

# Europe's Continental Congress

OTTO VON HABSBURG

Between June 7th and 10th,\* the nine countries of the European Economic Community (EEC) will elect the first genuine European parliament. One hundred eighty-one million Europeans will determine the fate not only of their own countries, but perhaps of the whole continent.

The claim that a nine-country parliament constitutes a Continental Congress might sound presumptuous, particularly to the non-participating governments. Nevertheless, as long as the new parliament recognizes itself as a starting point, it can be the political base for tomorrow's Europe, just as the thirteen colonies provided the base for the United States of today. As people grasp what is really at stake, public interest in the European parliament is rising.

Europe will be different after June 10th. The inveterate pessimists who presume that nothing will come of the European parliament are being as unrealistic as those who assume we shall have a European Constitution at the end of its five-year term. The leader of the European Christian Democrats, former Belgian Prime Minister Leo Tindemans, was right when he said that the elections would be a qualitative step into a new dimension. The evolution of Europe will be accelerated by the particular conditions of our times.

In economics, the Common Market has succeeded past all expectations and has now reached the limits of its abilities. It cannot develop the initiatives needed to cope with the serious problems concerning energy, petroleum, raw materials, and unemployment policies. The Common Market cannot enjoy new growth without a political element — which the elections will supply.

Security considerations are even more important than these economic matters. Despite the claims of detente and peaceful coexistence, we are living in a period of grave tensions, caused by the imperialistic policy of the Soviet Union. By escalating

\* This article was written before the election took place. Dr. von Habsburg was elected as a Member from the Federal Republic of Germany.

its armament efforts, the U.S.S.R. compels other nations to do likewise. And the communist takeovers in Angola and Mozambique belie the claims of naive politicians: the Soviet military preparations are in fact a threat to international peace.

In a period of global decolonization, the U.S.S.R. remains the last great colonial empire. The Russian colonies include not only the eastern European nations yielded to the Kremlin at Yalta, but also, more importantly, Siberia and Soviet Central Asia. People too often forget that the Soviet population east of the Urals is mostly Mongolian or Turkoman, definitely not Russian. In fact, in 1970 the Russians made up only 53 percent of the Soviet population; with their low birth rate (they use more coffins than cradles) and the high natality of the Asiatics, they are likely to be a minority within their own country before the end of the 1980s. Meanwhile China, the rising Asiatic power, declares its determination to decolonize the area north of the Amur and Ussuri.

To counter this threat, the Soviet Union is obviously interested in "Finlandizing" the European continent. Finland retains the outward trappings of sovereignty, but the Kremlin makes the major domestic decisions; a market economy endures, but the people work mainly in the service of their distant masters. The Kremlin plans a similar fate for western Europe.

Eurocommunism, the Trojan Horse of 1979, is the main instrument of this endeavor. Eurocommunism is an obvious fiction: its leaders declare quite openly that their fundamental program remains unchanged, and Marxism and democracy are mutually exclusive. Furthermore, the Eurocommunists are even more financially dependent on the Soviet Union today than they were in the days of Joseph Stalin. In politics, too, he who pays the orchestra will call the tune.

The main purpose of Eurocommunism is to facilitate the participation of communist parties in the European elections. But since the parties are virtually nonexistent outside France and Italy, in all likelihood the communist faction will be the smallest in the European parliament. Moscow therefore wants to give these parties a certain false respectability, enabling them to form a "popular front" coalition in which the Socialists — more numerous — will be the horse and the Communists — more determined — will be the rider. The prospect is dangerous, since the Socialists, to put it mildly, are quite interested in coalition.

**A Legitimate Basis For European Sovereignty**

One often hears the argument that the European parliament has no formal powers and is consequently meaningless. But history shows that parliaments never have power until they are elected, and this European parliament will already have certain notable competencies. The EEC's former representative body had obtained authority over its own budget (thanks to the pressure of Conservatives and Christian Democrats); hence, the parliament is already vested with financial power. Moreover, the parliament has the right to investigate the administration, even passing a motion of "no confidence" against that body.

However, the central significance of the European parliament will lie in its democratic legitimacy. Hitherto, all delegates in European institutions were appointed by and, consequently, dependent on their national authorities. The new European parliament will be elected directly by the people. The national governments, unsure about the continued validity of their sovereignty rights, will be unable to dominate this new body. We shall witness a transfer of authority, more extensive than currently visualized, from the national to the European institutions.

From the beginning, two main issues will lead to a confrontation between the socialist and non-socialist forces in the European parliament. The first is the question of federalism or centralization. When the parliament drafts a new European Election Law, if the Socialists and their allies succeed in imposing national proportional representation, centralism will have won; adoption of the Anglo-American system, however, would be a clear choice in favor of federalism. The second main issue is "freedom or socialism." True, the parliament will not yet have legislative powers in this field. Nevertheless, motions carried there will greatly influence the national governments. The Socialist program opens the way for the Eurocommunist operation. While the Socialists claim to keep the Communists at arm's length, the Conservatives and Christian Democrats are termed the main "enemy." The resulting polarization, evident today even in a relatively moderate country like West Germany, is bound to affect the European parliament.

The Socialists, to their credit, were the first to realize the importance of the coming elections. Years ago, the Socialist International established a special office in Luxembourg to deal with the question. Mr. Sicco Mansholt of the Netherlands,

praised by Willy Brandt as the brain behind the Socialist strategy, is a centralizer, a technocrat. His main goal is to create an all-pervading bureaucracy. In his system individualism plays only a subordinate role, if it plays any role at all.

The Socialist programs aim to replace the present European social order: the European parliament would be used as an instrument for changing society. To this end, the program seeks control of investments and co-determination via the unions in virtually every field. The trade unions, which have developed into a political-economic feudal force, will send their strongest men into the parliament. Their purpose is to unionize the whole economy, without passing unpopular nationalization laws.

### **Decolonization In Eastern Europe**

Besides the Socialists, there are three forces: the Conservatives, the Christian Democrats, and the Liberals (most of whom are "classical" liberals). At present they all agree in their rejection of the Socialist plan, although certain Christian Democrats are wavering. In this situation, the recent success of the British Conservatives will strengthen those who oppose Socialism.

One central issue, as strange as it may seem, will be the definition assigned to the word "Europe." In the Socialist camp in general, there is a more or less avowed readiness to limit the notion to western Europe. The nations of central and eastern Europe are usually ignored, and European reunification is not mentioned. Christian Democrats, particularly those of Bavaria, believe that western Europe should use every peaceful means to promote self-determination for the nations behind the Iron Curtain. Most Christian Democrats want the eventual liberation of the continent: decolonization should not stop with Africa and Asia, but should include the Old World.

The chances for such a solution are not bad. Under growing pressure from the Far East, the Soviet Union is entering a difficult phase. Whenever the master diplomat, Ceausescu of Rumania, wants to expand his area of independence, he brings in the Chinese. And despite dire predictions, the Kremlin usually backs down.

The time has come for Europe to establish a strong, outward-looking unity in the West, not forgetting the European nations under Soviet occupation. Such a policy would assure international peace, since history proves that aggressors only strike when they see weakness on the other side. Thus, one can

realistically hope that all nations of Europe will eventually unite into a strong continent, a faithful ally of the United States, guaranteeing that the "World Revolution" planned by Moscow will not take place.

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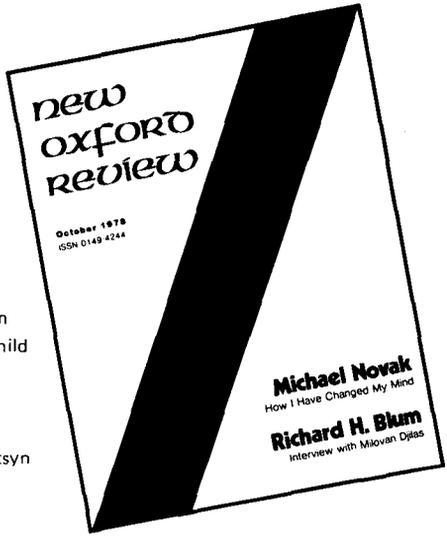
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# The Tax Reform Fraud

PAUL CRAIG ROBERTS AND RICHARD E. WAGNER

The growth of government is widely explained as a response to constituent demands for programs. Many economists see government as an agent for maximizing social welfare. In this view, government grows because the public wants it, and the growth of government expands the social welfare. Other economists believe that government grows by responding to demands from special interests rather than from the public. In this view, the growth of government is the growth of special interests. These explanations share the view that government is a passive agent that merely responds to demands. In contrast, we offer an explanation of tax reform that takes into account the self-interest of government itself. In this view, public policy also serves the private interests of the policymakers.

How does one define the self-interest of government? To an important extent, public officials can further their self-interests by increasing the power of government. Power maximization does not necessarily mean that government will maximize its revenue. Revenue maximization may result in a government that is large in absolute size, but small relative to the size of the economy. Power maximization may result in a smaller economy that produces less tax revenue, but in which the government is the source of a greater share of income and exercises greater control over the allocation of resources. Government, then, might rationally forego revenue maximization and adopt tax policies which result in government activity replacing private activity.

Government, of course, is not completely free of constraints on its ability to maximize its power, but at the same time it is not wholly constrained by the wishes of its constituents. It is often suggested that competition between political parties constrains politicians in the same way that market competition constrains firms. While such similarities are readily apparent, it is easy to exaggerate their extent. McCormick and Tollison show that incumbents regardless of party can be looked upon as forming a cartel to secure special advantage.<sup>1</sup> The expected

1. See Robert E. McCormick and Robert D. Tollison, "Legislatures as Unions," *Journal of Political Economy* 86, February 1978, pp. 63-79.