

To Sue and Tom and Gianni

Encouraging Democracy:
The International Context of
Regime Transition
in Southern Europe

Edited by
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In association with
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Chapter 10

Transition to democracy and european integration: the role of interest groups in Southern Europe¹

Dusan Sidjanski

Introduction

This chapter reproduces the main results of our empirical study on South European interest groups and their insertion into the European Community's structures (Sidjanski D., Ayberk, U., 1990). It deals with the transition to and the consolidation of democracy and more specifically with the role of the interest groups and European integration. In comparison with the transition taking place in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, the transition from authoritarian régimes to pluralistic régimes in Southern Europe and in Latin America was accomplished in the context of market economies. While banning political parties, political freedom and competition, these authoritarian régimes admitted and sometimes preserved a liberal and market economy with multiple centres of decision and organisations.

Despite their authoritarian political control, these societies in Southern Europe and Latin America thus remained pluralistic with regard to their economic and partly their social structures. In some ways, the transition to democracy there could be interpreted as a process of adaptation by political structures to the pluralistic structure of society and to the requirements of advanced market economies. This is the reason why the need for adaptation of the economic system to the new technological revolution was frequently referred to by Mikhail Gorbachov from the XXVIIth Congress of the Soviet Union Communist Party onwards.

In fact, generally, advanced or postindustrial societies are democracies and the new trend toward liberal democracy seems to confirm a correlation

between pluralistic régime, market economy and highly developed societies. On the other side, the rigidity of authoritarian and totalitarian régimes appears at some stage of development as an obstacle to the evolution toward a high-tech economy. One of the main reasons for the transition to democracy (or for reform of some traditional form of democracy) appears to be the requirement for political structures and processes to adapt to the new technological revolution and to the market economy, as well as to expectations for more freedom and for political and economic pluralism. In this perspective, pluralistic democracy, which guarantees more flexibility, more capacity for change and adaptation responds better to the general conditions required by an advanced society.

At the same time, the postwar and the most recent evolution to liberal democracy in Southern and Eastern Europe is characterised by two apparently contradictory tendencies: one pushing towards the establishment of big continental markets, regional economic integration and even globalisation in some advanced sectors (e.g. communication, finance, high-tech); the expressed aspirations for the preservation or reenforcement of national and even regional identities. It seems that the European Community, with its economic union (internal market and common policies) and its prospects for political union, offers a model which can combine both trends in some kind of federative union. 'Creation continue', the process of European integration aims at a union based on diversity and on democratic principles: political, economical and social pluralism, but also national and regional pluralism inside a federative and dynamic Community. Its evolution toward a democratic and decentralised union, as well as toward the biggest world market and commercial power, has contributed to its appeal to the new Southern democracies and to the Eastern countries recently engaged in the transition process.

These various factors explain why Southern European countries like Greece, Spain and Portugal joined the European Community in search of better guarantees for the stability and consolidation of their newly established or re-established democracies. At the same time, their integration into the grouping of highly developed countries offered the promise of quick modernisation and rapid growth. In this respect, interest groups have an important role to play in the socio-economic sphere comparable to the role of the political parties in the process of political development.

This hypothesis coincides with the opinion expressed by Alexis de Tocqueville in his analysis of the American political system more than a hundred years ago. Interest groups and civic associations form a dense network of links and communications which constitutes a basis and support for democratic life. This fact, which appeared both as an original and a new characteristic of the young American democracy in the nineteenth century, has become today a common feature of most industrialised democracies. It is not surprising therefore that the consultation of interest groups has become also a substantial part of the decision-making and implementation process in the European Community.

Since their return to democratic pluralism, the three Southern European countries have become members of the EC - Greece in 1981 and Spain and Portugal in 1986 - each drawing closer to the model of Western democracies

and to the principles of the EC. In accordance with the pluralism of its members, the EC is characterised by the existence of various organisations and centres of decision. At the political stage, this pluralism is exemplified by the presence of various political parties and free elections; at the socio-economic stage, it is symbolised by the diversity of groups which reflect a variety of activities, interests and values.

The Context of Interest Groups and European Integration

The European Community, endowed with powers of a political nature but still principally of economic content, governs not only certain aspects of the behaviour of member states but also of groups and individuals. The emerging European authority presents an entirely original trend with its capacity to take decisions which affect groups, enterprises and people as well as the member states. By directly influencing the actors of the socio-economic scene, the EC encourages a vast regrouping of, in particular, the interests which have already been organised at the national level.

As a consequence of this, a network has formed consisting of interest groups at the Community level around the principal decision centres of the EC. Obviously, these European groups, numbering more than 500, have neither the structure nor the capacity comparable to their national counterparts, but they are better organised and more efficient than the wider international organisations of the same nature. Their actions are more intensive and tangible, corresponding, in principle, to the areas in which the EC takes decisions and formulates common policies. In this respect, this European network of organisations and their activities are, in fact, indicators of the real power of the Community and the intensity with which socio-economic integration has been achieved in the EC (Meynaud J, Sidjanski, D., 1971; Sidjanski D., Ayberk U., 1974, 1987 and 1990).

The coming into force of the European Single Act of 1 July 1987 has vigorously accelerated activities at the Community level in which interest groups have been involved. It is assumed that interest groups have found their structures and functions strengthened by the idea of a Europe without internal frontiers as well as by the development of common policies and basic structures, and the prospects for political union.

Organised action by these groups is correlated to collective action by member states, by the Commission, the Council and the European Parliament, with the result that the current of activity is no longer all one way, but flows from the EC towards the groups as well as the other way. The network has become much more complex than was foreseen by the Treaty of Rome; it influences work in many directions between the principal elements - the institutions and the states - and various groups and many groupings have grown up alongside them.

The more important, immediate and autonomous the powers (as exercised by the European institutions), the more probable it is that the groups will try to organise themselves at the level of these powers. There is a certain parallel to be drawn between the degree and the nature of these powers, on the one

hand, and the structure and action of the groups on the other. Besides, the creation of these European groupings is proof of the importance of these powers. The groups do not act gratuitously; when they establish a network of structures and action, it is because they are trying to satisfy a real need. In order to be effective, their action is directed solely at the real power centres. If the groups try to influence the Commission, it is a sign that the Commission fulfils an important function in the formation, execution and control of decisions. The action of the groups on the Commission fulfils an important function in the formation, execution and control of decisions. The action of the groups on the Commission is a tribute paid to its genuine importance. For the same reason, interest groups have paid much more attention to the European Parliament since its direct election (Sidjanski, D., 1979) and particularly since the enlargement of its powers by the Single European Act, which provides that the European Parliament acts 'in cooperation with the Council' regarding the internal market.

When speaking of the activity of the pressure groups, one should think not only of unilateral pressures, but also of the influence which institutions exert on the groups, or through them, on the national centres of power. In this perspective, it is obvious that national interest groups should aim to influence the EC decision-making process. Simultaneously they channel the influence from the EC toward their members. This interaction is one important factor among others which has determined the transformation of structures and behaviour in Southern Europe and favoured its economic and political development; and hence is of considerable importance for the outcome of democratic transition in that region.

Table I presents an overview of the evolution of membership in the EC interest groups, including those from Southern Europe. It illustrates the emergence of the new European structures, as discussed above.

Among variables which condition and explain the degree of participation at the Community level are membership in the EC and its duration, the economic and social diversity of the country, its size as well as its distance from or proximity to the EC centres of decision. The size of Luxembourg limits its participation, but size accounts, in association with some other variables, for a high participation in the case of France and Germany. Similarly, proximity explains the relatively high participation of two medium-size countries, Belgium and The Netherlands, in comparison with Italy.

The groups of the new members of the European Community follow, more or less, the same route that the groups of the founding countries have followed: the groups that are most interested in and motivated by the European Community establish relations first with the interest groups at the Community level; others gradually follow depending on how well they feel their interests are represented there. This process takes a relatively long period of time, somewhere about five years to reach a sufficient level of representation. For example, the agricultural interest groups of the Community, on account of the priority formulation of a common agricultural policy, established organic relations first. The European industrial sector and the services attracted the recently adhering groups in Southern Europe to the EC according to their sectors and types of interest. Recently some non-Commun-

Table I Membership in the EC interest groups*

Country	1970		1975		1980		1985	
	N	in %	N	in %	N	in %	N	in %
B	297	93.8	324	93.6	382	88.6	391	86.3
F	304	98.7	332	95.5	419	97.2	424	93.5
D	304	98.6	338	97.6	417	96.7	417	92
I	272	89.1	302	87.2	374	86.7	396	81.4
NL	288	92.3	131	90.4	368	85.3	390	86
L	119	48.1	128	36.9	147	34.1	132	29.1
DK	—	—	117	33.8	260	60.3	266	58.7
IR	—	—	95	27.4	183	42.4	195	43
GB	—	—	161	46.5	378	87.7	373	82.3
GR	—	—	2	0.5	66	15.3	154	33.9
SP	—	—	5	1.4	167	38.7	189	41.7
P	—	—	—	—	85	19.7	113	24.9
Total of interest groups at EC level	308	—	346	—	431	—	453	—

* Data for 1970 are from our article (Sidjanski D., Ayberk U., 1974); all other data are obtained from the Commission's Survey of EC professional organisations.

ity member countries (e.g. Switzerland, Austria, Nordic countries) have frequently participated in the activities of the Community groups.

Looking at Southern Europe, the Greek interest groups' integration proceeded rather slowly and not in conformity with the trends so far followed. If we compare this situation with the entry of Portuguese and Spanish interest groups, we can see that they established organic and substantial relations with those of the Community much earlier than their formal entry and much more intensively than their Greek counterparts. How does one explain this inconsistency? Are the Greek groups insufficiently prepared regarding necessary personnel or means for representation at the European level? Do cost, distance or language form barriers in the way of their participation in the activities of the European groups? Nevertheless, the process of economic integration of Greece since 1981 had a positive impact on the participation of its interest groups. As a result they eventually surpassed in 1986 the level reached by Portugal.

The following comparison of the Southern European interest groups in their relations with the European institutions and organisations dwells on the following aspects: the role of the interest groups in the transition to democracy; their attitude towards the EC and the adaptation of the interest groups to and their participation in the activities of the Community interest organisations; and, the functions and the influence of the national interest groups at the Community level.² It is also necessary to look beyond democratic

transition to democratic consolidation, given the evolutionary effects of interest group activity.

Interest Groups in the Transition to Democracy

Our general assumption is that the emergence and autonomy of multiple interest groups and associations contributes to the pluralistic structure as well as to the decentralised activities in a society and tend therefore to consolidate the basis for a democratic system. In parallel, the participation of these groups at the European level stimulates and reinforces this tendency towards democracy.

Contrary to Spain and Portugal, Greece has suffered only one brief interruption in the democratic process after the War, between 1967 and 1974 under the Colonels' régime. This interruption did not have major effects on the interest groups, whose structures or management had in fact enjoyed a certain stability under the dictatorship which practised a liberal economic policy. The trade unions, on the other hand, already weak under the previous democracy, suffered a further setback and marginalisation under the Colonels' régime.

From the point of view of the interest groups, the return to democracy in 1974 did not bring any significant changes at the structural level. However, it emphasised the autonomy of these organisations and caused changes at the management level. This continuity of structure and administrative style of the professional organisations is also one of the reasons for the rigidity of the Greek groups which, despite the relatively long period since their application and acceptance, still require less support from the Community groups to improve their standing at the national level. This may be one of the reasons which govern the slow progress of the adaptation of the Greek groups to the Community environment.

The situation concerning the two Iberian countries has been quite different. Paradoxically, the socio-economic groups of these countries had not been acquainted with any development outside of that which had prevailed under a corporatist system. In that context, the political authorities had sought means of slowing down or controlling the progress towards autonomy of employer or labour groups, imposing on them a vertical organisational system. This state intervention had given rise to the development of underground or parallel systems, especially involving the trade unions with Communist inclinations (the Portuguese Intersindical and the Spanish Workers' Commissions). The socio-economic structures, as they are today, began to emerge and establish themselves progressively with the gradual opening up and liberalisation programme of the economies of these two countries: see the role of the *Opus Dei* in the 1960s in Spain, during which time exceptional economic growth was accompanied by in-depth changes in the economic structure; also the liberalisation policy implemented by the Caetano government during the years preceding the Portuguese Revolution. This Revolution of 1974 did in fact cause a break much sharper than that which took place in Spain with the coronation of Juan Carlos I in 1975; from then onwards, despite a slight setback due to the revolutionary, unstable period between 1974 and 1976 in

Portugal, both countries have taken decisive measures towards the democratisation of their socio-political structures.

With the transition to democracy in Portugal, the trade unions emerged from their clandestine positions. By 1976, the hegemony of Intersindical had been overcome and the tertiary sector unions supported by the Socialists (PS) and Social Democrats (SDP) had ended up victorious. A second central labour organisation, the UGT, with socialist and social democratic leanings, was established which stirred a dissident movement at the heart of the Intersindical. A similar chain of events took place in Spain after the enactment of the law recognising the freedom of unionist activities in 1977, which allowed groups of trade unions to organise at the expense of the vertical unions of the old régime and to form two main branches: the UGT which was of socialist leaning, and the Confederation of Unions of Worker Commissions which sympathised with the Communist Party (PCE).

The employer organisations were rather slow and were established as from 1975, in reaction to the socialist policy of the pro-Communist Portuguese government. The Confederation of Portuguese Industry (CIP) was founded in 1975 and the Confederation of Portuguese Trade (CCP) in 1976. During negotiations with the IMF, they gained in influence due to the fact that the minority government of the socialist Soares needed their support to come to terms with the IMF. Furthermore, following the launching of the agricultural reform and the nationalisation in 1975, the Confederation of Portuguese Farmers (CAP) was established. Both the CIP and CAP supported the PS and the PSD to put an end to the revolutionary period. The three confederations met regularly in order to coordinate their activities in favour of a liberal economic policy which, in fact, corresponded to the EC's orientation. Their legitimacy and influence have since been enhanced with the institution in 1983 of the Permanent Council for Social Cooperation and their affiliation to groups at the Community level. Also the attachment of Portuguese professional groups to the EC organisations has reinforced their standing at the national level.

The Spanish employers' organisations were formed and accepted following the enactment of the law of 1977. The Spanish Confederation of Employers' Organizations (CEOE) was founded in 1977 along with the other organisations. The National Confederation of Farmers and Breeders was also established at the same time. At the beginning of the transition period, a certain confusion reigned in Spain concerning the respective roles of political and socio-economic leaders, due in part to the fact that the new political personalities were, to a significant extent, also officials of professional groups. The leaders of employers' and labour organisations also assumed leading political functions especially as a result of their representation in the Parliament during the first legislative periods of the new régime (Condomines, J., 1984). This situation changed following the signing of the 'Pact of Moncloa' in 1977 and the coming into being of the principal parliamentary parties, from which members of unions and employer organisations have been excluded. After this division of responsibilities, the employers' and trade unions' leaders gradually began to manifest their groups' desires to establish their autonomy with regard to the state and the political parties. A desire for the pursuit of common views and

interests both from the point of view of groups and of the political parties was no longer evident or necessary as it was during the beginning of the transition to democracy (Sidjanski, D., Ayberk, U., 1990, pp. 242-5).

Consolidation of Democracy Through European Integration: Attitudes and Adaptation of Interest Groups

The political will to adhere to the European Community expresses a general desire to consolidate the new democratic process in Southern European countries. This motive is evident from multiple statements made by political leaders as well as from proposals presented in the programmes of political parties. From the point of view of interest groups, we observed a large consensus from our field study that participation in the integration process in the EC will contribute substantially to building a liberal democracy. In this respect, participation of the national interest groups at the European level represents a significant aspect of the evolution towards democratic structures and pluralistic social networks.

For these reasons, we consider that the following analysis of changes in the attitudes of the interest groups and their participation within a European democratic community reflects in an important way on the democratic development in the Southern European countries. For this process of change and of learning supports the emergence of pluralistic structures as well as the diffusion of new habits of consultation, dialogue and negotiation which are intimately related to general democratic behaviour.

a) Greece

On the Greek side, the principal political advantages of integration are perceived in terms of services rendered in support of the general interests of the country and its contribution to institutional and juristic modernisation. Most of the representatives of the employers' organisations still dwell on its economic advantages and disadvantages. For certain groups like the Greek merchant marine, integration brought neither gains nor losses. Of the many groups which appeared to fear the adverse effects of external competition, especially on account of the more advanced technological level of some of the member countries, none pronounced a word against the EC. The farmers' organisation (PASEGES), which always stressed the dangers of external competition, keeps a positive view on this matter, however, this being mainly due to the Integrated Mediterranean Programmes' modernisation of this sector and various forms of aid.

With the trade unions, despite the relatively favourable opinion of the General Confederation of Greek Workers (GSEE), their perception of European integration is in general less positive than the employers'. The closer trade unions are to the Communist Party or the left-wing of PASOK, the less favourable they are to the EC. An example is the Athens Labour Exchange which is controlled by the Communist Party.

Altogether, the Greek interest groups manifest less favourable attitudes than

the Spanish and Portuguese, with a more pronounced difference between employers and trade unions, and also a higher level of indifference to and distance from the EC. This general observation does not apply to the central employers' organisations, but is more in reference to certain sectoral organisations as well as trade unions.

The Greek central employers' organisation (SEV) has progressively established and developed relations at the European level since 1962, date of the enactment of the Association Agreement. Since the entry of Greece to the EC, these relations have been intensified. Becoming a member of the Union of Industries of the European Community (UNICE) after many years of contacts, the SEV now participates in the activities of UNICE and in its working groups and keeps a permanent representative office in Brussels. It is also represented in a series of advisory organs. This institutional participation is reinforced by a network of informal contacts. Apart from that, the SEV has established close relations with the employers' groups of many member countries, with those of West Germany in particular. This multi-faceted participation has been supported by many SEV leaders, especially its President.

Participation in European sectoral organisations varies according to sectors. For example, the Union of Greek Shipowners takes part in the Council, and also in the working groups, of the Committee of Shipowners Associations of the EC (CAACE) as well as in the Economic and Social Committee since 1990. In parallel, it maintains, as do practically all organisations, regular and frequent contacts with the Commission. On the other hand, the approach of the Union of Greek Cotton Industrialists and that of the Union of Greek Wool Mills display significant differences. While the cotton people participate actively in the activities of Comitextil and of Eurocoton, collaborate with the Commission and develop bilateral relations especially with their French and Italian counterparts, the wool people have only occasional contacts with the Comitextil - which they consider an 'overgrown monster' - in proportion to their expectations of information at a reasonable cost. These two forms of participation reflect the modernistic-traditional dichotomy.

The level of participation is also high on the part of PASEGES, being a member of COPA and COGECA, the EC's agricultural groups, as well as organisations of architects, engineers, lawyers, medical doctors and especially on the part of the travel agents (Group of National Unions of Travel Agencies of the EC - under Greek chairmanship). Meanwhile, many other groups do not express as much need for pursuing relations or being involved in organic cooperation with their counterparts in the Community.

In some exceptional cases participation is rendered difficult by an absence of equivalent structures at the EC level: the Union of Exporters of Industrial Products, for example, is represented sometimes through the Panhellenic Association of Exporters, or SEV or through the Ministry of Commerce. The participation of the trade unions has been marked by a considerable delay due to the GSEE and the Athens Labour Exchange themselves. The Federation of Textile Workers, although formally a member of the European Committee of Textiles Unions, does not participate in trade unionist activities at the European level because it is considered as lacking in class consciousness and class politics.

b) Spain

From the political point of view, the perception of the European integration process by the Spanish socio-economic groups is, in general, positive. Both the employers' groups – the majority of which holds the positive view with none against – and the spokesmen for the unions consider Spain's entry into the EC a positive move and as in support of the development of the new democratic political system. Views on the economic consequences, however, vary: the leaders of the employers' organisations express more optimistic views than those of the unions, the more optimistic ones being closer to the government. On the other hand, the more pessimistic organisations are mostly sectoral ones or those more distant from the government.

The consequences of the entry of Spain into the EC, as evaluated by Spanish interest groups, are considered positive by the majority of representatives, both at the level of employers and trade unions. Structural adaptation has not created any problems: many of the organisations which were recently formed have taken into account the European dimension and many have found there a stimulating agent or seen possibilities of support. From this point of view, the collaboration on the part of Spanish and Portuguese interest groups towards the common goal of their parallel development is also evident. One of the signs of the adaptation of the Spanish groups is the numerous surveys and analyses conducted by them concerning the EC, carried out for the purpose of assuring a more efficient representation at EC level.

Spain is the leading country in Southern Europe when considered in terms of new members in the Community groups, although it also has quite a few old members. Almost all the employer or trade union groups of any importance at the national level have taken part in one or more European organisations. Effective participation in European associative life appears to have itself gained in activity since the growing participation of Spain in advisory or decision-making sessions. All the interviewed employers' groups have encouraged their affiliates to become members of at least one European organisation; almost a third of them are members of two or three Community organisations. Unions which sympathise with the Socialist party have good general connections at the Community level; the other two unions, the CNT and the Workers' Commissions, insist more on participation in the Economic and Social Committee. Altogether, participation in one or other activities in the Community by different groups has been pursued with enthusiasm and with the aim of coordination of action at the European level.

In nine cases out of ten, participation was evaluated as positive, the appraisal of the employers' group being slightly more positive than the trade unionist groups. In general, the participation of Spanish delegations in Brussels is, for the majority of groups, periodic but of a high frequency and regularity. This varies depending on different factors: the importance and efficiency of the Community group; its power of influence as well as its level of intervention; the role of the EC in various sectors of the economy; and budgetary means which are rather low for Spanish groups, thus limiting their levels of participation. This last point is also underlined with considerable

emphasis by the spokesmen of the Greek and Portuguese groups. In all cases, the interest groups are inclined to complain of the insufficiency of means at their disposal.

As compared to the other two countries of Southern Europe, Spain displays a peculiarity due to its autonomous regions especially Catalonia. Its status of autonomy gained in 1979 could suffer from entry in the EC, due to certain restrictions concerning the role assigned to the central government in activities at the Community level. Supporting the cause of integration and the Europe of Regions, the Catalan authorities seek the means of preserving and increasing their autonomy by complying with the norms and executing decisions of the Community that are within their competence (Article 27/3 of the Statute of Autonomy), and by supporting the actions of the regional groups. In 1982, the government established the 'Patrona Catalana, Pro Europa' to facilitate the integration of various sectors into the EC. By 1986 it had installed a Catalan office in Brussels to serve the interests of Catalonia and also to provide a seat for the officials and private representatives of the region. Also the Catalan employers' associations are in direct contact with Brussels. Sometimes, a regional association like the Catalan Confederation of Commerce, participates directly at the level of the European Confederation of Retail Trade. This tendency towards regional representation gaining strength from the presence of certain German 'Länder' and certain regional interest groups is likely to become more widespread with the achievement of a single market envisaged for 1992.

c) Portugal

A similarly positive attitude is evident among the Portuguese interest groups. With the exception of these groups in alliance with the Communist Party (PCP), most of the groups express views which converge towards a consensus that the EC would contribute to the stabilisation of democracy. This generally positive attitude was much more emphasised in the period of negotiations with the EC, during which time the interest groups were confronted with various substantial problems. Since then, the employers and their various sectors have expressed reservations and assumed a position demanding better protection of their interests. In the meantime, following the integration of Portugal, this circumspect attitude has changed to a more positive attitude recognising the reality of integration and the need for profiting from its advantages as much as possible.

In Portugal, the principal organisations have reinforced their structures following entry into the EC. This led to the acquisition of additional staff and helped to accelerate modernisation of the equipment of certain groups: for example, the Portuguese Confederation of Commerce (CCP) has installed a permanent post in Brussels (1987) where it has representatives in about 15 advisory committees. Since 1986, it has become a member of the Federation of European Associations of Wholesale and Foreign Trade, its activities resting mostly on its sectoral associations, affiliated to European commercial groups. In the area of industry and agriculture, participation is mainly performed by

two central organisations, the CIP and the CPA and some sectoral groups involved in exporting, like the ones concerned with textiles. The degree of participation also depends on the budgetary means of the national groups which they have been endeavouring to expand since 1986, this leading the way to a general reinforcement of the groups themselves. The first of these organisations which established contacts at the European level has been the CIP, becoming first an associate member, then a full member of UNICE. It established a permanent representative office in Brussels in 1982. The CAP has also reinforced its representation by becoming a member of COPA in 1985, assuming its office of the presidency in 1987 and by establishing a permanent representative office in Brussels.

The situation at the level of the trade unions reflects a well-known conflict; the entry of the UGT to the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) from its creation has facilitated its subsequent affiliation to the European Confederation of Trade Unions (ECTU), gaining it an advantage over its rival, the CGTP-IN, whose several attempts at acceptance into the ETUC have remained fruitless. This inequality of access between the two confederations is partially neutralised by equal representation of both of them in the Economic and Social Committee.

Since the country's entry into the EC, all the important Portuguese groups have intensified their activities at the Community level. The delegations representing all the groups take pains to travel regularly, about once a week, to Brussels to take part in various meetings and especially in those of the Economic and Social Committee. The Portuguese groups, which have only recently established contact with the Community organisations, appear to assign greater importance to the Economic and Social Committee than the other groups. This is also the case for the CGTP-IN which is kept outside the ECTU.

In the three Southern European countries the liberal professions, services and commerce are well represented with the exception of the Spanish craftsmen. Intensity of participation varies in terms of the impact the group has at the Community level, the relative importance of the sectors concerned and their coverage by the EC as well as the means at their disposal. This observation, which could be extended to other sectors, must be interpreted in the light of the perception that leaders of the groups concerned have with regard to their relations with the Community groups and the institutions of the EC in terms of a cost-benefit analysis.

Similarly, we have established that the agricultural groups are, in general, well integrated and more active since agriculture remains an important field of activity in the three countries and the Community. This constitutes a substantial form of encouragement within the framework of the Common Agriculture Policy, through special contributions made to the agricultures of the Southern European countries. These inputs have sometimes also had a significant political dimension, as in the case of Greece.

Functions and Influence of National Interest Groups at the Community Level

Among the principal functions of the interest groups with relation to the European Community, the following are the predominant ones: information, analysis, representation and coordination, influence (promotion and defence of interests). As observed in the past in our previous work, the information function comes first in importance among the activities of the European groups. Progressively, with the development of the integration process, other functions also begin to assume more importance.

In the Southern European countries, and especially in Spain and Portugal, their processes of democratisation introduced the legitimisation function of national groups through membership of the Community or international institutions. These contacts are in a way confirmation of their representative function and, as an extension of that, an endorsement which mostly results in the reinforcement of their status and capacity of influence at the national level.

In all three countries, the demand for information and consequently for more transparency has significantly increased since their integration. The dissemination of information is accomplished through regular and periodic means to which publications and up-to-date reports may be added. The function of the groups is to act as instruments for gaining and disseminating information concerning the EC. They constitute a means of reducing the distance between their members and the EC, as well as of facilitating the action of their members in European matters. Thus, for example, the members of Portuguese organisations interviewed mostly regard their organisation more and more like a conveyor belt of information – evaluated as more efficient than national government – rather than as real pressure groups. Moreover, in the three countries, the leaders of the groups interviewed were by a great majority of the opinion that their governments furnished information parsimoniously and it is through their contacts and their participation at the Community level that the interest groups are better informed of the prevailing problems and decisions taken in the Community.

Other functions of the groups tend to develop as the impact of the EC on the tangible interests of their members increases: when a demand for aggregating the interests of its members and definition of common attitudes increases; when representation and negotiation within European groups or advisory organs of the EC are in question, or when elaboration of strategies and their coordination with those of other national groups are necessary; and when protection of the interests of their members and influencing the positions of the Community groups as well as the decisions of the EC are required. Apart from these functions of pressure groups or lobbying, the interest groups also assume a more general role: they contribute by their diversity and richness of information to the transparency and through the plurality of the decision centres to the democratisation of their socio-political systems. This role of the national groups is reinforced by their integration within the network of European groups. Finally, altogether, and via these various levels, they contribute to the process of integration by the 'European socialisation' of their leaders and their members.

The basic issue and also the most difficult one concerns the influence of the socio-economic groups on the process of decision-making at both the national and the Community levels. When European integration is advanced, it appears that specialised, limited or technical influence will have an upper hand over general influence. This observation seems quite plausible as it is much more difficult to evaluate the general influence of organisations like UNICE as compared to the more precise and incisive action of, for example, COPA. However, this observation is not meant to give an exaggerated impression of the influence of specialised or technical groups. A general evaluation of the influence of the interest groups is an hazardous exercise: it implies analysing a multitude of factors diachronically as well as appraising a complex model of inter-influences somewhat like a polygon of forces, of decisions and pressures evolving from the framework of a special process that is in general inseparable from the overall national or Community level processes.

Due precautions taken, a concrete distinction, however, could be established between general and sectoral or specialised influence. Also the representatives of the Spanish groups, in general, value sectoral influence as much more effective and important than general influence. The majority of the Spanish groups, subjected to our research, was of the opinion that the degree of influence at the European level of the groups had increased from the time of the entry of Spain into the Community. The effect at the national level is clearly apparent, as resulting from the responses of the majority of our interviewees – whether from the trade unions' or the employers' side – that the influence of the professional organisations has increased since 1986.

This dimension occupies too an important place in the views of the Portuguese and Greek socio-economic leaders. Also, being part of a European group greatly facilitates intervention in the decision-making process in the case of Portugal. In the same way, for the representatives of the employers' organisations, the integration of Portugal into the EC contributes to the reinforcement of the country's involvement in a market economy system and obliges it to revise the constitution along those lines.

The experience of the Greek groups deserves further attention, as it illustrates well the linkage between European involvement and domestic political evolution. The opinion of the principal Greek employers' groups of the European groups' influence was inclined towards judging them as quite effective in general. Only the exporters were of the opinion that their influence is weak and that real power passes through the government and the European Parliament. The Technical Chamber, the liberal professions and PASEGES perceived the influence of the European groups differently, although the majority agreed on attributing to them a real or potential influence. According to most of them, this influence is a function of the ability of the European groups to present tangible and sectoral decisions. Only PASEGES was critical of the influence of COPA and GOGECA on the Common Agricultural Policy. Nevertheless, this statement was greatly qualified by its following observation according to which the Commission takes back or modifies its proposals each time a strong majority of member groups of COPA opposes it. This indicates thus its blocking power of the obstructions which seem to have decreased in the last few years. When it comes

to trade unions – as could be presumed from their level of participation – they are mostly sceptical in this respect.

In principle, one can assume that those who attribute a high degree of influence to the European groups of which they are members usually tend to evaluate their own influence positively within these groups. Such is the case with the modernistic employers' groups – SEV, EEE, Cotton – which claim to have a certain influence within the organisations of which they are members. Taking into account its resources and the size of its membership, the SEV admits to not being as influential as the great European employers' organisations, while the EEE claims to have a great influence as it represents the most important merchant fleet in the EC. Various other groups like PASEGES consider themselves as influential within the European groups of which they are members, like COPA. To this end, PASEGES emphasises that it is essential for the protection of its interests to seek alliances with its counterparts in the other member countries. Finally – with surprise – one finds that the majority of the representatives of the workers consider themselves as influential in the Community groups of which they are members due to their connections. This statement raises doubts and one tends to suspect wishful thinking on the part of certain groups. In fact, it is a general tendency, observed regarding various groups, to highlight their influence in an attempt to increase their importance in front of their members and the decision-making bodies.

The principal Greek groups agreed by a majority that their affiliation to European organisations had had a positive effect on their relations with the government. For example, the Association of Medical Doctors, declared that their affiliation to the related European organisation made them able to criticise the government policy whenever it deviated from the decision taken at the Community level. While many other groups complained of a lack of consultation on the part of the government, PASEGES, on the contrary, claimed they exchanged information and help with the Ministry of Agriculture and that its participation in the Community groups has gained it the advantage of informal but continuous collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture. This collaboration in the agricultural sector is not peculiar to Greece but is encountered in most of the EC countries: in France, in Germany, in Denmark or Italy as well as in Spain and in Portugal. Many arguments have been raised in explanation of this phenomenon, especially stressing the fact that agriculture – often in difficulty or decline – remains a sector politically and socially deserving of attention or some sort of special protection by the governments. Some workers' organisations also appear to draw certain benefits from their international or European affiliations, especially in the form of support for their claims for the restoration of their rights at home.

Conclusion

On the whole, with the exception of certain Greek groups, the groups from Southern Europe are of the opinion that the governments keep them out of the process of decision-making. Contrary to what happens in the other European

countries, the practice of consultation with socio-economic groups does not appear to be a general tendency. Probably, the entry of a country into the EC and of its national groups into the European groups, contributes to the development of the process of consultation which many governments practise regardless of their political colour. Already there is good reason to believe that the foreseeable evolution in the countries of Southern Europe in this respect will progressively promote the transparency of relations between economic interests and their groups on the one hand and the governmental bodies on the other.

If this is the case, then we can conclude that their participation in the activities of the European institutions and groups will contribute to the spread of democratic processes and, thereby, to the consolidation of democracies in Southern Europe. In a more comprehensive sense, the development of these structures of autonomous groups and associations, as well as their integration into the European network gives a renewed relevance to Tocqueville's argument about the role of associations in democratic systems. At the same time, the pluralism of autonomous centres of decision in the system of the market economy tends to support the theory that postulates a close inter-relation between market and democracy around their basic principles of pluralism, competition and bargaining (Sullivan, 1988, pp. 139-59).

On the other side, the transition to democracy in Southern Europe as well as in Latin America (Diamond, L., Linz J. J., Lipset, S. M., 1989, XVII-XXI), and more recently the surprising change in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe (Sidjanski, D., 1990), have given a new dimension to the old theory which associates democracy and liberty with the market and development. Besides, in our particular study of the countries of Southern Europe, the transition to and consolidation of liberal democracy is closely related with their integration into the European Community. The EC appears as a real hope for achieving development through the market and democracy, for reconciling 'the beauty of the small with the necessity of the big', nations or regions with the sense of the Community. In this perspective and in view of its accomplishment, the European Community emerges as a promising democratic and federative model and as a powerful pole of attraction.

Notes

- 1 This collective research which I directed in collaboration with my colleague Ural Ayberk was done in common by research assistants from the Department of Political Science and from the Graduate Institute of European Studies. We are grateful to the *Volkswagen Foundation* as well as to the *Schmidheiny* and *Latsis Foundations* for their financial support. The final study benefited from various contributions: Klaus von Beyme (conceptual framework); M. Aligisakis, J. Papadopoulos, M. Cossina (Greece); C. Garcia, A. Melich, J. Condomines (Spain); G. Marques, J. Durao Barroso (Portugal). Complete results of this research are published in the collection of the Graduate Institute of European Studies: *L'Europe du Sud dans la Communauté européenne. Analyse comparative des groupes d'intérêts et*

leur insertion dans le réseau communautaire, (ed.), D. Sidjanski and U. Ayberk, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, p. 278.

- 2 The collection of data on the groups of Southern Europe was completed in 1987-8 following 84 in-depth interviews with the leaders of the central employers' organisations, commercial unions, agriculturalist organisations, the trade unions as well as with some sectoral organisations.

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