation in an essentially intergovernmental way, even though the Commission and the Parliament were granted a stronger role<sup>221</sup>.

Between the two main British political parties, during the historical period of our interest, there was a real cleavage on the issue of political cooperation. If they substantially agreed on the necessity to reform both the CAP and the budgetary arrangement, although starting from completely different attitudes, their views on the possibility to create stricter foreign policy coordination among EEC members were hardly reconcilable.

Gordon noted that the Conservative manifesto for the 1979 European elections – differently from Labour's – clearly stated the favourable attitude of the Tories towards an enhancement of foreign policy cooperation among EEC members<sup>222</sup>:

*“In a world dominated by the super-powers, Britain and the other Member States are best able to protect their international interest, and to contribute to world peace and stability, when they speak with one voice or at least in unison. By working with our partners, Britain's own position in the world can be strengthened and our objectives secured more readily”*<sup>223</sup>.

The manifesto expressed also a willingness to improve cooperation between NATO and EEC, *“although defence is not covered by the Treaties”*<sup>224</sup>. The role of the Community was considered as potentially crucial in the development of technologically advanced – and thus

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<sup>219</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 53-54.

<sup>221</sup> DINAN, Desmond, *op.cit.*, p. 547.

<sup>222</sup> GORDON, Ian, *loc.cit.*, p. 178.

<sup>223</sup> THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY (2), *op.cit.*, p. 10.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.



costly – defensive devices<sup>225</sup>. Even after a few years of experience in Europe, Thatcher's government remained a supporter of a mechanism to coordinate member states' foreign policy actions, as demonstrated by the proactive attitude embraced before the Milan European Council. In the already quoted booklet "Britain in the European Community: A Positive Approach", the commitment to achieve an ever closer coordination on foreign policy matters is reiterated and expanded, making also reference to the importance of expressing a united position in international fora and conferences:

*"The Ten should now extend the range of subjects (original text underlined) covered by political cooperation and seek to widen the areas in which a common view prevails. The Ten must develop the practice of acting as well as speaking as one. This applies both to particular issues such as the Middle East or Poland, and to joint action in the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, the United Nations, and other international fora"*<sup>226</sup>.

The Labour Party, however, since the first direct elections to the EP, assumed a rather pessimistic stance on political cooperation. The Labour manifesto for the 1979 European elections did not even mention the issue of political cooperation. The only reference made to EEC external relations is a criticism addressed to the unfair way in which trade relations between EEC industrialized members and third world countries were organized<sup>227</sup>. Foreign policy coordination – intended as a way to improve European security and enhance EEC importance in world politics – was directly tackled in the highly polemic pamphlet "The Common Market: Enough is Enough" published in 1980 by the already mentioned Labour Common Market Safeguards Committee, to which, as we said, most Labour leaders of that period were affiliated. In this booklet a rather "nostalgic" vision of the United Kingdom international standing is presented, with the aim to convince the reader of the possibility to preserve a great world role for Britain even without staying into the EEC<sup>228</sup>. The advantages of being part of a united front in conducting international negotiations were denied, as well as the desirability of a closer connection between EEC and NATO, underlining the dangerous tendency of the Community "to act as an independent power bloc"<sup>229</sup>. On the Conservative idea of involving the Community in the defence sector, the point of view expressed in the pamphlet was very sharp:

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<sup>225</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>226</sup> THE FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

<sup>227</sup> THE LABOUR PARTY (2), *op. cit.*, p. 8.

<sup>228</sup> THE LABOUR COMMON MARKET SAFEGUARDS COMMITTEE, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibidem*.

*“The EEC would be well advised to stay out of defence and arms procurement and as long as we are in the Common Market the Labour Party should make it absolutely clear that it will not tolerate nor be a part of any assumption of military responsibility made by the EEC”<sup>230</sup>.*

This last proposition echoed the opposition to the Pleven Plan for a European Defence Community proposed in the early 1950s. In that occasion, the Labour government, through the words of Ernest Bevin, expressed its utmost opposition to the project of providing the new European construction with defence and security prerogatives independently from NATO<sup>231</sup>.

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<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>231</sup> DELWIT, Pascal, *op.cit.*, p. 141.

## **2. The European Socialists in the First Elected European Parliament**

This chapter will be aimed at analysing the second independent variable we are using in order to explain the behaviour of the Labour MEPs between 1979 and 1984, namely the disagreements affecting Labour's relationship with the Confederation of the Socialist Parties of the European Community (CSPEC). Labour's anti-Europeanism and its British-oriented attitude were at the basis of the lack of cooperation and the frequent contrasts of the party with the Confederation. Labour's point of view on EEC reform, as we will show at the end of this chapter, often differed from the one expressed by the other European socialists. This tense relationship obviously had repercussions in the EP, preventing sometimes Labour MEPs to align with the rest of the Socialist Group. However, the Socialist Group and the Confederation, although strongly connected, were formally separated. As we will point out already in this chapter, even though more details will be given in the next one, the Labour MEPs, once involved in the everyday working of the European Parliament, developed a form of loyalty towards their political group. However, they remained committed to the official line of the party keeping the defence of the national interest as a priority.

We are going to proceed as follows: in the first section, we will describe the initial developments of transnational cooperation between socialist parties in Western Europe. Then, we will stress the main features of the CSPEC as it was when the first EP elections were held, analysing also the relationship between the Confederation and its member parties. We will finally emphasize the problems faced by the Confederation in its attempts to organize a uniform European campaign for the 1979 EP elections. In the second section, our aim will be to examine the relationship between the CSPEC and the Labour Party, showing the reasons why Labour entered into conflict with the European socialist movement. In this part of the chapter we will also examine the point of view of the other European socialists on the three policy issues that we decided to assess in this research – the CAP, the EEC budget and the area of defence, security and political cooperation – as compared with Labour's.

### ***1. The Confederation of the Socialist Parties of the European Community between the 1970s and the 1980s***

The reestablishment of the Socialist International after the end of the Second World War, which occurred in parallel with the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community

(ECSC), inaugurated a new era of cooperation among socialist parties in Western Europe<sup>232</sup>. The European socialist parties, since the creation of the First International in 1864, had developed a tradition of transnational cooperation, which would have been further refined and developed by the post-war European integration project. As argued by Lightfoot, on the one hand the European socialist parties had historically been keen to establish reciprocal connections, but on the other hand, once integrated into the political mainstream of their own polities, they became very attached to the pursuit of national interest and jealous of their autonomy and independence<sup>233</sup>. The strong commitment of each socialist party to its own national priorities was at the basis of the collapse of the Second International (1889-1914) and of the Labour and Socialist International (1923-1940), that inaugurated an era in which the “nationalist” soul of the European socialist movement prevailed on internationalism<sup>234</sup>. Despite the repeated failures, the efforts to establish a supranational mechanism of coordination had the merit to generate among European socialist parties a tendency to institutionalize their cooperation networks<sup>235</sup>.

When the six founding countries started to negotiate the ECSC treaty, their respective socialist parties organized a round of talks on the same issue. Eventually, this sort of socialist European committee issued a policy statement in which its point of view on the ECSC was expressed<sup>236</sup>. The six socialist parties, after the decision to establish the ECSC Common Assembly in Luxembourg, created also a unified Socialist Group in order to gather their representatives at the Assembly. The first President of the Group was the French Guy Mollet<sup>237</sup>. The socialists were very rapid in building up these transnational initiatives and they have been recognized a role of leadership in the organization of the future parliamentary groups active in the EP<sup>238</sup>. The Socialist Group represented – from an historical point of view – the first centre of gravity of the transnational socialist movement that developed around the future EU. Once understood that the creation of the EEC and the EURATOM would have increased the political influence of the new supranational institutions, the socialist started to further expand transnational cooperation<sup>239</sup>.

The Confederation of the Socialist Parties of the European Community was the direct descendant of the Liaison Bureau of the Socialist Parties of the European Community, born in

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<sup>232</sup> STEINNES, Kristian, *loc.cit.*, p. 52.

<sup>233</sup> LIGHTFOOT, Simon, *Europeanizing Social Democracy? The rise of the Party of European Socialists*, Abingdon – New York, Routledge, 2005, p. 27.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>235</sup> MAY, John, “Co-operation Between Socialist Parties” in Paterson W. E. and Thomas A. H., *Social Democratic Parties in Western Europe*, London, Croom Helm, 1977, p. 410. (total pages 408-428).

<sup>236</sup> HIX, Simon & LESSE, Urs, *op.cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>238</sup> SWEENEY, Jane P., *op.cit.*, p. 82.

<sup>239</sup> HIX, Simon & LESSE, Urs, *op.cit.*, pp. 10-11.

1957 with the aim to strengthen cooperation among the socialist parties of the six EEC member states<sup>240</sup>. The Confederation was mainly shaped by the national parties, with the help of the EP Socialist Group<sup>241</sup>. The Confederation had essentially the objective to approve common positions to be expressed at the European level on EEC related issues<sup>242</sup>. The transformation of the Liaison Bureau into the CSPEC, in 1974, was determined on the one hand by the will of the socialist parties to present a stronger common platform at the forthcoming European elections and on the other hand by their desire to profit of the new powers that the Parliament would have acquired once provided with a real influence on the budget<sup>243</sup>. The CSPEC, however, was much less than a true transnational political party. The parties composing the Confederation were unwilling to give up their autonomy and to destabilise their national structures in order to build a larger and comprehensive Euro-party<sup>244</sup>. The Confederation was largely dependent on the national shareholders and, as the 1979 European elections campaign will show, unable to adopt autonomous policy proposals<sup>245</sup>. The same socialists explicitly ruled out the possibility to consider the Confederation as a true political party<sup>246</sup>. During the 1970s, the transnational socialist network in Western Europe had failed to produce strong and binding connections between members. The 1979 European electoral campaign, at the supranational level, was characterized on the one hand by the great heterogeneity of the member parties and on the other hand by the incapacity of the Confederation to find a true common denominator among them. The decision to draft a common socialist manifesto for the first European elections was taken shortly after the Paris Summit of 1974 and the Confederation made all the possible efforts to realize it. It was even decided to create separate working groups for developing the different parts of the program, in order to allow the maximum involvement of every national group. Eventually, in 1977, the bureau of the Confederation combined the proposals of the various working groups in a “Draft Political Manifesto” of almost thirty pages, which was literally dismantled by the national parties. There were disagreements on the wording and the style of the document, especially between British and Germans, but also on the political content, with the French socialists who did not want to oppose explicitly the communists because they needed them at home and the Germans, who were obligated to be intransigent on this point<sup>247</sup>. The document,

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<sup>240</sup> STEINNES, Kristian, *loc.cit.*, pp. 52-53.

<sup>241</sup> PRIDHAM, Geoffrey, PRIDHAM, Pippa, *Transnational Party Co-operation and European Integration: The process towards direct elections*, London, George Allen & Unwin LTD, 1981, p. 113.

<sup>242</sup> LIGHTFOOT, Simon, *op.cit.*, p. 30.

<sup>243</sup> STEINNES, Kristian, *loc.cit.*, pp. 56-57.

<sup>244</sup> LIGHTFOOT, Simon, *op.cit.*, p. 30.

<sup>245</sup> STEINNES, Kristian, *loc.cit.*, p. 59.

<sup>246</sup> HIX, Simon & LESSE, Urs, *op.cit.*, p. 24.

<sup>247</sup> SWEENEY, Jane P., *op.cit.*, p. 85-86.

in 1978, was eventually converted into an eight pages “Political Declaration”, a sort of list of socialist principles aimed at supporting the separate national manifestos of each member party<sup>248</sup>. The last step in this process of progressive weakening of the common electoral document was the drafting of the “Appeal to the Electorate”, a short document of five pages signed by the European socialist leaders in January 1979<sup>249</sup>. In its very first page, the Appeal clearly stated that within the Western European socialist family there were still insurmountable differences:

*Our parties have inherited different experiences down the years. They operate in countries where the level of economic development, the intensity of social struggle, cultural traditions, awareness of social problems and the interplay of internal political alliances profoundly differ. Yet we share a common goal of a more human and egalitarian Europe for all our citizens*”<sup>250</sup>.

The Appeal is divided into seven sections. The document presents proposals to reform the EEC in a socialist sense, by enhancing social equity, fighting against unemployment and putting key industries under state control in order to limit the power of big multinationals on citizens’ lives. Economic planning, a leitmotif of Labour electoral campaigns during the 1970s and the 1980s was plainly advocated by the Appeal to the electorate<sup>251</sup>. The Appeal is also quite committed with human and social rights, underlining the necessity to fight against women discrimination. There was a clear pledge to stop the nuclear arm-race and also to put a brake on the technological developments on nuclear energy if the whole process would not have been placed under public control and if the protection of the environment would not have been granted<sup>252</sup>.

Maybe in order to obtain the approval of the less euro-enthusiast members, most notably British Labour and Danish Social Democrats, the following sentence was placed in the last page of the Appeal:

*The directly elected European Parliament must initially develop within the framework of the existing treaties. We recognize that any*

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<sup>248</sup> HIX, Simon & LESSE, Urs, *op.cit.*, p. 29.

<sup>249</sup> SWEENEY, Jane P., *op.cit.*, p. 88.

<sup>250</sup> CONFEDERATION OF THE SOCIALIST PARTIES OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY, “Appeal to the European Electorate”, website of the “Centre Virtuel de la Connaissance sur l’Europe” (CVCE), 23/10/2012, [http://www.cvce.eu/obj/appeal\\_to\\_the\\_european\\_electorate\\_15\\_january\\_1979-en-1ef2b623-2a9d-404c-a4df-56ebc6c542c7.html](http://www.cvce.eu/obj/appeal_to_the_european_electorate_15_january_1979-en-1ef2b623-2a9d-404c-a4df-56ebc6c542c7.html) (consulted on the 11<sup>th</sup> of April 2015), p. 2.

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

*further transfer of powers from national governments to the Community institutions or from national parliaments to the European Parliament can take place only with the clear and direct assent of the national governments and parliaments*<sup>253</sup>.

Despite their longer tradition of cooperation and transnational networking, the socialists did not manage to draft a true common electoral manifesto. The Confederation did not succeed in the attempt to catch up with the Christian-Democrats and the Liberals, both of which had agreed on common electoral programs<sup>254</sup>. As argued by Anita Pollack, the Confederation member parties had wanted to put their respective national issues at the centre of the European electoral campaign<sup>255</sup>.

The European socialist Confederation did not wage a proper transnational electoral campaign. The member parties decided to autonomously draft their electoral manifestos, attaching the Appeal to the Electorate just as an appendix. As argued by Pridham & Pridham, during the electoral campaign all the socialist parties, with the exception of Labour, expressed an even vague commitment to ameliorate Europe in a socialist sense even though they did not believe that the supranational Confederation was a necessary means to achieve this goal<sup>256</sup>. The Confederation's tasks were mainly to create a network involving socialist aspirant MEPs, to give an impression of socialist cohesion to the media and to insert a transnational element in the nine separated campaigns<sup>257</sup>.

Despite the difficulties encountered before and during the electoral round, the Socialists Group was the largest one in the first elected European Parliament. The nine member parties elected one hundred and twelve MEPs, four more than the Christian-Democrats of the EPP. The German SPD was the chief socialist party in the EP, with its thirty-five seats, followed by the French *Partie Socialiste* with twenty-one representatives. The Labour Party sent to Strasbourg seventeen Euro-deputies, a poor result that ruled out the possibility for the socialists to dominate the first elected EP<sup>258</sup>. Put together, a potential centre-right coalition formed by the Liberals and the Christian-Democrats, with or without the participation of the sixty-three Conservative MEPs – mainly elected in Britain – could have easily overtaken the socialists<sup>259</sup>. Among those composing the EP Socialist Group, there were only two parties

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<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.* p. 6.

<sup>254</sup> HIX, Simon & LESSE, Urs, *op.cit.*, p. 29.

<sup>255</sup> POLLACK, Anita, *op.cit.*, p. 66.

<sup>256</sup> PRIDHAM, Geoffrey, PRIDHAM, Pippa, *op.cit.*, p. 237-238.

<sup>257</sup> SWEENEY, Jane P., *op.cit.*, p. 117.

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 113-114.

<sup>259</sup> EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: DIRECTORATE GENERAL FOR COMMUNICATION, PUBLIC OPINION MONITORING UNIT, “European and National Elections Figured Out”, website of the European Parliament, [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/pdf/elections\\_results/review.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/pdf/elections_results/review.pdf) (consulted on 13<sup>th</sup> of April 2015), p. 30.

committed to withdrawal from the EEC: Labour and the Greenlander Finn Lynge, that left the EP when Greenland eventually quitted the organization in 1982<sup>260</sup>.

## ***II. The Confederation of the Socialist Parties of the European Community and the Labour Party***

As argued by several commentators, Labour approached the EEC “*from a very distinctive national political tradition*”, strongly influenced by nationalism<sup>261</sup>. For George & Haythorne, the reasons behind Labour’s recalcitrance towards Europe are of cultural and historical nature:

*The Labour Party was strongly influenced by the British tradition of non-conformist Christianity. It was rooted in the British working class, who formed the basis of its electorate, and specifically in the trades union movement. Indeed, unlike most other European socialist parties, the Labour Party was a product of the trades union movement. This particular national history made it very difficult for Labour to adjust to the EC. The British working class were fully imbued with the spirit of imperialism, and the attitudes that were inculcated by imperialism: a sense of national superiority, and an assumption of a privileged position*”<sup>262</sup>.

Stressing the importance of parliamentary sovereignty and national independence against any form of federal integration, Labour leaders were able to justify their opposition to the Community. As indicated by Sweeney, this policy was grounded on nationalist more than on socialist premises<sup>263</sup>. The attachment to national interest was strong enough to prevail on any commitment to socialist internationalism, for a party that since the first experiences in government had chosen to defend the role of the UK as a global power<sup>264</sup>. Labour anti-European sentiments can be already identified immediately after the Second World War. Labour wanted to safeguard the position of Britain as an independent world authority, able to stand next to the US and the USSR. The rejection of the idea to establish a closer partnership with the rest of Europe started to open a cleavage with the other Western socialist parties, for example the French one, which had started to look at the integration project as a vehicle to maintain a certain independence from the two blocks<sup>265</sup>. Labour wanted Britain to remain a

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<sup>260</sup> POLLACK, Anita, *op.cit.*, p. 19.

<sup>261</sup> GEORGE, Stephen, HAYTHORNE, Deborah, *loc.cit.*, p. 118; SWEENEY, Jane, *op.cit.* p.71.

<sup>262</sup> GEORGE, Stephen, HAYTHORNE, Deborah, *loc.cit.*, p. 112.

<sup>263</sup> SWEENEY, Jane P., *op.cit.* pp. 69-70.

<sup>264</sup> DELWIT, Pascal, *op.cit.*, pp. 135-136.

<sup>265</sup> *Ibidem.*



great world power and in this sense the perspective to relinquish part of its sovereignty to the European organization was obviously unacceptable<sup>266</sup>. Labour's aim was to safeguard its privileged relationships with British trade unions and to protect British workers; its horizon was Britain and British trade unions, on which Labour depended from a financial and electoral point of view<sup>267</sup>. As argued by Sweeney, Labour seemed to think that "*protecting the rights of British workers is far more important than advancing the position of European workers*"<sup>268</sup>.

Even when the EP was still an unelected Assembly, the relationship between the Labour delegation and the other socialists was not a good one. Peter Shore, a leading anti-Markeeter, clearly stated that Labour did not have to join the Socialist Group, whose members were on the one hand committed to a dangerous form of Euro-federalism and on the other hand compromised with centre or right-wing parties at home<sup>269</sup>. When the "Political Declaration" was eventually signed, Labour was the only party not represented by its leader at the final Brussels summit of 1978<sup>270</sup>. The Labour Party also declared that the version of the Appeal to the Electorate enclosed to its own manifesto was not "*a statement of party policy*"<sup>271</sup>. Even if the NEC had refused to endorse the text, the party was obligated to distribute the Appeal in order to obtain financial assistance from the Socialist Group to wage its own campaign<sup>272</sup>. In a commentary on the Labour European Manifesto distributed to its candidates, the Conservative Party demonstrated to have perfectly grasped the amplitude of the cleavage between Labour and the other socialist parties associated to the Confederation:

*"The Socialist Group in the European Parliament is the largest group. There are Socialists in government in 3 Community countries. However, there is no evidence that any other Socialist party in the Community would support the Manifesto drawn up by Labour's NEC. Those passages relating to Treaty amendment in particular would arouse the hostility of Socialists committed to the idea of common action at Community level. It is in the highest degree improbable that they would be "taken up" by anybody, except possibly*

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<sup>266</sup> *Ibid.* p. 142.

<sup>267</sup> SWEENEY, Jane P., *op.cit.* p. 66; Gordon, I., *loc.cit.*, p. 177; George S., Haythorne D., *loc.cit.*, p. 112

<sup>268</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71.

<sup>269</sup> POLLACK, Anita, *op.cit.*, p.13.

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>271</sup> SWEENEY, Jane P., *op.cit.*, p. 93.

<sup>272</sup> POLLACK, Anita, *op.cit.*, p. 14.

*by the French Communists*”<sup>273</sup>.

According to Conservatives, Labour had developed a form of arrogance towards its own political family<sup>274</sup>. This could be explained, again according to George and Haythorne, by Labour’s belief of having developed a superior idea of socialism, which all the other world socialist parties should have taken as a model<sup>275</sup>. The Labour Party decided to not participate in the working groups preparing the common socialist manifesto for the European elections, even though the national referendum on membership had produced a positive result<sup>276</sup>. The reason was that Labour official policy was still of thorough opposition to the principle of direct elections<sup>277</sup>. Also, the Labour Party made whatever it could to hinder the plans of the Confederation and to downplay the importance of the EP in the political life of Europe<sup>278</sup>. All the attempts made by the CSPEC to involve Labour in its transnational campaign were rebuffed, except for the economic support that, as already said, Labour had been very glad to accept<sup>279</sup>. The diversity of perspectives among the leaders of the three main European socialist parties was clear. If Brandt and Mitterrand expressed their desire to transform the European Parliament in a true supranational Chamber provided with a proper party system, Callaghan asserted again the absolute freedom of each national political subject to pursue its independent political and economic strategy<sup>280</sup>.

Between the late 1970s and the early 1980s, the Labour Party largely remained a marginal force within the CSPEC, always keen to underline the differences between its own positions and those expressed by the Confederation<sup>281</sup>. The NEC, after the elections, did not authorise Labour MEPs to serve as party delegates at the CSPEC meetings, preferring to be represented by its own International Committee and by the Labour International Department<sup>282</sup>. This latter organism, like the NEC, was dominated by anti-Markeeters<sup>283</sup>. At a Socialist Group meeting held in December 1980, a few months after the Labour’s conference vote in favour of withdrawal, Tony Benn defended this choice in front of the rest of the Socialist Group members. Delegates from almost every other EEC socialist party harshly criticized this decision<sup>284</sup>.

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<sup>273</sup> THE CONSERVATIVE RESEARCH DEPARTMENT (2), *op.cit.*, p. 16.

<sup>274</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>275</sup> GEORGE, Stephen, HAYTHORNE, Deborah, *loc.cit.*, p. 116.

<sup>276</sup> HIX, Simon & LESSE, Urs, *op.cit.*, p. 27.

<sup>277</sup> SWEENEY, Jane P., *op.cit.* p. 134.

<sup>278</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 137.

<sup>279</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>280</sup> HIX, Simon & LESSE, Urs, *op.cit.*, p. 31.

<sup>281</sup> GORDON, Ian, *loc.cit.*, p. 183.

<sup>282</sup> POLLACK, Anita, *op.cit.*, p. 67.

<sup>283</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

According to Sweeney, the new Confederation – whose chief function remained to connect the parliamentary Socialist Group with the nine national socialist parties of which it was composed – was formally separated from the Socialist Group active within the EP, although they were strongly connected<sup>285</sup>. This is indeed the normal structure of the political parties present at the EEC/EU level, which are composed of an EP party group and an organization active outside the Parliament<sup>286</sup>. During the 1970s, also the Parliamentary groups experienced a phase of intensive political development determined by the organizational dominance they achieved within the Parliament, whose agenda was increasingly established by their secretariats<sup>287</sup>.

It is very important for our research purposes to underline the separation between the Socialist Group and the Confederation. The Appeal clearly shows that, despite its opposition to the EEC as a way to politically and economically organize the continent, Labour shared a common ideological patrimony and an array of policy priorities with the other parties of the Confederation. This commonality of interests was soon discovered by several Labour MEPs that improved their attitude towards the Socialist Group and the EEC, even though the differences remained<sup>288</sup>. If the relationships between Labour and the CSPEC were always at strain, those between the Socialist Group and its Labour members were thus much less tense, despite the fact that Labour's leaders constantly remarked their commitment to retire from the EEC<sup>289</sup>. Between 1979 and 1984, as argued by George and Haythorne, Labour Euro-deputies learned not only that British interest could also be served by working constructively in Europe, but also that the membership of the multinational Socialist Group was a very valuable asset<sup>290</sup>. Nevertheless, the next chapter will show that Labour representatives at the EP remained faithful to their own party and to its political line, especially when they had to vote on resolutions potentially relevant for Britain. This is valid even for those who were more sympathetic to Europe that always refused, with the sole exception of Gallagher, to abandon Labour for joining the British Social-Democratic Party<sup>291</sup>.

On the issue of the Common Agricultural Policy, the Confederation agreed at least in principle with Labour on the necessity to reform. As stated in the Appeal to the Electorate:

*“The Common Agricultural Policy must be adapted so as to achieve a better balance between production and consumption, more stable*

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<sup>285</sup> SWEENEY, Jane P., *op.cit.*, pp. 81- 86.

<sup>286</sup> BARDI, Luciano, *loc.cit.*, p. 64.

<sup>287</sup> PRIDHAM, Geoffrey, PRIDHAM, Pippa, *op.cit.*, pp. 42-44.

<sup>288</sup> POLLACK, Anita, *op.cit.*, p. 24.

<sup>289</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>290</sup> GEORGE, Stephen, HAYTHORNE, Deborah, *loc.cit.*, p. 117.

<sup>291</sup> *Ibidem.*

*prices and an equitable development of agricultural incomes through greater efficiency and better structural policies. The consumer interest must be taken fully into account in the evolution of the C.A.P.*<sup>292</sup>.

Of course, this was a far more moderate position than the one expressed in the Labour manifesto, which, as stated in the previous chapter, had even contemplated the possibility of a British withdrawal from the CAP as a whole in the absence of significant reforms. If we look, for example, at the individual positions of the other two main parties of the Confederation (in terms of seats occupied in the first elected EP), we can obtain a more complete picture. The French Socialist Party (PS), in order to gather votes from a larger political spectrum decided to commit itself to the protection of French agriculture in Europe. The main preoccupation, in this sense, was constituted by the future accession of Spain, Portugal and Greece, three highly agricultural countries. The PS agreed on the EEC enlargement, provided that the French first sector was protected<sup>293</sup>. Nevertheless, the French socialists manifesto advocated a reform of the CAP and of Community expenditure as a whole, which was not focused on a strong reduction in support prices – strongly advocated in the Labour manifesto – but instead on the improvement of farms and on a greater usage of EEC funds on social welfare and regional cohesion programs<sup>294</sup>. The German SPD was substantially on the same wavelength of the PS, arguing on the one hand that the CAP produced very good results in terms of continental integration – that the SPD strongly supported – but that on the other hand had to be reformed, in order to orient Community expenditure towards the industrial and regional policies<sup>295</sup>. In general, therefore, even though they shared a common reformist goal, Labour differed from the rest of the socialists on the CAP issue, both on the comprehensive evaluation of the policy and on how to possibly reform it.

On the budgetary issue, closely intertwined with the CAP, there was a substantial agreement between Labour and the other European socialists on the necessity to reduce Community expenditure as a whole<sup>296</sup>. Nevertheless, on the question concerning the British contribution to the budget, deep divisions emerged within the Socialist Group between 1979 and 1984. The Parliament in general and the Socialist Group in particular hardly tolerated the continuous quarrels generated by the British Budgetary Question. In 1980, when the Parliament was purposely excluded by the Council from the procedures to approve a

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<sup>292</sup> CONFEDERATION OF THE SOCIALIST PARTIES OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY, *op.cit.*, p. 3.

<sup>293</sup> REIF, Karlheinz, “France”, in Reif K., *Ten European Elections: Campaign and Results of the 1979-1981 First Direct Elections to the European Parliament*, Aldershot, Gower Publishing Company Limited, 1985, p. 92.

<sup>294</sup> SWEENEY, Jane P., *op.cit.*, p. 99.

<sup>295</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 95-96.

<sup>296</sup> POLLACK, Anita, *op.cit.*, p. 31.

budgetary rebate in favour of the UK, Pieter Dankert, the Socialist budget spokesman, clearly stated that “*the British agreement has shown that the policy of blackmailing the Community works*” also adding that “*the British deal means that the Community will hit the own resources ceiling a year earlier than we expected*”<sup>297</sup>. If we look at the individual countries, also Germany, like Britain, suffered from a deficit in its contribution to the EEC. Nevertheless, due to their huge gains in terms of exports thanks to the Common Market membership, the Germans decided not to complain<sup>298</sup>.

The issue of defence, security and political cooperation was not a matter with which the Appeal to the Electorate dealt in an extensive way. Indeed, as documented by Sweeney, in the 1977 “Draft Political Manifesto”, there were several statements concerning the relationship with the US, the creation of a common foreign policy through the EPC mechanism and the objective to develop a European block independent from the two super-powers<sup>299</sup>. Concerning specific foreign policy objectives, if we do not take into account the part on cooperation with developing countries and the generic commitment to pursue détente between East and West<sup>300</sup>, the most important statement made in the Appeal was the following one:

*“We are working for the full implementation of the Helsinki agreements and for worldwide peace and security. In the meantime, the maximum effort should be made to halt the arms race, especially in the nuclear field, and to bring sales of arms under international control. Satisfactory measures must be found to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Socialists will not be a party to the supply of arms to fascist or racist regimes”*<sup>301</sup>.

For a better understanding of the European socialists position, we may look at the individual points of view expressed by the PS and the SDP, the two parties with the highest number of representatives in the Socialist Group between 1979 and 1984. They both perceived EPC as a potential means to further socialist objectives. The SPD was undoubtedly the most favourable to an integrated European foreign policy. In 1977, the German SPD/FDP (Free Democratic Party) government distributed a publication named “Texts Relating to the European Political Co-operation” that gathered all the major speeches, communiqués and declarations issued by

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<sup>297</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30.

<sup>299</sup> SWEENEY, Jane P., *op.cit.*, p. 92.

<sup>300</sup> CONFEDERATION OF THE SOCIALIST PARTIES OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY, *op.cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>301</sup> *Ibidem.*

the foreign ministers of the nine EEC member countries<sup>302</sup>. Hans Dietrich Genscher, the foreign minister that developed with his Italian counterpart Emilio Colombo the famous proposal to intensify political cooperation, was a member of the executive led by Helmut Schmidt, although he was not an SPD member. The same Helmut Schmidt declared that the European Political Cooperation had to be strengthened by means of a mutual commitment between member states to consult reciprocally in order to establish together the best way to act<sup>303</sup>. The SPD was in favour of centralizing at the European level the decisions concerning foreign and defence policy, enhancing the cooperation with NATO and developing countries but safeguarding at the same time an independent role for Europe in international affairs<sup>304</sup>. François Mitterrand, leader of the PS and then French President, was also in favour of a stronger role of Europe in these matters. At the 1981 CSPEC Paris Conference on security and disarmament, he pointed out that Europe should pursue a security strategy independent from the two blocks but that NATO was not the appropriate structure to pursue the objectives of peace as intended by socialists<sup>305</sup>. Progressively, Mitterrand started to support the idea of Europe as an autonomous international actor<sup>306</sup>. In 1984, during a speech to the EP, the French President proposed to establish a permanent EEC bureau devoted to foreign policy cooperation and to enhance collaboration on defence matters<sup>307</sup>.

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<sup>302</sup> SWEENEY, Jane P., *op.cit.*, p. 49.

<sup>303</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>304</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>305</sup> HIX, Simon & LESSE, Urs, *op.cit.*, p. 35.

<sup>306</sup> DELWIT, Pascal, *op.cit.*, p. 96.

<sup>307</sup> DINAN, Desmond, *op.cit.*, p. 68.

### **3. The First Elective Legislature of the European Parliament**

In the introduction to this work we maintained that the behaviour of the Labour Party and of Labour MEPs during the first elective legislature of the EP would have been explained by making reference to two independent variables. The first one is the huge political distance that developed between Labour and Conservatives during that historical conjuncture. While the Tories adopted a free-market and pro-EEC attitude, the Labour Party experienced a deep political radicalization, under the leadership of the anti-capitalist and anti-Markeeter internal left-wing. They both wanted to defend national interest at the European level, but the solutions proposed to the problems related to EEC membership differed and – at least at the beginning of the legislature – their respective attitudes towards the Community were opposite. If Conservatives wanted to solve these issues and then keep Britain in the EEC, Labour was openly committed to withdrawal. Labour MEPs refused to strike a stable alliance with the Conservative group, even if, as we are going to show, on some occasions they chose to support Conservative motions on grounds of national convenience. The Labour MEPs were thus not able to form a permanent alliance with their Conservative compatriots, even though, as we will document, they sometimes accepted to vote with them in order to pursue common goals.

The second explanatory variable is the political divide that developed between Labour and the CSPEC due to Labour nationalism and anti-Europeanism. This latter element is fundamental in order to understand why Labour MEPs cannot be completely loyal to their EP political group, even though they shared a common ideology and an array of policy objectives. As pointed out in the precedent chapter, the relationship between the Labour Group at the EP and the Socialist Group was much better than the one between the Labour Party and the Confederation.

In the first part of this chapter we will provide an overview of the European Parliament during the first elective legislature, paying particular attention to its powers and to the main features of the different parliamentary groups. Then, we will support the qualitative part of our study with a quantitative analysis of some relevant roll-call votes registered during the first elective legislature, considering the voting behaviour of the Labour MEPs, the British Conservatives and the Socialist Group on resolutions connected to the CAP, to the EEC budget and to the area of defence, security and political cooperation. As we shall see, in the votes related to the three policy areas we are examining, the Labour Euro-deputies showed a good degree of loyalty to the Socialist Group despite the bad relationship between the Confederation and their national party. However, due to their willingness to prioritize national objectives, they

remained ready to depart from the Socialist Group's position when they recognized that an issue relevant for Britain was at stake and to vote either alone or even with the Tories.

During the course of the quantitative part, we will also comment some votes that are particularly relevant for our purposes. As argued in the introduction, our idea is to confirm through the quantitative data the findings of the qualitative analysis, demonstrating that the behavior of the Labour MEPs during the first elective legislature can be explained in the light of the Rational Choice Theory. The Labour MEPs acted on the basis of a cost-benefit analysis based on their own consistent preferences. Their objective was to maximize their personal interest and the interest of Britain, as interpreted by the Labour Party.

### ***I. The European Parliament and the First Parliamentary Groups***

The first meetings of the European Parliament were welcomed with pleasure and curiosity by several commentators and journalists. Many people considered the birth of the elective assembly as a unique event in European history:

*“Some said that this was nothing new in the history of Europe, the same had happened at the Congress of Vienna. In terms of a gathering of powerful men and women, this may perhaps be true, but with one difference that is so fundamental that it radically changes the significance of this event. The leaders who met in Vienna in 1815 wanted to impose their views and their law on the peoples of Europe; in Strasbourg, in 1979, the peoples' elected representatives met to speak and deliberate in the name of the people”<sup>308</sup>.*

In 1979, the European Parliament was much less powerful than now, even though it was not anymore the simple consultative chamber designed in 1957 by the Treaty of Rome. Since the beginning of the 1970s, thanks to an array of budgetary reforms, the Parliament acquired a veto power on EEC “non-compulsory” expenditure, namely on the social and economic voices of the budget excluding agriculture and regional spending<sup>309</sup>. Since the mid 1970s, the Council started to consult the Parliament even when the Treaties did not require it, while the Commission begun to send also to the EP all the communications and memoranda addressed

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<sup>308</sup> RICCARDI, Ferdinando, “The New European Parliament takes its first steps”, website of the “Centre Virtuel de la Connaissance sur l'Europe” (CVCE), 14/05/2014, [http://www.cvce.eu/obj/the\\_new\\_european\\_parliament\\_takes\\_its\\_first\\_steps\\_from\\_30\\_jours\\_d\\_europe\\_august\\_s\\_eptember\\_1979-en-8707265b-83ce-4a45-898c-d7373b8b3166.html](http://www.cvce.eu/obj/the_new_european_parliament_takes_its_first_steps_from_30_jours_d_europe_august_s_eptember_1979-en-8707265b-83ce-4a45-898c-d7373b8b3166.html) (page consulted on the 15<sup>th</sup> of April 2015), p. 2.

<sup>309</sup> HIX, Simon, HØYLAND, Bjørn, “Empowerment of the European Parliament”, *Annual Review of Political Science*, 2013, vol. 16, p. 172; HIX, Simon, NOURY, Abdul, ROLAND, Gerard, *op.cit.*, 14.



to the Council<sup>310</sup>. A decisive step in the process of progressive growth in the EP's influence was the famous "Isoglucose judgment" issued by the European Court of Justice in 1980, with which the Court overturned a piece of legislation adopted by the Council because the Parliament had not yet issued its formal opinion, as the Treaty required<sup>311</sup>. As a matter of fact, this ruling gave to the EP a strong power to delay EEC legislative acts, because the consultation procedure, under which the Council acts on a Commission proposal after the Parliament's opinion, was the most common one at that time<sup>312</sup>. Together with these prerogatives related to the legislative activity, the EP – as established by the same Treaty of Rome in 1957 – had also the power to remove the Commission. To trigger this latter procedure, a double majority – consisting of an absolute majority of MEPs coupled with two-third of valid votes – had to be reached<sup>313</sup>.

As argued by Luciano Bardi, the importance of the first direct elections in developing a form of supranational party system was enormous<sup>314</sup>. Due to the actual perspective of holding elections at the end of the decade, several supranational parties and confederations experienced a growth in terms of political importance and organizational capacity throughout the 1970s<sup>315</sup>. This was for example the case for the socialist movement, which, as documented in the previous section, decided to create the CSPEC. In particular, Pridham & Pridham argued that during the 1970s the party groups active in the EP increased their degree of politicization, as a result both of their greater importance in the functioning of the Parliament and of the high number of national-parties pressures putting at risk their cohesion<sup>316</sup>. For assessing the cohesion of party groups, which can be regarded as a measure of their strength, one can look at their propensity to express a uniform position in roll-call votes<sup>317</sup>. During the first elective legislature of the EP, the Socialist Group showed a degree of cohesion a bit lower, although still quite high, than those showed by the other major parliamentary groups<sup>318</sup>. According to Bardi, this was a consequence of the Group's internal fragmentation and of the high number of member parties, fifteen, from every EEC state<sup>319</sup>. The European socialist family had been affected by a problem of internal coherence on the very issue of European integration since the first enlargement to Britain, Denmark and Ireland. Before

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<sup>310</sup> CORBETT, Richard, JACOBS, Francis, SHACKLETON, Michael, *The European Parliament*, London, John Harper Publishing, 2011, p. 258.

<sup>311</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 259.

<sup>312</sup> HIX, Simon, HØYLAND, Bjørn, *loc.cit.*, p. 172.

<sup>313</sup> HIX, Simon, NOURY, Abdul, ROLAND, Gerard, *op.cit.*, p. 14.

<sup>314</sup> Bardi, L., *loc.cit.*, p. 63.

<sup>315</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>316</sup> PRIDHAM, Geoffrey, PRIDHAM, Pippa, *op.cit.*, p. 40.

<sup>317</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>318</sup> BARDI, Luciano, *loc.cit.*, pp. 75-76.

<sup>319</sup> *Ibidem*.

1973, the Socialist Group had a strong pro-integrationist orientation, but then it suffered from pressures produced by national politics intromission in the European Parliament<sup>320</sup>. As underlined by Hix & Lord, already during the 1960s and the 1970s not only Labour but also the socialist parties of Denmark, Ireland and Norway (which was not and still is not a member of the EEC/EU) had declared their official opposition to the EEC<sup>321</sup>. This latter feature represents an important difference with the other two most ancient political families of the first elected EP, the Christian-Democrats and the Liberals, which were and remained pro-European even after the enlargement<sup>322</sup>.

When the Parliament became an elective body, the MEPs number increased sharply. In 1979, the European citizens elected four hundred and ten MEPs, more than twice the one hundred and ninety-eight appointed by the national parliaments since the first enlargement<sup>323</sup>. As briefly stated in the previous chapter, at the first official session of the new European Parliament the Socialist Group was the largest, with one hundred and twelve MEPs. Just a few seats behind them there were the Christian-Democrats, with one hundred and eight seats. The Conservatives, gathered into the European Democratic Group, became the third force with sixty-three MEPs, mainly due to the spectacular victory obtained in the United Kingdom<sup>324</sup>. Also the Communists, which were the sixth force in the old EP, obtained a good result, becoming the fourth largest faction with forty-four MEPs. The true losers, among the historical groups were the Liberals. From being the third most represented family, the Liberals became the fifth largest group, having seized only forty seats<sup>325</sup>. The first elected EP welcomed also a small Gaullist patrol of fifteen MEPs that allied with a few deputies from Ireland, Scotland and Denmark in order to form the European Progressive Democrats group, with twenty-two members<sup>326</sup>. The Parliament was completed by the Group of Technical Coordination, gathering eleven MEPs, and by the ten members who decided, at least at the beginning, to not join any group<sup>327</sup>.

The issue dominating the first elective term of the European Parliament was the Community budget that provoked several inter-institutional struggles<sup>328</sup>. The Common Agricultural Policy, on which the great majority of the budget was concentrated, was another major

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<sup>320</sup> PRIDHAM, Geoffrey, PRIDHAM, Pippa, *op.cit.*, p. 54.

<sup>321</sup> HIX, Simon, LORD, Christopher, *op.cit.*, p. 36.

<sup>322</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 29-33.

<sup>323</sup> CORBETT, Richard, JACOBS, Francis, SHACKLETON, Michael, *op.cit.*, pp. 81-82.

<sup>324</sup> EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: DIRECTORATE GENERAL FOR COMMUNICATION, PUBLIC OPINION MONITORING UNIT, *op.cit.*, p. 30.

<sup>325</sup> CORBETT, Richard, JACOBS, Francis, SHACKLETON, Michael, *op.cit.*, p. 82.

<sup>326</sup> EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: DIRECTORATE GENERAL FOR COMMUNICATION, PUBLIC OPINION MONITORING UNIT, *op.cit.*, p. 30.

<sup>327</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>328</sup> POLLACK, Anita, *op.cit.*, p. 25.

concern of the EP between 1979 and 1984. Nevertheless, no significant reforms of the CAP were achieved during that parliamentary term. In 1984, the CAP still absorbed the seventy per cent of the Community resources, even though during the Fontainebleau summit held in June of that same year the leaders agreed to limit the growth of agricultural spending<sup>329</sup>. The first Parliament showed the ambition to radically modify the asset of the EEC and this is probably the reason why six resolutions suggesting policy and institutional reforms were positively sanctioned between 1980 and 1982<sup>330</sup>. The “Draft Treaty Establishing the European Union”, approved in February 1984<sup>331</sup> can also be seen as the culmination of this tendency. The Parliament dealt with regional policy and with the conservation of fisheries resources, issuing its opinions on the possibility to establish a Common Fisheries Policy. A number of resolutions related to energy policy and in particular to the financing of research programs on the use of nuclear energy for civilian purposes were passed. Issues of security, defence and foreign policy cooperation were also the object of some parliamentary acts, besides being included in the Draft Treaty on the EU approved by the EP in February 1984.

## ***II. The Parliamentary Vote on Budgetary Resolutions***<sup>332</sup>

In this section our aim will be to analyse the vote expressed by the Labour Group, the British Conservatives and the Socialist Group on resolutions concerning the budget of the EEC. In this policy field, our data show that the Labour MEPs were quite prone to vote with their political group. However, on some occasions, they decided to act differently in order to defend their own objectives and maximise their interest, voting either alone or with the Conservatives, regardless of the socialist position.

We analysed seventeen separated roll-call votes related to the budget. On twelve occasions the Labour MEPs voted with their fellow socialists, showing their loyalty towards the political group. Six times, the Conservatives decided to align with Labour and the rest of the Socialist Group. Nevertheless, on five occasions, Labour decided to break away from the socialist majority, voting two times with the Tories and three times with none of the other two. We are going to concentrate in particular on the dispute that arose on the 1982 supplementary budget, through which the UK had to obtain a refund of its budgetary contribution. In this latter case, despite the strong opposition of the whole Socialist Group, Labour MEPs decided to side with the disliked Tories in order to achieve their goals.

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<sup>329</sup> DINAN, Desmond, *op.cit.*, p. 335.

<sup>330</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 98.

<sup>331</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 100.

<sup>332</sup> All the voting results quoted in this section are reported in detail at the pages i, ii, iii of the appendix.

In July 1980, the Labour Group proposed to reject the 1980 budget, with the resolution 1-294/80, presented by the MEP Richard Balfe, Labour's budget spokesman. As explained by Anita Pollack, the Council had agreed on further increases in farm prices<sup>333</sup>. Although the prices would not have grown very much, also thanks to the opposition of the EP, Labour chose the hard line. If Labour claimed that in this way the Community would have never addressed its spending problems, the rest of the Socialist Group decided to not oppose the budgetary deal, which was believed to be an acceptable one at that moment, because on the one hand it made some increases in regional expenditure and on the other hand promised to review the whole structure of the budget by 1982<sup>334</sup>. The great majority of the socialists MEPs decided to not participate in the vote on Labour's motion. Just eight of them expressed their preference: three voted in favour of Labour motion, two against and three abstained. The resolution was eventually voted down by an overwhelming majority of one hundred and seventy one deputies, with twenty-two positive preferences and nine abstentions. The Conservatives, which were satisfied with the budgetary provisions for 1980, voted massively against and just one of them abstained.

However, the most serious case of disagreement between Labour and Socialist Group was the vote on the 1982 supplementary budget. At the end of 1982, the British government had negotiated a new reimbursement of its contribution to the EEC that was included in a supplementary budget to be voted by the EP<sup>335</sup>. On the 14<sup>th</sup> of December 1982, the Parliament passed a resolution (doc. 1-991/82) complaining for the incapacity of the Council to find a lasting solution to the budgetary imbalances of the Community and announcing its decision to reject the supplementary budget. The Parliament also stated "*its grave concern at the proliferation of measures of national compensation contrary to the principles of a single comprehensive budget, transparency and political and financial control which form the basis of the Community budget*"<sup>336</sup>. The Socialist Group voted massively in favour of this last resolution, with sixty-nine "yes" and just one "no", while fifty-eight Conservatives out of sixty casted a negative vote. Labour MEPs moderately endorsed the Tories, expressing eight votes against and seven abstentions. This ballot opened a new quarrel between the EP and the Council, with the latter stuck between the unwillingness of the former to approve another supplementary budget unable to solve the intrinsic imbalances of the Community spending and the necessity to placate Thatcher's desire to recuperate part of the money unduly paid by

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<sup>333</sup> POLLACK, Anita, *op.cit.*, p. 31.

<sup>334</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>335</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 33-34.

<sup>336</sup> EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES, *Official Journal of the European Communities – Information and Notices*, Strasbourg, 17 January 1983, C 13, pp. 34-36.

Britain to the Community. The great majority of the EP, on the 16<sup>th</sup> of December 1982, approved the resolution 1-059/82, presented by the vice-chair of the Committee on Budgets Carla Barbarella, which advocated the definitive rejection of the supplementary budget<sup>337</sup>. Before the vote on this latter resolution, the vice-president of the Commission and Commissioner to the Budget Christopher Tugendhat and the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs Otto Møller – that participated in the meeting held by the Council after the vote on the first resolution – spoke to the assembly. The former in particular tried to win the approval of the EP by emphasizing the gravity of the institutional crisis in which the Community was likely to fall in case the motion had been approved, but to no effect<sup>338</sup>. The Barbarella resolution got two hundred and fifty-nine votes in favour and seventy-nine against. Eighty-one socialist MEPs voted in favour and none against. Conversely, the British MEPs expressed their utmost opposition to the rejection of the supplementary budget. Fifty-nine Conservatives voted against and fourteen Labour MEPs supported their compatriots. As documented in the previous sections, Labour and Conservatives shared the objective to achieve a better deal on British contribution to the financing of the Community<sup>339</sup> and for Labour MEPs this was enough to disregard the line of their own group and side with the Tories in defence of Britain.

It is also worth commenting an interesting case in which Labour showed its willingness to side with the Socialist Group but the latter was not able to express a uniform position. The approval of the budget for the year 1984 was a controversial issue in the first European Parliament, in particular for the Labour MEPs. The main problem with the 1984 financial framework was that the “own resources” proved insufficient to the needs of the Community<sup>340</sup>. The Parliament proposed a number of reforms to increase the financial endowment of the EEC that did not satisfy the expectations of the Labour Group<sup>341</sup>. In December 1983, Barbara Castle – the leader of the Labour Group at the EP – and a group of twelve Labour MEPs proposed a resolution to reject the budget for the year 1984 (Doc. 1-1215/83)<sup>342</sup>. Thirteen Labour MEPs and other forty-three socialists supported this document, amounting together to a majority of the Socialist Group. Forty-six socialists decided to vote against, showing the deep split affecting the Group on the issue. A large majority of the Conservative group, fifty-four MEPs, decided to abstain. The Tories, due to their choice to

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<sup>337</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66-67.

<sup>338</sup> COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES – GENERAL SECRETARIAT, *Press Release*, Strasbourg, 15 and 16 December 1982, Council Press Release 11938/82 (Presse 195), pp. 11-12 (16 pages), see <http://aei.pitt.edu/57462/>.

<sup>339</sup> POLLACK, Anita, *op.cit.*, pp. 33-34.

<sup>340</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 35-36.

<sup>341</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>342</sup> EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES, *Official Journal of the European Communities – Information and Notices*, Strasbourg, 16 January 1984, C 10, p. 57-58.

not support the motion, were even accused of being cowards by the same Labour MEPs, whose motion was rejected<sup>343</sup>.

One of the most important circumstance in which the three groups sided massively together on a budgetary resolution was the vote on the rejection of the 1980 budget, held in December 1979 (doc. 1-581/79)<sup>344</sup>. With this vote the EP opened a deep institutional crisis within the Community, the first since the elections of June 1979. The decision to rebuff the 1980 financial plan was determined by the unwillingness of the Council to accept the suggestions made by the EP on the matter. The EP had underlined the necessity to limit agricultural expenditure and to restore the keep the ceiling to non-compulsory expenditure to its usual level. Moreover, the Parliament wanted the Council to include the European Development Fund and the lending and borrowing activities of the EEC into the budget. None of these requests was satisfied. The Parliament reacted in a very strong way, rejecting the budget with two hundred and eighty-eight favourable votes, sixty-four against and just one abstained. All the seventeen Labour MEPs voted in favour and so did the Conservatives, with fifty-nine positive votes. Also the rest of the Socialist Group voted with conviction in favour of the resolution, casting seventy-five favourable preferences, four against and one abstention.

### ***III. The Parliamentary Vote on Resolutions Pertaining to the Common Agricultural Policy***<sup>345</sup>

In this part of the chapter our attention will be focused on the CAP, the second important policy area we decided to examine in our research. We analysed thirteen roll-call votes related both to agriculture in general and to the CAP in particular. Even in this case, there was a tendency of Labour Euro-deputies to vote with their own political group, something that occurred nine times out of thirteen. On eight of these occasions, the Conservatives sided with Labour and the Socialist Group. However, like for the budgetary resolutions, Labour MEPs showed their readiness to detach themselves from the position of their own group whenever they deemed it necessary and this occurred three times: in two of these, Labour acted independently; in one case, Labour MEPs voted with their Conservative compatriots. As we argued in the first and the second chapter, although they shared the objective of reforming the CAP, socialists, Labour and Conservatives had different ideas on how to do that. The point of view expressed by Labour was much more critical and radical than those expressed by the

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<sup>343</sup> POLLACK, Anita, *op.cit.*, p. 35.

<sup>344</sup> EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES, *Official Journal of the European Communities – Information and Notices*, Strasbourg, 7 January 1980, C 4, pp. 36-38.

<sup>345</sup> All the voting results quoted in this section are reported in detail at the pages iii and iv and v of the appendix.

other two groups. Like we did for the resolutions related to the budget, we are now going to examine in more detail some particularly relevant votes.

The Conservative Henry Plumb, from 1979 to 1982, chaired the Agricultural Committee of the European Parliament. Plumb, the former president of the UK National Farmers Union and a strong supporter of the EEC, was appointed president of an Agricultural Committee in which the interests of the producers were excessively represented<sup>346</sup>. The contrasts between Barbara Castle – which took upon her the responsibility to push for CAP reform – and the Committee were very frequent, because of the latter's willingness to carry on increasing farm prices even though the European agriculture was already producing much more than needed<sup>347</sup>.

In June 1981, Plumb proposed a resolution containing proposals to improve the Common Agricultural Policy (doc. 1-250/81), which was approved by the EP with one hundred and forty-seven favourable votes, seventy-six against and thirty-five abstentions<sup>348</sup>. This resolution was massively endorsed not only by the Conservative Group, that casted fifty-seven favourable votes, but also by the socialist one, with forty-one socialist MEPs voting in favour and just eight against. Here, the Labour deputies decided either to vote against (six of them) or to abstain (nine in total), diverging both from their own parliamentary group and from their compatriots. Several proposals and principles contained in the Plumb's resolution were clearly incompatible with Labour's point of view on the CAP as it was expressed, for example, in the European manifesto. Indeed, Barbara Castle had even tried to propose the replacement of the whole resolution with the limited support of the Socialist Group, but to no avail<sup>349</sup>. Suffice it to say that the document, although admitting the problematic nature of certain aspects of the CAP – like the huge overproduction of the milk sector – and proposing some moderate reforms, surely not as radical as those wanted by Labour, underlined the great achievements of the policy since its establishment in terms of improvements of the agricultural sector and food security<sup>350</sup>. Labour, conversely, had maintained that the CAP had inflicted a huge damage to British agriculture, suggesting the withdrawal from the common policy as a whole in the absence of very deep changes in its asset<sup>351</sup>. Moreover, the resolution strongly argued against any attempt to restore measures of national support to the agricultural

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<sup>346</sup> POLLACK, Anita, *op.cit.*, p. 29.

<sup>347</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>348</sup> EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES, *Official Journal of the European Communities – Information and Notices*, Strasbourg, 13 July 1981, C 172, pp. 31-43.

<sup>349</sup> Amendment N. 113/rev. to doc. 1-250/81, *ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>350</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>351</sup> THE LABOUR PARTY (2), *op.cit.*, p. 7.

sector<sup>352</sup>. The Labour Party, conversely, had clearly proposed to leave more room for schemes of national support<sup>353</sup>, while the Conservatives had maintained that a return to the deficiency payment system would not have been affordable to Britain<sup>354</sup>.

However, the three groups often managed to find points of convergence and, acting together in order to achieve shared purposes. During the first elective legislature, the EP approved a number of resolutions related to agriculture, supported both by the Conservatives and by the Socialist Group including Labour. For example, in July 1983, a resolution (doc. 1-248/83) concerning the impact of the Common Agricultural Policy on the external relations of the EEC was passed<sup>355</sup>. This document, elaborated by the Conservative Fred Catherwood, dealt also with the relationships with developing countries. The resolution found the approval of both Labour and the rest of the Socialist Group that agreed on the necessity to open the European market to the agricultural products coming from the developing world<sup>356</sup>. The Labour manifesto had underlined the risk of damaging developing countries' economies through the CAP system of subsidies<sup>357</sup>, while the Socialist Appeal to the Electorate was committed to improve trade relations with the third world. The text also stressed the importance of the commercial relationships with Australia and New Zealand, a topic traditionally dear to the British<sup>358</sup>. Here, there were six Labour votes in favour, coupled with the twenty-nine positive preferences casted by the other socialists. Thirty-eight Conservatives endorsed the motion.

#### ***IV. The Parliamentary Vote on Resolutions Related to Defence, Security and Political Cooperation***<sup>359</sup>

The third and last group of motions that we decided to take into account in our research is made up of resolutions related to defence, security and political cooperation. For a supranational assembly like the EP, it was particularly difficult to be involved in the topic, due to the fact that not all governments were willing to provide the EEC with relevant powers on these policy fields. However, as we said in the first two chapters, between the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, something started to change. When the

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<sup>352</sup> EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES, *Official Journal of the European Communities – Information and Notices*, Strasbourg, 13 July 1981, C 172, pp. 35-36.

<sup>353</sup> THE LABOUR PARTY (2), *op.cit.*, p.8.

<sup>354</sup> THE CONSERVATIVE RESEARCH DEPARTMENT (2), *op.cit.*, p. 12.

<sup>355</sup> EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES, *Official Journal of the European Communities – Information and Notices*, Strasbourg, 12 September 1983, C 242, pp. 76-80.

<sup>356</sup> *Ibid.* p. 79.

<sup>357</sup> THE LABOUR PARTY (2), *op.cit.*, p. 10.

<sup>358</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9; THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY (2), *op.cit.*, p. 14.

<sup>359</sup> All the voting results quoted in this section are reported in detail at page vi of the appendix.



intergovernmental mechanism based on consensus designed for the ECP at the beginning of the 1970s started to show its inadequacy in dealing with a new phase of global turmoil, a process to strengthen the EEC's international standing was triggered<sup>360</sup>. The European Parliament, although formally excluded from this policy field, expressed its point of view through several votes related to the issue.

We have identified six roll-call votes on the issue. As documented in the second chapter, the anti-Europeanism embraced by Labour's leaders also produced an opposition to the strengthening of the EEC powers in the area of defence, security and political cooperation, a particularly delicate one in terms of impact on national sovereignty. Conversely, the Conservatives had shown a more favourable attitude, especially on the aspects of cooperation in the development of military technologies and on foreign policy coordination. The two main shareholders of the EP Socialist Group – the French PS and the German SPD – shared this more positive approach, although in the last chapter we underlined some differences between them. Even in voting on this kind of matters, the Labour MEPs showed a certain loyalty to their own group. Four times out of six, Labour voted with the rest of the socialists, expressing on three occasions a negative preference. Nevertheless, in two very important occasions the Labour MEPs decided to depart from the Socialist Group's majority and to vote alone. The Conservatives, in both these latter circumstances, expressed the same preference as the Socialist Group.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> of February 1984, the European Parliament approved the "Draft Treaty Establishing the European Union" (doc. 1-1200/83), the final result of the efforts carried out by Altiero Spinelli and his "Crocodile Club" since 1980<sup>361</sup>. The Stuttgart "Solemn Declaration on European Union" – which had been the ultimate outcome of the proposals of Genscher and Colombo to strengthen foreign policy cooperation – did not satisfy the more enthusiast European federalists, who tried to push more on supranational integration with the Draft Treaty<sup>362</sup>. The Draft Treaty included several important provisions concerning defence, security and political cooperation, aimed at giving to the EU a stronger role in this field<sup>363</sup>. According to the Draft Treaty, "*the Union shall ensure that the international policy guidelines of the Member States are consistent*" (article 67.2)<sup>364</sup>. The Union had also to be in charge of coordinating the position of the member states at the international level (article 67.3). The foreign policy area had still to be managed through a form of cooperation between

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<sup>360</sup> DINAN, Desmond, *op.cit.*, 66-68; 546-547.

<sup>361</sup> POLLACK, Anita, *op.cit.*, p. 53.

<sup>362</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55; DINAN, Desmond, *op.cit.*, pp. 68-70.

<sup>363</sup> For a more detailed account of the "Draft Treaty" general purposes see chapter 1 par. VI.

<sup>364</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

sovereign states and European institutions, but the general intent was to embed the actions of the individual members within the framework of the Union. Moreover, the Draft Treaty contemplated, at least in principle, the possibility for the Council to extend the cooperation at the supranational level to defence policy and issues related to armaments. The Treaty project was approved by the EP with an overwhelming majority of two hundred and thirty-seven MEPs, with thirty-one votes against and forty-three abstentions<sup>365</sup>. However, some sectors of the EP were by no means enthusiast of these new potential developments. Among those who opposed the Spinelli project there was Labour Party, who had declared its opposition to any involvement of the European institutions in the delicate fields of defence and security. Also, differently from Conservatives, they disagreed on any involvement of the Community in the field of international policy. In general, the Treaty put forward a federal idea of Europe that was completely opposite to Labour's. In the first chapter, we clearly showed how the anti-EEC wing of the Labour Party – that included also the Labour's leader in Strasbourg Barbara Castle – did not agree on the benefits of foreign policy coordination, arguing that Britain could be a strong and international power independently from the EEC. Eight Labour MEPs voted against, while three of them abstained. The rest did not vote, including Rodgers, who was one of the most vocal opponents of the Spinelli project<sup>366</sup>. The majority of the Conservative MEPs who participated in the in the vote expressed a favourable preference. Eventually, from the Conservative group came nineteen positive votes, four against and two abstentions. Also the Socialist Group supported the Treaty, with forty-six votes in favour, six against and twenty-five abstentions.

Two months after the approval of the Spinelli Treaty, the Socialist Group split again on the issue of security and political cooperation. On a resolution proposed by Egon Klepsch (EPP) on the “shared European interests, risks and requirements in the security field” (doc. 1-80/84), six Labour MEPs voted against, while all the others did not take part in the vote. The text asked to the foreign ministers of the EEC members, in the framework of the EPC, to assume common positions in the North Atlantic Council, calling also “*on the Foreign Ministers meeting in political cooperation to use all available expertise to produce a thorough analysis of the Member States' shared interests, risks and requirements in the security field with a view to establishing a European security concept; and to make efforts to ensure that the Member States' positions in present institutions having a bearing on European security are based as*

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<sup>365</sup> EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES, *Official Journal of the European Communities – Information and Notices*, Strasbourg, 19 March 1984, C 77, p. 32.

<sup>366</sup> POLLACK, Anita, *op.cit.*, p. 55, 56.

*far as possible on a common approach*”<sup>367</sup>. The general aim of the document was to encourage member states to assume – through the mechanism of the EPC – a common position at the NATO level. From the rest of the Socialists Group, whose members were at least in general willing to enhance the principle of foreign policy coordination among member states, came twenty-six favourable votes and sixteen against, with eight abstentions. Also the Conservative group endorsed the motion: twenty-seven of them voted in favour and none against. On this vote, the split between the three groups was clear, and it can be explained again by making reference to their respective positions on the possibility to coordinate foreign policies and cooperate in the security field. While the Conservatives wanted to establish a closer coordination between the foreign policies of member states, underlining the necessity to strongly coordinate the roles of the NATO and the EEC in the security field<sup>368</sup>, Labour did not recognize the desirability of to coordinate British foreign policy with those of the other EEC members<sup>369</sup>. Most European socialists, as documented in the second chapter, were also in favour both to greater foreign policy coordination and to the strengthening of the EPC mechanism. Concerning the individual leaders, as we stated at the end of the last chapter, both Willy Brandt and François Mitterrand supported a stronger role of the EEC in matters related to the fields of security and defence.

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<sup>367</sup> EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES, *Official Journal of the European Communities – Information and Notices*, Strasbourg, 14 May 1984, C 127, p. 71.

<sup>368</sup> GORDON, Ian, *loc.cit.*, pp. 178; THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY (2), *op.cit.*, p. 11.

<sup>369</sup> GORDON, Ian, *loc.cit.*, pp. 178.

## Conclusions

In this last chapter we will try to draw the overall conclusions of our work. First of all, we will assess the capacity of our hypothesis to provide an answer to our research question, examining it in the light of the two independent variables we have considered. Then, we will try to briefly point out some suggestions for future research, based on the main findings of this study.

### *I. Verification of the Initial Hypothesis*

At the beginning of this research, we stated that our aim was to assess the behaviour of the British Labour MEPs during the first elective legislature of the European Parliament. We pointed out that to achieve this goal we would have considered two separate independent variables: the first was the deep cleavage that developed between Labour and Conservatives between the 1970s and the 1980s that hindered the possibility to stably make common front at the EP level; the second one was the political distance separating Labour from the Confederation of the Socialist Parties of the European Community (CSPEC) in that same period, as a consequence of the nationalist and anti-EEC stance embraced by Labour in that historical conjuncture. This latter factor sometimes hampered the convergence of Labour MEPs towards the Socialist Group in the parliamentary vote, even though they voted together most of the time. The hypothesis that we proposed to explain the conduct of the Labour group was that although its members chose to not side permanently neither with the Conservatives nor with the other European socialists, they remained in principle loyal to the EP Socialist Group, towards which they developed a genuine bond over time. However, when it came to defend national interest, they were always ready to depart from the group orientation either to take an autonomous position or, sometimes, to side with the Tories in defence of common views or objectives.

In the first chapter we presented the first of our independent variables. The UK has never been a state eager to be part of the European project. This tension between the convenience to stay in and the potential gains to be achieved by getting out marks the history of Britain into the EEC/EU since the early 1960s. However, in the 1970s the Conservatives started to officially support the British membership of the EEC, while the Labour Party began its shift towards the radical left. The Tories, since the early 1970s began to present themselves as the party of Europe, as opposed to Labour's scepticism<sup>370</sup>. Labour, conversely, had chosen to fight the campaign starting from completely different assumptions. The left of the party – that

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<sup>370</sup>MORRIS, Peter, *loc.cit.*, pp. 129-130.

between the late 1970s and the early 1980s acquired the control of the National Executive Committee – started to advocate new nationalizations, strong state interventions in the economy and immediate withdrawal from the EEC. It is interesting to note that Labour anti-Europeanism was based not only – and maybe not mainly – on the alleged incompatibility between the EEC and the socialist policies that Labour wanted to apply at home, but on the threat that the EEC was posing to British autonomy and to the sovereignty of the Westminster Parliament. It can thus be framed as a nationalist sentiment<sup>371</sup>.

Also the Tories experienced a true revolution in that same period. The so-called “New Right”, that ruled Britain for eleven years under the leadership of Margaret Thatcher, had incorporated some radically liberal and free-market elements into the philosophy of the British Conservative Party, which were incompatible with Labour’s leftism. Moreover, Thatcher’s commitment to laissez-faire and deregulation was at odds even with her own party tradition. The Tories had historically preferred to impose rules and intervene in the economy in order to safeguard the national community instead of leaving Britain in the hands of unreliable market forces<sup>372</sup>. Margaret Thatcher and her staff had grasped the opportunities that the huge European Common Market could have offered to British firms<sup>373</sup>. It is not by chance that the British government, during the Thatcher’s decade, pushed strongly for the creation of a true European single market. Generally speaking, the true difference between Labour and Tories in the European elections campaign was marked by the fact that the former had opposed the very principle of direct elections, was committed to withdrawal and came from an heavy electoral defeat, while the latter had openly endorsed the creation of a democratically elected parliament, had organized its electoral campaign very carefully and was the fresh winner of the general elections held just one month before.

The points of view of the two parties on the CAP were similar. However, the solutions proposed for the agricultural issue were different – with Labour advocating even more radical reform – and perhaps most importantly the approaches adopted by the two parties vis-à-vis the Community institutions were almost opposite. Moreover, as we have seen in the last chapter, among the Conservative MEPS there were also people strongly linked with the British agricultural producers.

The points of view of the two parties were more or less the same also on the EEC budgetary reform. Both Labour and Conservatives believed that the British contribution to the EEC budget was not proportional to the economic return of membership. The battle to reduce the contribution of the UK was indeed conducted by the Conservative government, not by

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<sup>371</sup> SWEENEY, Jane P., *op.cit.* pp. 69-70.

<sup>372</sup> GREEN, Ewen H.H., *op.cit.*, pp. 31-34.

<sup>373</sup> DINAN, Desmond, *op.cit.*, p. 62.

Labour. However, we showed that for the Tories this represented another battle in the war against excessive public expenditure they were fighting, while for Labour, which wanted to increase public spending at home, this was a way to weaken the Community by reducing its size and budget. As we have seen in our voting analysis, in 1982 Labour joined its forces with Conservatives to obtain a refund on British contribution.

Concerning the last policy issue of our interest, Labour did not recognize the need for coordinating foreign policies, was against any collaboration between NATO and EEC and against the possibility of the EEC acting as an independent actor in international relations<sup>374</sup>.

The Conservatives, conversely not only adopted a constructive attitude on the EPC – by proposing their own idea to reform political cooperation and suggesting even stronger foreign policy coordination – but were also in favour of a greater involvement of the Community in the field of armament technology, as reported in their European manifesto<sup>375</sup>.

In the second chapter we examined our second independent variable. The relationship between the CSPEC and the Labour Party was not good either. Despite Labour shared a relevant part of its ideology with the parties of the Confederation, its nationalist commitment, its sentiment of superiority and its intransigent anti-Europeanism created a deep cleavage with the rest of the European socialist movement. Labour boycotted the Confederation's efforts to coordinate the electoral campaigns of its member parties and refused to participate in the activities of the CSPEC<sup>376</sup>. However, the Confederation and the Labour Party also shared a number of policy objectives, such as the commitments to plan the economy and to impose a political control on multinational companies, to defend workers rights, to improve the relations between Europe and the third world.

There were points of convergence also in the policy areas we have taken into account in our study. On the CAP, the socialist were in favour of reform, even though their attitude was more moderate than Labour's. This was valid not only for the Confederation, but also for the two main member parties, the SPD and the PS.

Even on the budget the Confederation shared Labour's pledge to reduce overall expenditure. However, the quarrels concerning British budgetary contribution deeply affected the cohesion of the Socialist Group during the first elective legislature.

In the areas of defence, security and political cooperation, the positions of the two groups sharply differed, mainly due to the unwillingness of Labour leadership to attribute any role to the EEC in this field. Even though the Appeal to the Electorate was deprived of all the ambitious sentences on foreign policy coordination contained in the 1977 "Draft Political

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<sup>374</sup> THE LABOUR COMMON MARKET SAFEGUARDS COMMITTEE, *op.cit.*, pp. 12-13.

<sup>375</sup> THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY (2), *op.cit.*, pp. 10-11.

<sup>376</sup> SWEENEY, Jane P., *op.cit.* p. 137.

Manifesto”, the willingness of the socialist movement to strengthen these aspects of European integration remained clear. Both the French and the Germans were in favour of a stronger coordination of foreign and security policy at the EEC level, of an increased collaboration with NATO and of a more independent role of Europe in international affairs<sup>377</sup>.

Nevertheless, the disagreements between the Labour Party and the CSPEC affected only partially the relationship between the Labour MEPs and the EP Socialist Group, which, as underlined, was formally independent from the Confederation<sup>378</sup>. Even though the contrasts within the CSPEC were reflected in the cohesion of the Socialist Group in the first elected EP, the socialist MEPs maintained a fair degree of unity. The results of the quantitative analysis, as we argued in the introduction, corroborate the validity of this latter claim.

The qualitative analysis of the various documents and manifestos indicated on the one hand the cleavages but on the other hand the points of contact between Labour and the other two groups. The differences, which were quite relevant, made it impossible for Labour MEPs to side stably with either of the two, although they had developed a clear preference for their fellow socialists. The quantitative analysis of the vote – which was basically aimed at confirming the qualitative findings – demonstrated that even though Labour Euro-deputies had actually been fairly loyal to their own political group, in a number of occasions they disregarded the orientation of the socialist majority. When they did so, it was because of their willingness to pursue a different interest, which was the interest of Britain according to their party vision. Sometimes, when their points of view coincided, the Labour MEPs were also able to side with the highly disliked Conservatives.

Therefore, the answer to our initial research question concerning how did Labour MEPs manage the conflictual relationship between the defence of national interest and their membership of the Socialist Group is that their priority was and remained the pursuit of the British interest as defined by Labour’s official policy. However, they established close linkages with the rest of the Socialist Group, to which they were in principle loyal unless the socialist position was at odds with their national priorities.

The behaviour of the British Labour MEPs during the first elective legislature can indeed be explained in the light of the Rational Choice Theory. Labour Euro-deputies acted in a purposive way, in the sense that their votes were finalized to achieve specific goals and to maximize their own utility. Moreover, they were also provided with consistent preferences, at the top of which there was the pursuit of their own conception of national interest. The conduct of the Labour MEPs has been shaped by cost-benefit calculations, as demonstrated

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<sup>377</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50; DINAN, Desmond, *op.cit.*, p. 68.

<sup>378</sup> SWEENEY, Jane P., *op.cit* pp. 81- 86.

by their choice to detach themselves from the Socialist Group when they considered that the cost of doing so was lower than the potential gain. The individual conducts, as suggested by Oppenheimer, can be aggregated in order to understand the behaviour of the group<sup>379</sup>.

## ***II. Suggestions for additional research***

As we briefly stated in the chapter dedicated to Britain, during the second part of the 1980s the two parties started to change their respective attitudes towards the EEC. After the second electoral defeat in a row, in 1983, under the guidance of Neil Kinnock the Labour Party started to slowly change its policy towards the EEC, adopting a more constructive approach. The more moderate leadership guiding the Labour Party since 1983 recognized, at least in electoral terms, the fallacy of the anti-EEC commitment. The progressive conversion of Labour to Europe, accelerated by the drafting of the very appreciated “Social Charter” of the 1989, was also marked by a pro-European shift of the Trade Unions<sup>380</sup>. Within the Conservative Party, conversely, after the signing of the SEA, a form of anti-Europeanism started to surface. As argued by Morris, “*it even began to look for a period as if ‘Europe’ might be damaging to the Conservatives in the 1990s as it had been to Labour in the early 1980s*”<sup>381</sup>. Thatcher’s behaviour towards the EEC institutions became always more hostile, reaching probably a peak with the already mentioned 1988 Bruges speech in which she launched a powerful attack to the EEC establishment. The Community was indeed moving towards a supranational direction that she was not disposed to accept. Thatcher also refused to sign the “Social Charter”, on grounds that it a “socialist” rather than a social document<sup>382</sup>. The harsh divisions created within the party by the European issue became apparent when the Parliament had to ratify the Maastricht Treaty, which officially created the European Union<sup>383</sup>.

The purpose of this research has been to analyse the behaviour of the Labour MEPs in a context in which their own party was not only isolated from the rest of the European socialist movement but was also largely unable to converge with Conservatives, unless their points of view on a certain issue coincided. If we consider that in the next years the two parties started to switch their respective roles, it could be interesting to analyse the second or even the third elective legislature of the EP, in order to understand how these changes affected the behaviour of the Labour and Conservative MEPs. Did the Labour MEPs start to stably align with their

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<sup>379</sup> OPPENHEIMER, Joe A., *op.cit.*, p. 2.

<sup>380</sup> GEORGE, Stephen, HAYTHORNE, Deborah, *loc.cit.*, p. 118.

<sup>381</sup> MORRIS, Peter, *loc.cit.*, p. 131.

<sup>382</sup> GEORGE, Stephen, HAYTHORNE, Deborah, *loc.cit.*, p. 118.

<sup>383</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 132.



political group, abiding to its point of view without giving anymore the utmost priority to national interest? Did the Conservative MEPs begin to oppose the Community from within or they preferred to remain faithful to its institutions, refusing the Euro-scepticism embraced by a portion of their own party? These questions could constitute the core of a new research aimed at analysing – from the perspective of the European Parliament – the progressive evolution of the British approach to Europe. Our study could represent just the first step towards a more comprehensive and deep knowledge of this fascinating topic.

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## Appendix

**Table 1: Roll-Call Votes related to the EEC Budget**

<u>Vote</u>	<u>Labour MEPs</u>	<u>Conservative MEPs</u>	<u>Socialist Group</u>	<u>Comparison</u>
<b>Doc. 1-581/79<sup>1</sup></b>	17 Yes	59 Yes	75 Yes; 4 No; 1 Abstained	All together
<b>Doc. 1-294/80<sup>2</sup></b>	14 Yes; 1 No	54 No; 1 Abstained	3 Yes; 2 No; 3 Abstained	Three different voting behaviors
<b>Amendment N°1 to Doc. 1-600/80<sup>3</sup></b>	7 Yes, 6 No	48 No	36 Yes; 9 No; 2 Abstained	Labour with Socialist Group versus Conservatives
<b>Amendment N°2 to Doc. 1-600/80<sup>4</sup></b>	8 Yes; 6 No	49 No	41 Yes; 2 No; 7 Abstained	Labour with Socialist Group versus Conservatives
<b>Doc. 1-772/80<sup>5</sup></b>	3 No	30 Yes; 1 No	2 Yes; 16 No; 2 Abstained	Labour with Socialist Group versus Conservatives
<b>Amendment N°180 to Doc. 1- 826/81<sup>6</sup></b>	11 Yes	4 Yes; 5 No; 41 Abstained	66 Yes; 1 Abstained	Labour with Socialist Group versus Conservatives
<b>Amendment N°29 to Doc. 1-410/82<sup>7</sup></b>	12 Yes	28 Yes; 1 No; 1 Abstained	41 Yes	All together

<sup>1</sup> Resolution on the draft general budget of the European Communities for the financial year 1980 (Section III — Commission) as amended by Parliament and modified by the Council, and on the total rejection of the 1980 draft budget (EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES, *Official Journal of the European Communities – Information and Notices*, Strasbourg, 7 January 1980, C 4, pp. 36-38). Voting results: 288 in favour; 64 against; 1 abstained.

<sup>2</sup> Resolution on the rejection of the new budget for the year 1980 (EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES, *Official Journal of the European Communities – Information and Notices*, Strasbourg, 4 August 1980, C 197, p. 19). Voting results: 171 against; 22 in favour; 9 abstentions.

<sup>3</sup> Amendment N°1 proposed by the Socialist Group to the project of supplementary and amending budget for the financial year 1980 (EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES, *Official Journal of the European Communities – Information and Notices*, Strasbourg, 15 December 1980, C 327, p. 28). Voting results: 153 against; 78 in favour; 3 abstained.

<sup>4</sup> Amendment N°2 proposed by the Socialist Group to the project of supplementary and amending budget for the year 1980 (*Ibidem*). Voting results: 145 against; 80 in favour; 8 abstentions

<sup>5</sup> Resolution on the Community's own resources (EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES, *Official Journal of the European Communities – Information and Notices*, Strasbourg, 4 May 1981, C 101, pp. 71-75). Voting results: 99 in favour; 31 against; 3 abstentions.

<sup>6</sup> Amendment N°180 proposed by the Committee on Budgets to the resolution on the draft general budget of the European Communities for the financial year 1982 as modified by the Council (EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES, *Official Journal of the European Communities – Information and Notices*, Strasbourg, 18 January 1982, C 11, pp. 56-58). Voting results: 193 in favour; 6 against; 72 abstentions.

<sup>7</sup> Amendment N°29 proposed by the Labour MEP Clwyd to the resolution on the preliminary draft budget in the light of the Parliament's resolution on guidelines for the 1983 budget (EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES, *Official Journal of the European Communities – Information and Notices*, Strasbourg, 13 September 1982, C238, pp. 58-63). Voting results: 93 in favour; 58 against; 5 abstentions

<b>Amendment N°6 to Doc. 1-410/82<sup>8</sup></b>	13 Yes	1 Yes; 35 No	34 Yes; 1 Abstained	Labour with Socialist Group versus Conservatives
<b>Doc. 1-450/82<sup>9</sup></b>	9 Yes	33 Yes; 1 Abstained	34 Yes; 4 No	All together
<b>Doc. 1-991/82<sup>10</sup></b>	8 No; 7 Abstained	58 No	69 Yes, 1 No	Labour with Conservatives versus Socialist Group
<b>Doc. 1-059/82<sup>11</sup></b>	14 No	59 No	81 Yes	Labour with Conservatives versus Socialist Group
<b>Doc. 1-062/82<sup>12</sup></b>	9 Yes; 3 No	58 Yes; 1 No	79 Yes	All together
<b>Amendment N.1 to Doc. 1-1222/82<sup>13</sup></b>	13 Yes; 1 No	56 No	59 Yes	Labour with Socialist Group versus Conservatives
<b>Doc. 1-233/82<sup>14</sup></b>	13 Yes	57 No	59 Yes;	All together
<b>Doc. 1-791/83<sup>15</sup></b>	7 Abstained	50 Yes; 5 Abstained	37 Yes; 16 No; 2 Abstained	Labour alone versus Conservatives and Socialist Group
<b>Doc. 1-1215/83<sup>16</sup></b>	13 Yes	54 Abstained	43 Yes; 46 No	Three different voting behaviors

<sup>8</sup> Amendment N°29 proposed by the Labour MEP Enright to the resolution on the preliminary draft budget in the light of the Parliament's resolution on guidelines for the 1983 budget (*Ibidem*). Voting results: 113 in favour; 54 against; 6 abstentions.

<sup>9</sup> Resolution on the joint declaration by the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission on various measures to improve the budgetary procedure (*Ibid.*, pp. 64-67). Voting results: 125 in favour; 28 against; 8 abstentions.

<sup>10</sup> Resolution on the draft supplementary and amending budget n.1 for the financial year 1982 (EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES, *Official Journal of the European Communities – Information and Notices*, Strasbourg, 17 January 1983, C 13, pp. 34-36). Voting results: 229 in favour; 84 against; 9 abstentions.

<sup>11</sup> Resolution on the rejection of the draft supplementary and amending budget n.1 for the financial year 1982 as modified by the Council (*Ibid.*, p. 66-67). Voting results: 259 in favour; 79 against; 0 abstentions.

<sup>12</sup> Complementary resolution on the draft supplementary and amending budget n.1 for the financial year 1982 (*Ibidem*). Voting results: 305 in favour; 24 against; 2 abstentions.

<sup>13</sup> Amendment N°1 of the Socialist Group to the draft supplementary and amending budget n.1 for the financial year 1983 (EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES, *Official Journal of the European Communities – Information and Notices*, Strasbourg, 14 March 1983, C 68, pp. 67-70). Voting results: 125 against; 77 in favour; 4 abstentions.

<sup>14</sup> Resolution on the draft supplementary and amending budget n.1 for the financial year 1983 (*Ibidem*). Voting results: 183 in favour; 33 against; 5 abstentions

<sup>15</sup> Resolution on the draft supplementary and amending budget n.2 for the financial year 1983 (EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES, *Official Journal of the European Communities – Information and Notices*, Strasbourg, 14 November 1983, C 307, pp. 32-35). Voting results: 134 in favour; 41 against; 100 abstentions.

<sup>16</sup> Resolution of the Labour group on the rejection of the general budget of the European Communities for the financial year 1984 (EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES, *Official Journal of the European Communities – Information and Notices*, Strasbourg, 16 January 1984, C 10, pp. 57-58). Voting results: 250 against; 63 in favour; 54 abstentions.

<b>Doc. 1-1213/83<sup>17</sup></b>	9 Yes	55 Yes	41 Yes; 36 No; 1 Abstained	All together
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<sup>17</sup> Resolution of the European Democratic Group on the rejection of the general budget of the European Communities for the financial year 1984 (*Ibid.*, p. 61). Voting results: 243 against; 109 in favour; 1 abstention.

**Table 2: Roll-Call Votes related to the Common Agricultural Policy**

<u>Vote</u>	<u>Labour MEPs</u>	<u>Conservative MEPs</u>	<u>Socialist Group</u>	<u>Comparison</u>
<b>Doc. 1-37/80 Paragraph 12<sup>18</sup></b>	16 No	54 No	16 Yes; 39 No; 1 Abstained	All together
<b>Doc. 1-37/80 Paragraph 14<sup>19</sup></b>	8 Yes; 6 No	12 Yes; 43 No	17 Yes; 40 No; 5 Abstained	Labour alone versus Conservatives and Socialist Group
<b>Doc. 1-37/80 Paragraph 21<sup>20</sup></b>	11 No; 1 Abstained	55 No	20 Yes; 20 No; 16 Abstained	All together
<b>Amendment N.1 to Doc. 1- 813/80<sup>21</sup></b>	12 No	43 No	29 No; 1 Yes	All together
<b>Doc. 1-250/81 <sup>22</sup></b>	6 No; 9 Abstentions	57 Yes	41 Yes; 8 No	Labour alone versus Conservatives and Socialist Group
<b>Amendment N. 113/rev. to Doc. 1- 250/81<sup>23</sup></b>	16 Yes	54 No	29 Yes; 14 No	Labour with Socialist Group versus Conservatives

<sup>18</sup> Resolution embodying the opinion of the European Parliament on: I. the communication from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council concerning changes in the common agricultural policy to help balance the markets and streamline expenditure II. The proposals from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council on the fixing of prices of certain agricultural products and on certain related measures; on monetary compensatory amounts ((EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES, *Official Journal of the European Communities – Information and Notices*, Strasbourg, 21 April 1980, C 97, pp 9-43). In paragraph 12 (p. 35), the EP states its approval of the Commission’s proposals to ameliorate the CAP. Voting results: 153 in favour; 134 against; 2 abstentions.

<sup>19</sup> In paragraph 14 (*Ibidem*) it is stated that “while account must be taken of the need of producers and individual Member States to see the more immediate problems resolved satisfactorily, the current negotiations on agricultural prices and measures to restore balance on the markets must be used as an opportunity to work out a strategy for the reform of the production aspects and structures of European agriculture”. Voting results: 140 in favour; 133 against; 25 abstentions.

<sup>20</sup> In paragraph 21 (p. 36) the EP argues that “the Commission proposals do not take sufficient account of the social and economic repercussions of the measures planned on the small and medium-sized farms and on the underprivileged regions of the Community”. Voting results: 152 in favour; 93 against; 25 abstentions.

<sup>21</sup> Amendment N°1 presented by the Group of European Progressive Democrats to the Resolution embodying the opinion of the European Parliament on the proposal modifying the EEC regulation n. 2727/75 concerning the common organization of cereal markets presented by the EEC Commission to the Council. Voting results: 108 against; 54 in favour; 1 abstention.

<sup>22</sup> Resolution on the possible improvements to the Common Agricultural Policy (EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES, *Official Journal of the European Communities – Information and Notices*, Strasbourg, 13 July 1981, C 172, 143 pp. 31-43). Voting results: 147 in favour; 76 against; 35 abstentions.

<sup>23</sup> Amendment N°113/rev. (p. 19) presented by Barbara Castle on behalf of the Socialist Group in order to replace the entire resolution doc. 1-250/81. Voting results: 47 in favour; 169 against; 18 abstentions.

<b>Doc. 1-236/82</b> <sup>24</sup>	8 No	11 Yes; 10 No; 14 Abstained	24 Yes; 7 No; 2 Abstained	Three different voting behaviors
<b>Doc. 1-279/82</b> <sup>25</sup>	5 No	38 No	13 Yes; 29 No	All together
<b>Doc. 1-680/82</b> <sup>26</sup>	3 Yes	34 Yes; 1 Abstained	38 Yes, 2 Abstained	All together
<b>Doc. 1-325/82 Commission Proposals</b> <sup>27</sup>	14 No (in favour of Conservatives)	53 No, 1 Abstained	20 Yes; 39 No, 1 Abstained	All together
<b>Doc. 1-1325/82</b> <sup>28</sup>	13 No	52 No	24 Yes; 38 No; 2 Abstained	All together
<b>Doc. 1-248/83</b> <sup>29</sup>	6 Yes	38 Yes	29 Yes	All together
<b>Doc. 1-923/83</b> <sup>30</sup>	3 No	18 No; 1 Abstained	26 Yes	Labour with Conservatives versus Socialist Group

<sup>24</sup> Resolution on the failure of the Council of Ministers of Agriculture to take agricultural price decisions for the 1982/83 marketing year (EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES, *Official Journal of the European Communities – Information and Notices*, Strasbourg, 14 June 1982, C 149, pp. 63-66). Voting results: 98 in favour; 31 against; 27 abstentions.

<sup>25</sup> Resolution concerning regulations in the fruit and vegetables sector (EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES, *Official Journal of the European Communities – Information and Notices*, Strasbourg, 19 July 1982, C 182, pp. 29-40). Voting results: 100 in favour; 76 against; 16 abstentions.

<sup>26</sup> Resolution on the budgetary costs of the Common Agricultural Policy in the cereals sector and on the factors influencing such costs (EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES, *Official Journal of the European Communities – Information and Notices*, Strasbourg, 20 December 1982, C 334, pp. 40-43). Voting results: 132 in favour; 34 against; 8 abstentions.

<sup>27</sup> This vote relates to a proposal of the EP Agricultural Committee to reject some regulations (doc. 1-970/82 — COM(82) 748 def. and doc. 1-1206/82 — COM(82) 605 def.) on agricultural prices issued by the EEC Commission ((EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES, *Official Journal of the European Communities – Information and Notices*, Strasbourg, 11 April 1983, C 96, p. 47). Voting results: 146 in favour; 125 against; 3 abstentions.

<sup>28</sup> Resolution embodying the opinion of the European Parliament on proposals made by the EEC Commission to the Council concerning the fixation of the prices of some agricultural products (*Ibid.*, pp. 47-62). Voting results: 148 in favour; 124 against; 8 abstentions.

<sup>29</sup> Resolution on the impact of the Common Agricultural Policy on the external relations of the EEC (EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES, *Official Journal of the European Communities – Information and Notices*, Strasbourg, 12 September 1983, C 242, pp. 74-80). Voting results: 100 in favour; 68 against; 10 abstentions.

<sup>30</sup> Resolution on new guidelines for the Community's structural policy in the agricultural sector (EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES, *Official Journal of the European Communities – Information and Notices*, Strasbourg, 19 December 1983, C 342, pp. 96-106). Voting results: 77 in favour; 22 against; 1 abstention.

**Table 3: Roll-Call Votes related to Defence, Security and Political Cooperation**

<u>Vote</u>	<u>Labour MEPs</u>	<u>Conservative MEPs</u>	<u>Socialist Group</u>	<u>Comparison</u>
<b>Amendment N.9 to Doc. 1- 946/82<sup>31</sup></b>	10 Yes	36 No	55 Yes; 1 Abstained	Labour with Socialist Group versus Conservatives
<b>Doc. 1-946/82<sup>32</sup></b>	11 No	24 Yes	20 Yes; 21 No; 10 Abstained	Labour with Socialist Group versus Conservatives
<b>Doc. 1- 1014/83<sup>33</sup></b>	12 No	44 Yes; 1 Abstained	1 Yes; 57 No; 22 Abstained	Labour with Socialist Group versus Conservatives
<b>Doc. 1- 1200/83<sup>34</sup></b>	8 No; 3 Abstained	19 Yes; 4 No; 2 Abstained	46 Yes; 6 No; 25 Abstained	Labour alone versus Conservatives and Socialist Group
<b>Doc. 1- 1343/83<sup>35</sup></b>	7 No	48 Yes	2 Yes; 36 No; 2 Abstained	Labour with Socialist Group versus Conservatives
<b>Doc. 1-80/84<sup>36</sup></b>	6 No	27 Yes	26 Yes; 16 No; 8 Abstained	Labour alone versus Conservatives and Socialist Group

<sup>31</sup> Amendment N°9 to the resolution on the European Political Cooperation and Security in Europe (EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES, *Official Journal of the European Communities – Information and Notices*, Strasbourg, 14 February 1983, C 42, p. 73). Voting results: 116 against; 98 in favour; 2 abstentions.

<sup>32</sup> Resolution on the European Political Cooperation and Security in Europe (*Ibid.*, pp. 71-77). Voting results: 133 in favour; 50 against; 19 abstentions.

<sup>33</sup> Resolution on the installation of missiles in Western Europe. (EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES, *Official Journal of the European Communities – Information and Notices*, Strasbourg, 19 December 1983, C 342, pp. 29-30). Voting results: 171 in favour; 109 against; 26 abstentions.

<sup>34</sup> Draft Treaty Establishing the European Union (EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES, *Official Journal of the European Communities – Information and Notices*, Strasbourg, 19 March 1984, C 77, pp. 27-55). Voting results: 237 in favour; 31 against; 43 abstentions.

<sup>35</sup> Resolution on destabilizing activities of eastern countries' secret services on the territory of the Community and the western world (EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES, *Official Journal of the European Communities – Information and Notices*, Strasbourg, 16 April 1984, C 104, pp. 44-45). Voting results: 136 in favour; 63 against; 9 abstentions.

<sup>36</sup> Resolution on shared European interests, risks and requirements in the security field (EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES, *Official Journal of the European Communities – Information and Notices*, Strasbourg, 14 May 1984, C 127, pp. 69-72). Voting results: 156 in favour; 67 against; 8 abstentions.