

Political statement from the Socialist parties of the European Community (Brussels, 24 June 1978)

Caption: On 24 June 1978, Social-Democrat leaders from the Member States of the European Community officially launch their election campaign in Brussels with the first direct elections to the European Parliament due to be held, at most, one year later.

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We, the Socialist parties of the European Community are committed to the pursuit of the common goals of freedom, social justice, equality and harmonious economic development.

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, as part of a new international order based on democratic socialist principles.

Our drawing more closely together in Europe is quite compatible with respect for each other's individuality.

Throughout Europe, it is the Socialists who, in the cause of human welfare, are battling to eradicate injustice and inequality, and to ensure a harmonious development of society.

In the European Community, the most important objective for Socialists is the liberation of the individual from every form of dependence, exploitation and need and the giving of more power and rights to each individual.

To achieve this objective we must change the economic and social structures in our countries. We realize that whilst each country can by itself do much towards this end, joint action between us in some fields can accelerate our progress. After twenty years of existence, the Community must now advance to a new phase in which the emphasis - in policy and in action - will be changed from the dictates of commercial interest to the pursuit of humane and co-operative goals. The first phase of the life of the Community has ended with only free trade achieved but with little regional and social balance.

We note with concern:

- the inability of our present social structure to solve the grave problem of unemployment;
- a trend towards less equality and solidarity as seen in the ever-widening gulf between the rich and the poor throughout the world and within the European Community;
- that uncontrolled growth in production and consumption, especially in the wealthier regions of the world, is being achieved at the cost of exhausting and polluting the environment, and of declining living and working conditions for millions of workers - something which Socialists cannot permit.

We accept that our duty to posterity, and to the millions of people living in dire poverty, compels us to accept restrictions in the use we make of the world's natural resources and to work for a better distribution of wealth, both within the Community and between the Community and the Third World.

Our fight for a society in which available resources are distributed fairly demands that we shape and guide social and economic development. The conventional economic policy instruments have proved inadequate; an active employment policy and the planning of the economy will be necessary to reduce unemployment. We also seek a fairer distribution of available work, with an important place being given to a shorter working span, a shorter working week, and a systematic policy of vocational training and retraining. Here we must take particular account of those groups which face the greatest difficulties on the labour market; young people, women, older workers and foreign workers.

We believe that the best way to achieve these conditions is through a common policy agreed between the main industrial nations. This common policy can be achieved only in close cooperation with all Trade Union organisations, particularly the ETUC. Our parties emphasize the growing role that the ETUC has to play in defending the personal and material interests of the working people of Europe and in achieving social

progress and the democratisation of the economy. The ETUC must be more involved in the preparation of, and the procedure for, making decisions. Our parties also intend to work out their own proposals in close collaboration with the Trade Union movement and to encourage every possible step towards greater freedom for the workers of Europe.

In addition to reducing unemployment, an improvement in working conditions is urgently required. The third industrial revolution has been accompanied by great technological progress, but also by an increase in the scale and concentration of economic power, producing massive and impersonal production units which make individual workers and consumers feel insignificant and powerless. Increasing mechanisation and mass production mean that work is rarely geared to the aptitudes and wishes of the individual worker. Inhuman working conditions lead to alienation, increasing absenteeism and inefficiency. The traditional small and medium-sized undertakings are often unable to keep up with the large undertakings and are threatened with extinction.

We oppose this trend. Therefore we shall campaign for:

- increased responsibility for workers within the enterprise. Democracy within industry and the economy as a whole should be developed in forms appropriate to each country and in cooperation with trade unions.
- democratic control of major industrial concentrations and multinational concerns: respect for competition rules, checking transfers of profits, greater control of the movement of capital and the allocation of investment.
- active encouragement of small and medium sized enterprises, and development of workers-cooperatives, and similar social instruments.

The Socialist parties therefore undertake to strive for an economic policy aimed at establishing

- Full employment
- Stability
- A fairer distribution of income and wealth
- An effective and democratic economic structure
- Economic democracy
- Improved social security
- Better living and working conditions
- Improved educational opportunities.

The right to work is and will remain one of the basic aims of Socialism. It is a fundamental human right for men and women. The principal tasks of the European Community and its member countries must therefore be to combat unemployment and to ensure full employment. In this connection Socialists place greatest emphasis not only on a policy of full employment but also on a policy aimed at creating better working conditions.

Socialists therefore advocate humane and harmonious growth, which means that innovation, investment and the creation and location of jobs will take account of the need for a balanced society, particularly with regard to the environment.

We Socialists will continue to strive for a more equitable distribution of income and wealth. We note with particular concern that efforts to assist the development of the Community's less-favoured regions have made little headway.

We therefore demand a clear and vigorous regional policy designed to reduce differences in living standards between the various regions in the Community. At the same time we demand an effective social policy capable of removing the many inequalities between groups of citizens in our countries.

Democratic Socialism stands for an equitable educational system which offers equal opportunities and maximum possibilities of development for all. In Europe we want a social expenditure policy which will ensure that everyone, irrespective of social background, sex or age, can avail himself of opportunities for continuing education throughout his life.

The exhaustion of raw materials and the dangers of environmental pollution are most alarming. Only a worldwide effort can enable the nations to implement a policy designed to maintain the ecological balance and save raw materials; Europe should give a lead in this direction.

Of great importance here will be a Community energy conservation programme, together with a Community effort to develop alternative energy sources. We recognize that the further development and use of nuclear energy can be considered only if there is public ownership and control to ensure adequate safeguards against security and environmental hazards.

We welcome the reestablishment of democracy in Greece, Spain and Portugal; we strongly support the accession of these countries to the Community. Moreover we believe that democratic Europe has an urgent responsibility to contribute to the strengthening of democracy in these countries and must demonstrate its solidarity with the working people of the countries concerned.

We know that the economic and social structures of these countries and the particular products concerned make it necessary to have certain arrangements for adaptation and an appropriate timetable of transitional periods, in order to respect the legitimate interests of all people - both in the Community and in Greece, Portugal and Spain.

The enlargement of the Community must become a source of new strength and dynamism for Europe.

Europe should see itself as a force for peace.

In our view, social progress based on freedom and a sense of responsibility within and outside the Community are possible only if we remain at peace. We wish to contribute towards this end and therefore support the policy of détente between East and West. Our aim is to work towards a situation in which European peace becomes a reality.

Europe has failed to achieve an organized peace - for the mere absence of war does not constitute a secure peace. We therefore support a policy consciously aimed at preventing war. We want to see a policy of détente between the power blocs.

The Socialist parties in Europe are the best guarantee that in future, the renunciation of the use of force, stability, cooperation and the non proliferation of nuclear weapons will remain the basic principles of international politics.

We spare no effort to achieve the renunciation of violence at regional and world level. Freedom, justice and solidarity are not only principles ruling the way of life of our countries but also a reliable guide for the international order that we are striving for.

With regard to the present military balance in the world and developments in the field of armaments technology, negotiations on arms control are becoming more and more important. The arms race must be stopped, as it swallows up huge resources and could endanger strategic stability through the increasing development of new weapons technology. The policy of limiting and reducing arms must be so conceived as to make it possible to stop the arms race spiral.

As regards our relations with Eastern Europe, we favour a policy of détente and cooperation as set out in the Final Act of the Helsinki Agreement. This first effort at cooperation between East and West in Europe since the Second World War includes practical plans for cooperation in the economic field as well as in science and human relations. These plans can become a reality only if the true spirit of the Helsinki agreement,

including the area of human rights, is supported by all signatories.

Only a Europe which declares itself in solidarity with the world's poor can make a genuine contribution to peace. On the medium and long term the prosperous countries will have to accept a slower increase in their material affluence in order to overcome the North-South conflict.

This is why we would also intensify European cooperation with the developing countries. The success achieved so far - in particular through the Lomé agreement - shows that we are on the right path towards further progress. The basic principles of this cooperation are the following:

- commitment of the Community to the overall advancement of the developing countries;
- full recognition of the independence of the developing countries and their right to freedom from intervention, whether politically or commercially motivated;