

**Greek Bank Employees' Representation in the EU
and Left Wing Trade Unionism**

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*Paper presented at the
3rd ECPR Conference, Budapest, 8-10 September 2005
Section 8:
"Political Participation and Interest Intermediation in the European Union"*

Very First Draft Version

ABSTRACT

This paper addresses an issue that has not been thoroughly discussed in Greek political science public debates mainly due to the fact that the debates has been concentrated only on peak level trade union organisations. Research on specific branches has not yet been undertaken in order to understand how interests employees are represented and intermediated neither at the specific branch level nor at the European level at a time of internationalisation and globalisation of economies as well as of labour markets. Research has not also been undertaken in order to examine the political discourse of political party factions about unions and employees representation vis-à-vis their European counterparts in other countries and cooperation within the EU institutional framework.

The paper author's focus on the left wing discourse is justified on the basis that the left wing parties and factions are traditionally strong in the bank employees' unions and that the financial sector is the par excellence internationalised sector of Greek economy. The Greek bank employees trade unions were historically the most active ones at the international level by participating in the FIET (International Federation of Commercial, Clerical, and Technical Employees - Fédération internationale des employés et techniciens) and now in UNI (Union Network International). In the context of the so-called «Europeanisation» process both major parties of the left have been engaged in a long-standing (and bitter sometimes) debate on whether EU is a new battlefield for trade unions and the working class in their struggle for promoting the rights of the workers and employees.

This paper's contribution shall be the opening of a dialogue on whether the left wing discourse on employee interests' representation enables trade unions to act as active social movements promoting democratic representation both at the EU and national levels or stalemates them as bureaucratic pressure groups that seek a discussant's status at tripartite bargaining structures isolated from their rank and file's interests and opinions. The case of OTOE (Hellenic Federation of Bank Employees Organizations) is a characteristic example of a union organisation facing this challenge.

I) Introduction

Theoretical discussions and debates concerning the “Europeanisation” issue have been taking place within the ranks of the European Left for quite a long time.¹ On the contrary, the Greek people rarely take notice of what has been discussed elsewhere in Europe or in Greece, except recently as a result of the «European Constitution» debate and the procedures that were followed by the conservative government in order to avoid a referendum for its popular ratification or rejection; however, the public debate was not focused on the essential issues of the proposed “European Constitution” but on procedural details. Moreover, labour union general assemblies rarely discuss other than bread-and-butter issues and whenever this occurs it is only a matter of ritual voting than of a real and in-depth discussion that could produce meaningful results in terms of socio-political mobilisation. Besides, a powerful and institutionally subsidised pro-EU movement has prevailed during the last two decades monopolising public debates. In the ranks of the Greek Left anti-EU sentiments are dominant due to the existence of a well-built pro-soviet Communist Party, which, since the end of the military dictatorship, is the major party on this side of the political continuum. Eurocommunists, Trotskyites and other internationalist currencies do not cooperate in order to undermine the dominance of the Communist Party of Greece (KKE) and of Maoists who are in favour of the country’s withdrawal from the “imperialist EU”. As shown by experts on European issues and political conflicts, throughout the EU “radical left wing” parties are highly Eurosceptical.²

This paper attempts to record and evaluate the debate concerning the European Union and the interest representation of workers at the EU level that has been taking place in the Greek trade unions and especially between the wider left forces in the ranks of the Hellenic Federation of Bank Employee Unions (OTOE).

In order though to proceed to proceed to the examination of the left wing discourse on the EU issues, we must define what the EU is and what does it have to do with the intermediation and representation of organized interests. Afterwards, the paper will take a brief look at the intermarxism debate concerning the state and its transnational transformation as well as at the debates concerning the participation into European institutions representing the bank employees’ interests.

According to a main opinion in the general debate, EU is a *sui generis* political system, which is neither a state pattern nor a typical international organization since it is something like a state without a central government. Another definition of the EU characterizes EU as a *sympoliteia* that is a union of states (polities) with an internal institutional organization that has the characteristics of both international *and*

¹ Europeanisation is not a well defined term. Among other meanings, we must choose for our purpose the “systemic’ definition that Europeanisation “is a process of ‘internalization of environmental inputs’ by the political and societal systems of EU member states, and, as such, it entails a steady redefinition of functions, relationships, boundaries, values and cultural traits, regulatory patterns that shape the internal dynamics of the political system. It involves the redefinition of boundaries between the state and society as well as of relationships within state structures and within society.” Ioakimidis P.C. *The Europeanisation of Greece: An Overall Assessment*, http://www.ekem.gr/old/article_en.html

² Hooghe L., Marks G. and Wilson C. (2004) “Does Left/Right Structure Party Positions on European Integration?” in Marks G. and Steenbergen M. (eds) *European Integration and Political Conflict*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp 120-140.

constitutional organization, is subject to international and constitutional law and is founded on a Constitutional Convention.³ It is within this context that organized interests such as the workers' unions and associations must act to promote and defend their members' interests. Functional groups as the working class may better be represented through their euro-organizations than through their territorial organizations, i.e. their governments that represent either the society at large or the better-off social strata such as businesses and their interests. Although this judgement may be highly subjective, surveys have shown that a great part of the respondents regards that it is mainly through the EU that social policies may be produced and implemented in favour of the working classes.⁴ Nevertheless, things are not as easy as survey respondents may think when answering quantitative social research questionnaires.⁵ This field of struggle is much different than the national political setting to which the workers' unions were accustomed and within which they had been succeeding or failing to accomplish their major goals. Unions usually fight for the negotiation of satisfactory collective agreement with the employers and/or the state, for their participation in government policy making both at the national and the local levels or for the simple representation of their members in decision-making bodies at the company level. The new EU field of struggle causes new problems for nationally-based unions, such as removal of certain decision making bodies from the national levels, complicated decision-making procedures at the EU level, regulations and institutions for lobbying practices at the European Parliament that are more complicated and more demanding compared to those in effect in some of the member-states. Another set of opportunities at the EU level available to unions and other working class associations are the following: multitude of points for accessing the system, coalition building opportunities, opportunities of bypassing some national policy channels etc. Although it was supposed that the European unification would progress in a linear way to the "spill-over process" with the organized interest organizations acting as its main vehicles it is now recognized that "the outcomes, through discontinuities and ebbs and flows, were always results of complex procedures involving national strategies, bureaucratic resistance, Community institutions' actions interest strategies and international variables".⁶ Central theme in this discussion of organized interests' intermediation and representation at the EU level is the crucial role played by bureaucracy, in this case by the European Commission.⁷

³ Tsatsos D. (2001) *Evropaiki sympoliteia: Yia mia Enosi Laon me Ishyres Patrides (European Sympoliteia: For a Union of Peoples with Strong Homelands)*, Athens: Papazisis Editions, pp 61-62.

⁴ Gabel M. and Anderson Ch. (2004) "The Structure of Citizen Attitudes and the European Political Space" in Marks G. and Steenbergen M. (eds) *European Integration and Political Conflict*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 13-31.

⁵ In order to understand the risks connected with non proper use of quantitative research data, see Wozniak J. (2000) "Economic and Public Support for the European Union: An Analysis at the National, Regional, and Individual Levels.", *Polity*, No. 32

⁶ Lavdas K. (2005) *Symferonta kai Politiki: Organosi Symferonton kai Protupa Diakyvernisis (Interests and Politics: Interests Organizations and Governance Models)*. Athens: Papazisis Editions, p. 256. See also: Moravcsik A. (1993) "Preferences and Power in the European Community: A Liberal Intergovernmental Approach", *Journal of Common Market Studies*, No. 31.

⁷ Masey S. and Richardson J. (2001) "Interest Groups and EU Policy Making: Organizational Logic and Venue-shopping", in Richardson J. (ed.) *European Union: Power and Policy Making*. London and New York: Routledge, pp 217-237.

II) Theoretical debates in the ranks of European Left and trade unions

As Graham Taylor notes, a significant part of the debate is focused upon either the national dimension of class relations thus ignoring the European one or capitalist restructuring downplaying the resistance of a great part of the old and new working classes.⁸ One of the crucial early debates that took place between intellectuals of the European left was that of N. Poulantzas versus E. Mandel.⁹ Mandel, argued that the “radius of action of the bourgeois state must conform to that of the productive forces and relations of production... Once private property becomes extensively internationalised, it cannot be effectively defended within the framework of a French, German or Italian state. European capital demands a European bourgeois state as an adequate protector and guarantor of profit”.¹⁰ Poulantzas criticised Mandel’s theory stressing that “if the state in the imperialist metropolises... still maintains its character as a national state, this is due among other things to the fact that the state is not a mere tool or instrument of the dominant classes, to be manipulated at will, so that every step that capital took towards internationalisation would automatically induce a parallel ‘supranationalisation’ of states... The problem we are dealing with... cannot be reduced to a simple contradiction of a mechanistic kind between the base (internationalisation of capital) and a superstructural cover (nation state) which no longer ‘corresponds’ to it”.¹¹ The main argument underlying such criticism against past left traditions, which had drawn from Marxian texts the notion of the state as a mere instrument of the ruling classes that can be manipulated in their favour, is that the capitalist state, as a terrain of class struggle and expression of the correlation of classes, may seek to maintain social equilibrium by acting against the wishes of some parts of the dominant classes in cases where pressures from below in the form of social movements can cause the costs of not acting to exceed the costs of reform.¹² Therefore, during the 1960’s and early 1970’s it was the national states that were proactive in favour of a form of class compromise at the national level, thus, incorporating politically the main trade union organizations, through neocorporatist political structures. This state provides certain guarantees to the economic interests of the dominated classes that might contrast the short-term interests of the dominant classes but still well-matched to their political interests and hegemonic dominance.¹³

A few decades later the debate has gone through a systematic transformation; new issues arose with reference to new political, economical and social phenomena and trends that continuously reshape the issues of the debate. The globalisation debate has brought to the surface a series of issues that exceed the framework of the previous

⁸ Taylor G. (2002) “The politics of European integration: A European labour movement in the making?” *Capital and Class*, No. 78, Autumn, pp 39-60.

⁹ Or it was regarded as a debate by Holloway and Picciotto. See Holloway, J. and S. Picciotto (1980) “Capital, the State and European Integration”, *Research in Political Economy*, vol. 3 pp 123-154. See also Bonefeld W. (2002) “European integration: the market, the political and class (1)”. *Capital and Class*, No. 77, Summer pp 117-142.

¹⁰ Mandel E. (1970) *Europe versus America? Contradictions of Imperialism*. London: New Left Books, pp 55-56.

¹¹ Poulantzas, N. (1975) *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism*, London: New Left Books

¹² Poulantzas, N. (1978) *State, Power, Socialism*. London: Verso.

¹³ Poulantzas, N. (1974) *Political Power and Social Classes*. London: New Left Books. For a thorough analysis of the European integration issue and a critical look at the relevant theories, see Albo G., (1999) “European capitalism today: between the Euro and the third way” *Monthly Review*, July-August, 1999.

debate. Two decades of neoliberal restructuring of the capitalist economies have caused changes due to the globalisation of the economy, the reorganization of labour and the compression of time and space through the revolutionising of information and communications. The latter, namely knowledge and information, have become much more significant elements of production and social relations. The place where power and knowledge reside is the international political structure. The national state is seen either as an obsolete political element or as a withering-away political structure that is functional only as a repressive or at best as an ideological apparatus. “With reference to the dominant classes, class dominance is secured through the management and the expansion of globalisation. The capitalist state is the state of globalisation. Therefore, in order to serve the interests of capitalism the state must overlook the interest of the nation and its citizens. Of course, even in this case the state must solve various legitimisation problems arising from this new framework of domination. But this domination is exercised through globalisation and networking of national states that coalesce in order to protect globalisation. With reference to domestic social classes, the state exercises its domination through the educational system.”¹⁴

The left wing political discourse on the issue of the debate has been undergoing a sudden transition due both to the socio-political consequences of the above mentioned changes and the sudden but expected by many currents of the left collapse of soviet-type “really existing socialism. At length the greatest part of Europe's left is eager to support European integration. But, this was not always the case. In its 1952 party program, the German social democratic party criticized supranational Europe as “a conservative and capitalist federation of the miniature Europe”.¹⁵ Even with this position, socialist parties in all six founding states helped to ratify the Treaty of Rome, although their support was repeatedly qualified alarmed as they were that European integration would make it more difficult to put into practice socialist policies. At the Third Conference that took place in Luxembourg in 1958 these parties decided to work together in order to fight for the abolition of duties and lifting of barriers on products and commodities within the framework of the European market and at the same time to fight for the protection of European workers. Ambivalence or opposition also initially characterized labour and socialist parties in Britain, Ireland, and Denmark in the 1970s, Greece in the 1970s and early 1980s,¹⁶ and Sweden in the 1990s. The least one can say is that the left has not been in the forefront of European integration.¹⁷ The unification of Europe was crafted by centre and right-wing parties.

The communist left parties and the trade union organizations organically connected with the former were initially hostile to the European integration idea. Until 1967 the two major communist trade union confederation in France and in Italy were fighting

¹⁴ Carnoy M. and Castells M. (1999) “Globalisation, Knowledge Society and the State” in Tsoukalas K., Rigos A. (eds) *Politics Today (Symposium in Memory of Nicos Poulantzas)*. Athens: Themelio Editions.

¹⁵ Haas E.B. (1958) *The Uniting of Europe: Political, Economic and Social Forces 1950-57*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, p. 137.

¹⁶ For an account of PASOK's historical ambivalence and final pro-integration stance, see Spourdalakis M. (1988) *The Rise of the Greek Socialist Party*. London and New York: Routledge. On PASOK's economic policy in connection with its European policy see Tassis Ch. (2003) “PASOK: From Protest to Hegemony”, Paper presented at the *1st LSE PhD Symposium on Modern Greece “Current social sciences research on Greece”*, London, June 2003.

¹⁷ Hooghe L. (2001) *The European Commission and the Integration of Europe: Images of Governance*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, pp. 118-141.

against the Common Market and EEC rejecting them as parts of a capitalist programme intended to intensify the exploitation of the working class. Nevertheless, both trade unions decided to change their strategies in 1958. The General Confederation of Italian Labourers (CGIL) recognising that Italian workers would benefit from labour mobility and other favourable social and labour policies changed its position and in common with the French General Confederation of Labour (CGT) formed the Coordination and Action Committee aiming at representing their members' interests within the framework of EEC's administrative bodies. Due to the other western European trade union organizations the EEC Commission did not accept the Coordination and Action Committee's accreditation until 1969. In 1974 the Coordination and Action Committee was dissolved due to CGIL's affiliation to the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC). The latter was established in 1972 and has forty affiliated confederations from twenty-one countries, including all of the most important EU national union confederations, apart from the French CGT (Confédération Générale du Travail) and the also Communist Portuguese CGTP-IN (Confederação General dos Trabalhadores Portugueses-Intersindical).¹⁸ Not all unions conceived of international co-ordination and action in the same way. Despite the internationalisation of capital at the European level it is not sure that trade unions will automatically benefit from international regional agreements such as those that constructed European Union. International agreements may possibly weaken the historically developed influence that trade unions stress by pursuing their goals at the national level without strengthening international bargaining power.¹⁹ Nevertheless, given the emergence of transnational structures of governance in the Union, it is clear that trade unions should out of necessity develop into a transnational movement in order to be in a position to guarantee their members' interests as regards to jobs, insurance and participation in the decision-making processes. The chief obstacle is not as much of the loss of national potency than the need for an valuable transnational organization, because whatever level of international coordination exists issues only from exterior pressure. The restructuring of the ETUC near the beginning of the 1990s due to developments in EC policy-making is set to make possible coalition building among its member confederations and to block any challenge coming from decentralization of collective bargaining as a result of the implementation of the principle of subsidiarity pursued by employers' organizations.²⁰ The principle of subsidiarity promotes the distribution of power to the member states for all proceedings that do not require centralized consideration.²¹ This principle is vague and is open to various misinterpretations and debates demanding that the European trade union movement develops and reframes its own powerful interpretation as a result of its transformation into a coherent social movement.

¹⁸ Leibfried St. and Pierson P. (eds.) (1995) *European Social Policy: Between Fragmentation and Integration*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, p. 88.

¹⁹ Barnouin B. (1986) *The European Labour Movement and European Integration*. London: Frances Pinter, p. 126.

²⁰ See: Pérez-Solórzano Borragán N. (mimeo) "A Constitution for Europe. What Role for Organised Interests?" in *The Making of the European Constitution*, Palgrave-MacMillan, <http://www.uea.ac.uk/psi/people/Perez-Solorzano%20documents/Nieves.pdf>

²¹ According to Article 3 of the Maastricht Treaty, EU institutions undertake action when "the objectives of the proposed action cannot be sufficiently achieved by the member states." For more details and a critical review see Dehousse R. (1994) "Community Competences: Are There Limits to Growth?" in Dehousse R. (ed.) *Europe after Maastricht: An Ever Closer Union?* Munich: Beck, pp. 103-25.

III) The Greek Debate

Greek left-wing parties were always dominated by an anti-western and pro-soviet mentality as a result of the influence of historical and geopolitical factors as well as of the lack of a social democratic tradition either of the northern Europe or of the Latin style. We cannot analyse these factors in this paper, so we shall proceed to the examination of the mainstream left parties' positions on the EU issue and then we shall turn to the debate on the said issue in the banking sector's union.

The main parties of the contemporary left are two. The largest one is the Communist Party of Greece (KKE), which is hitherto the oldest existing political party in neohellenic political history. The main party of the minor left is the "Coalition of the Left, of Ecology and Social Movements" ("Synaspismos"), which is a political hybrid consisting of followers of Euro communism, leftist ecologists, left social democrats, and social movement activists. Other political groups on the left of KKE and "Synaspismos" are either politically independent from the main parties (Maoists, most groups of Trotskyites etc.) or issue-oriented groups of activists who place these issues on the political agendas of the main parties without participating in their internal procedures (Network of Movements for Political and Social Rights, Network of Social Support of Immigrants, Ecological and Feminist Groups etc.).

The Communist Party of Greece (KKE)

The Communist Party's position on the issue of "European Unification" is that under capitalist control the unification is not possible and that the contemporary EU is a mere tool in the service of the multinational enterprises.²² The so called "Social Dialogue" is a trap that capitalist EU institutions have devised in order to incorporate the workers' organizations assisted by the "shameless stance" of trade unions' leaderships. As early as 1992 the Communist Party has been denouncing that the then European Community was creating a "two-speed Europe" which would "further marginalize" Greece as a country.²³ The decisions of the Amsterdam's intergovernmental conference would lead "to the deepening of the division of Europe into two great camps", that is "the camp of capitalism and wealth on the one side and the camp of labour and poverty on the other." The "Stability Pact" is considered as "permanent austerity and cutbacks of social rights and gains". In a nutshell, EU, especially after the Maastricht Treaty, serves the strategical goals and objectives of capital and, above all, of the German capital. The European unification and a single European policy is not a goal that can be achieved because "European Union is endogenous the intracapitalist competition."²⁴ As for Greece, the Communist Party predicted that the consequences of the Greek economy's conformation to these limits

²² See Gontikas D. "Oi Exelixeis meta tin Diakybernitiki.Mythos kai Pragmatikotita. Ta Apotelesmata tis Diakybernitikis sto Amsterdam." ("Developments in Europe after the Intergovernmental. Myth and Reality. The results of the Amsterdam Intergovernmental Conference."). www.kke.gr

²³ See *Keesing's Record of World Events*. 16 December 1991. www.keesings.com

²⁴ See the speech by Aleca Papanicolaou, the Communist Party's General Secretary, delivered at the political parties' leaders debate that took place in the Greek Parliament on 22/10/2003. www.rizospastis.gr

are disastrous: swift to a services economy, shrinking of the industrial productive base of the country, intensification of mergers and acquisitions of companies, widening of the gap between Greece and the developed capitalist countries and unbearable negative developments for working people and the popular strata through privatisations, less state, and market liberalization.²⁵

What does the Communist Party propose instead? The Communist Party's permanent position is that the working class and its allies (farmers, shopkeepers, tradesmen, scientists etc.) must not compromise with the EU; instead they must fight for "the demise of the EU". The EU, irrespectively of the way it develops, is not able to offer any perspective for the peoples. It is an instrument for the protection of the capital accumulation apparatus. Those who support capitalism have a good reason to support the EU. Those who fight against capitalism cannot compromise. Another Europe will be born as a result of the struggle for the termination of the Treaty of Maastricht and of the power of the multinationals. This surely does not mean that socialism is coming tomorrow, nor that we must wait for the maturing of general prerequisites. Towards this direction determined struggles are needed in every country. On this basis a coordination of movements is required both at the European and the international levels. In such a framework there is no other more realistic and more effective strategy than the determined and consistent struggle for organizing the working class and the other working popular strata in a strong anti-imperialist anti-monopolistic democratic front on the basis of their fundamental interests". This is our strategy. Within this framework we are ready to discuss and go with anyone who agrees that we must not resign from struggling".

The level on which the Communist Party bases its strategy is the national one. "People produce the wealth which belongs to the people Of course, this is the way towards that direction, but, in our opinion, if you do not have a perspective you cannot determine today's struggle. As a consequence, the peoples must raise struggle fronts not against the management exercised at the European Union but against the strategy o the European Union. And the struggle fronts must produce results changing the equilibrium of forces at the national level."²⁶ In election times this political strategy is not so clear. Political goals such as withdrawal from the EU or demise of the EU are not put forward. Instead, the goal is "struggle against the power block that prevails in Greece" and at the same time against European Union's decisions".²⁷ This means that the Communist Party's strategy allows for the recruit and co-operations with political fellow travellers who choose to fight on the national level for the minimization of the damage to be done by the policies of either social democratic or liberal-conservative pro-EU Greek governments.. The Communist Party essentially changed its strategy from "revolutionary" to "nationalist reformist"²⁸ seeking to

²⁵ See Tsakiris A. (2000) "*He ergasia sta proeklogika programmata ton kommaton(Labour in the Election Programmes of Political Parties)*", <http://tsakiris.snn.gr>

²⁶ See Pappariga A., (2003) *op.cit.*

²⁷ See A. Pappariga's Euro-elections interchannel press conference on 28/5/2004 (www.rizospastis.gr)

²⁸ Nevertheless, we must be cautious when characterizing a political party's strategy as "nationalist", because there is always a rigid difference between left and right wing nationalism. A characteristic of the Greek society is that nationalist themes are shared by the majority of the population without yet having converted to a wide-spread overt right wing ethnoracism. For a study of nationalist attitudes in Greece, see Voulgaris Y., Dodos D., Kafentzis P., Lyrantzis Ch., Michalopoulou K., Nikolakopoulos I., Spourdalakis, and Tsoukalas K. (1995) "He proslipsi kai he antimetopisi tou 'Allou' sti simerini

restore the welfare state that, despite its shortcomings, needs to be protected from the neoliberal capitalist strategy adopted by the EU institutions.²⁹ According to Aleca Papatou, the Communist Party's General Secretary: "The strategy for the encounter with contemporary problems both at the national and the European levels must be connected to a policy of rupture and collision with whatever do concepts such as globalization, competitiveness, and productivity mean today and in the decisions of the EU have specific class and political dimensions. The national level remains the basis of this strategy."³⁰ The logic of this strategy when transmitted to the trade union level calls for an alliance with political fractions that intend to fight against the incorporation of unions into the "social dialogue" framework and, as a consequence, against EU as a transnational political organization that limits the national independence of the country.³¹ Thus, in the banking sector the Communist Party's trade unionists call for the creation of a new front, PAME (Panergatiko Agonistiko Metopo - All Workers Militant Front), which must create new correlations of power in the existing associations and the branch federation for a new militant union that will put an end to the employers' attack against the rights of the employees, an attack which is facilitated by the European Union's policies. In order to halt these developments PAME cooperates at the international level with other national trade union participating in the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU). On a more general level, PAME is supposed to be a front that will pave the road for the coordination of those socio-political forces that are destined to fight for "people's power". This front is also destined to become "the real organization that will express the interests of workers and employees in the private and public sectors". Thus, the Communist Party seems to have designed to use PAME as a quasi-confederation against the General Confederation of Greek Workers that is now dominated by "reformist" and "conservative" trade unionists that have submitted to the "social dialogue" procedures dictated by the directives of the EU.³²

Hellada" ("The apperception and treatment of the 'Other' in contemporary Greece", *Helleniki Epitheorisi Politikis Epistimes (Hellenic Political Science Review)*, No. 5, April, pp. 68-90.

²⁹ The Communist Party of Greece is not alone in such a stance. Other former Stalinist parties have been revamped in the nationalistic defence of their welfare states that they once condemned as "fascist social security laws" intended to rescue the capitalist states from collapsing. For a detailed historical analysis of the contemporary discourse of European Communist Parties on European Union issues, see Bell D. (1996) "Western communist parties and the European Union" in Gaffney J. (ed.) *Political Parties and the European Union*. London: Routledge, pp. 220-234. Although this historical analysis has some merits, it does not treat all cases of communist parties fairly due to its ignorance of many different tendencies in the interior of parties (for example in the Greek case) and the equalization of differences between parties with different historical backgrounds, outlooks and strategies (for example Italian Communist Refoundation is very different than the Communist Party of Greece or the equalization German Party of Democratic Socialism with the Portuguese Communist Party).

³⁰ See the General Secretary's speech at the session of the United European Left (GUE): Papatou A. "To oikodomima pou yparhei prepei na anatrapei" ("The existing edifice must be overthrown"), *Rizospastis (Radical)*, Sunday, 12.4.1998.

³¹ That's why, despite its unattractive pro-soviet past, the Communist Party of Greece exhibits an enduring capacity to open electoral passages into PASOK's older voters who traditionally lend an ear to nationalist pleas due to their fashioning by Andreas Papandreou's national independence rhetoric. See Verney S. (1996) "The Greek Socialists: PASOK, The Difficult Partner" in Gaffney J. (ed.) *Political Parties and the European Union*. London: Routledge, pp. 170-188. See also Spourdalakis M. (2002) "The Europeanization of Greece's Party System" in *Greece in the European Union*. Athens: Ministry of Press and Mass Media, pp.100-108.

³² PAME's goals are the following, according to its initial statement (www.pamehellas.gr) :

One could see in the Communist Party's issue a case study example of the "framing analysis" theory for the interpretation of certain aspects of social and political movements.³³ According to this theoretical approach, which turns to the analysis of the interpretive schemes that people accept in order to understand their environments and place themselves in their surrounding worlds, frames exercise a dual function by giving meaning to events as well as organizing experiences and leading both individuals' and collectivities' actions. Aiming at recruiting of new members and attracting followers political parties and social movements shape frames that represent, as best possible, the ideas and visions of those under recruitment.³⁴ The degree of success of this process is a function of the capability of the leadership to bridge their organizations' frames of action with those of the individuals, groups and collectivities with which they wish to collaborate.³⁵ The latter, who are potential allies of the former, go on to critically evaluate the proposed frames taking into consideration both the alternatives and the political environment.

We could say that the Communist Party reframed old meanings and understandings into a new context in order to fuel activism and engagement of its remaining as well as its potential constituencies. The latter could not be attracted by just recalling past memories of heroic struggles nor by calling to mind those regimes that collapsed. Stalinist regimes could only be regarded as forces counterbalancing western imperialism but not as models of socialism. As one author put it, it is "Keynesianism in one country" that is the new model for remaining Communist Parties; as Keynesianism cannot be conceived without a national state, Communist Parties reframe their Marxism-Leninism without saying it, since the wording remains the same as in the past as well as its symbols and icons.

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- "a) The protection of the rights and gains of the Working Class from the anti-labour policies of Governments, Capital and the European Union.
 - b) The support to the struggle of people's movement for national independence, peace, friendship and solidarity against Imperialism, Monopolies and Multinationals.
 - c) The promotion and propagation of the principles of morality and militant culture among the lines of the labour trade union movement.
 - d) The enforcement of the class struggle and militant lines as main means for the assertion of solutions to the current, mid-term and strategical issues of the working class until its liberation
 - e) The cooperation and coordination with the poor peasantry, the practitioners and tradesmen since their interests are close to the interests and goals of the Working Class.
 - f) The cooperation and development of relationships and close bonds with trade union organizations and movements in Europe and the world that are on the move and accept the principle of class struggle.
 - g) The exposure of the role of government and employer-sponsored trade unionism, the split and clash with the policies of subordination, consensus and co-management that devitalize trade unions and render them accomplices for the policies that are applied against the popular strata."

³³ On the theory of "frame analysis" see Goffman E. (1974) *Frame Analysis*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; Snow D. and Bedford R. (1992) "Master Frames and Cycles of Protest" in Morris A. and McClurg Mueller M. (eds.) *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, pp. 135-155; Snow D., Rochford E.B.J, Worden S., and Benford R. (1986), «Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization and Movement Participation», *American Sociologist Review*, No.51, pp. 464-481; Tarrow S. (1998) *Power in Movement*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. For a critical synopsis of the "frame analysis" theoretical discussions, see Crossley N. (2002) *Making Sense of Social Movements*. Buckingham, UK and Philadelphia, PA USA: Open University Press, pp. 130-143.

³⁴ See also Gamson W. (1990). *The Strategy of Social Protest*, Belmont, Wadsworth Publishing Company as well as Gittlin T. (1980) *The Whole World is Watching*, Berkeley, University of California Press.

³⁵ Gamson (1990, *op. cit*) used in-depth interviews with randomly selected member of the working class in order to pull out three main frames of collective action: injustice, action, identity.

This reframing is related to the party's strategy to gain electorally from the dissatisfaction of working class strata, and even strata of the small bourgeoisie, with certain EU policy results that are supposed to cause economic insecurity and spell social disaster. This strategy takes into consideration a euroskeptic trend, which is part of the anti-western approach of the historical legacy of left political discourse in Greece that was also manifested in the early PASOK's declarations. During PASOK's history, "its attitude towards the Community has continually shifted, covering the whole range from an adamant anti-integrationist stance to an apparently ardent pro-federalism. This evolution of its EC policy mirrored the different phases in the party's own development, as it moved from the self-proclaimed national liberation movement of 1974 to the full member of the West European socialist left of 1994."³⁶ As PASOK was gradually changing its stance in favour of European integration many of its voters changed their opinion following the trend as "affective supporters" while others either adopted a "utilitarian support" position or rejected the pro-EU stance altogether.³⁷ It is to these latter constituencies that the Communist Party appeals to by "reframing" its discourse in order to gain their votes. As shown in the following Table 1, utilitarian support signified by the "benefit indicator" is historically strong in Greece, despite its ups and downs. This means that on specific occasions (specifically European Parliament Elections) a large segment of these voters could turn to more Euroskeptical parties in order to express their protest against specific policies that have negative effects on their well-being.³⁸ However, this tendency of voters to adopt a utilitarian stance should not be exaggerated in the case of Greece, as other factors also influence their political and electoral behaviour vis-à-vis the EU (such as sustaining political democracy, Greek-Turkish relationships, problems with Balkan neighbours etc.)

Table 1

Benefit from EU membership in Greece and EU-15, 1983-2001 (results in % for 'benefited')

GR	44 44 51 49 42 50 60 58 54 64 55 68
EU-10/12/15	52 46 48 50 53 46 51 53 49 52 56 55
European Barometer	14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30
Year	81 81 82 82 83 83 84 84 85 85 86 86 87 87 88 88 89
GR	72 76 79 78 76 73 73 70 72 79 69 72 72 72 59 66 68
EU-10/12/15	52 59 59 59 59 56 53 49 48 45 47 48 48 45 42 45 41
European Barometer	31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47
Year	89 89 90 90 91 91 92 92 93 93 94 94 95 95 96 96 97
GR	70 68 76 67 70 75 72 69
EU-10/12/15	44 46 49 44 46 47 47 45
EB	48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55
Year	97 98 98 99 99 00 00 01

Source: Standard Eurobarometer,

³⁶ Verney S. (1996), *op.cit.*, p.171.

³⁷ For the different kinds of support, see Wozniak J. (2000) *op. cit.*

³⁸ See Mavris Y. (2004) "From accession to the euro: The evolution of Greek public attitudes towards European integration, 1981-2001" in Dimitrakopoulos D. and Passas A. (eds.) *Greece in the European Union*. New York: Routledge, pp. 113-139.

1981-2001, Report no. 19-55 (Y. Mavris's compilation).

The Coalition of the Left, of Ecology and Social Movements (Synaspismos)

The Coalition of the Left and Progress (henceforth Synaspismos) was created in 1988 as an alliance between the Communist Party of Greece, the United Left (a small fraction of the formerly Communist Party of Greece-Interior, which tried unsuccessfully to introduce Euro-communism in Greece) and various other left wing groups as well as dissidents of PASOK and liberal social democrats. Synaspismos co-governed with the conservative neoliberal New Democracy for three months in 1989 and with New Democracy and PASOK in the so called "Ecumenical Government" between November 1989 and April 1990. The elections of April 1990 resulted to the rise of New Democracy to the government having gained the absolute majority of the seats in the new parliament. The unsuccessful effort of Synaspismos, as a political parties alliance, to gain a great number of votes from PASOK, a political party suffering due to scandals and the loss of governmental power, resulted in the clash between "dogmatic Stalinists" and "renewing communists" in the 12th Congress of the Communist Party. The former prevailed against the latter who resigned from the party, which experienced one more split, the second in three years.³⁹ The remaining majority decided to restructure the Communist Party in accordance to the Marxist-Leninist dogma (a.k.a. Stalinist). As a consequence Synaspismos was led to demise as a multiparty alliance. Renewing communists along with almost all other groups that participated in the previous Coalition formed a new unified party under the same title. The new element that characterized the new party was the approval of internal organized tendencies. This multi-tendency party has up to now proved durable, despite opposite prophecies. Its structure resembles that of a mass party of the left but we would rather say that this has not yet been achieved although it is a constant goal of the party, which many times functioned as a federation of small elite intra-parties, with the exception of the Left Current, which is the largest tendency with a mass following within the party and a great number of its members are ex-members of the Communist Party. Although the party has suffered many oscillations and interminable introspections due to the conflicts between pro-PASOK and anti-PASOK tendencies as well as due to its mainly bureaucratic character, it still exists as a minor opposition party expressing pro-European and social movement political tendencies in the left. After its last Congress it has taken a more radical left turn in an effort to survive electorally and politically. The party has changed its title to "Coalition of the Left, of Ecology and Social Movements" in order to tune in to the spirit of the times of antiglobalization and new social movements. In the previous elections the party formed a new alliance with other left groups and radical leftists under the ticket of the

³⁹ In 1989, the majority of the Communist Youth of Greece (KNE) was expelled from the organization along with several members of the Central Committee of the Party due to their dissent over the Party's participation in the government with New Democracy. The dissenters formed a new political group (New Left Current) that although anti-EU in its orientation does not consider the national level as the only privileged field for communists to intervene and try to restore an internationalist strategy in the context of the radical communist left discourse that has been dominated by Maoist third world style nationalism. NAR was the first political party that created a truly transnational ticket (Radical Left Front-MERA) in the 1999 European Parliament elections (www.prin.gr).

“Synaspismos tis Rizospastikis Aristeras” (“Coalition of the Radical Left”). “Synaspismos” is generally a pro-European political Party, which oscillated between different strategies concerning European unification changing lines according to the tendency that dominated the party each time. For example, in the parliamentary ratification procedure the party voted in favour of the Maastricht Treaty on the basis that it forwarded unification and it included the Protocol for a Social Europe, without taking into account that the treaty’s imperatives dictated the three criteria required for the admission of Greece to the Economic Monetary Union.⁴⁰ The latter meant that it was not easy for the trade unions to sustain their past gains due to the policies that were going to be implemented (public utilities’ and organizations’ privatizations, austerity programs, pension plan reforms etc.). Synaspismos did not vote in favour nor against the Amsterdam Treaty and this year it voted against the plan for the European Constitution on the basis that it legitimized neoliberal ideology widening the “democratic deficit”. Its previous “left turn” is due, among others, to the shift of the balance in favour of trade unionists and other social movement activists that gained through their participation in labour struggles, such as strikes and occupations and international mobilizations against neoliberal globalization.⁴¹

A cluster of small and tiny political organizations of the far left act either independently from or in cooperation with the main parties of the left. None of these organizations and their trade union factions and groupings is pro-European except those cooperating with Synaspismos without though sharing its straightforward positive attitude for the current EU.⁴²

Banking Sector Trade Unionism

The banking sector is by nature an internationally oriented sector of the economy. Due to the increasingly internationalising character of banking transactions and operations that follows the opening of the economic systems in the era of capitalist globalisation bank employee trade unions are forced to enhance their coordination both at the national and the international levels. The Hellenic Federation of Bank Employee Unions (OTOE) was always an internationally oriented organisation. Throughout the last thirty years OTOE is a member of international (ICFTU) and European trade union organisations (FIET).⁴³ Through FIET, OTOE participates

⁴⁰ For a series of well-detailed critical papers on the Maastricht Treaty, see Rhodes M. (1995) “A Regulatory Conundrum: Industrial Relations and the Social Dimension” in Leibfried St. and Pierson P. (eds.), *op.cit.*, pp. 78-122.

⁴¹ As highlighted in its electoral statements for the European Parliament Elections (June 1999) Synaspismos fights “for a politically unified, democratically structured and functioning Europe that will treat the struggles of the peoples of Europe on unified criteria; where International Law will prevail over economic and financial tendentiousness. For a Europe with a social face that will contribute to the reduction of unemployment, to the ecological protection and to the equality of sexes.” (www.syn.gr)

⁴² For example AKOA (Renewing Communist and Ecological Left) is critical of certain policies of the EU (labor, social and ecological). On the other side KEDA (Movement for the Unity in Action of the Left) is more critical of EU as an imperialist power without though speaking of withdrawal.

⁴³ International Federation of Commercial, Clerical, and Technical Employees (Fédération internationale des employés et techniciens).

indirectly in the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC).⁴⁴ In the late 1990's FIET was transformed into UNI, a global union incorporating international confederations of service economy workers (UNI-Commerce), telecommunications workers, banking and financial companies' employees (UNI-Finance) and mass media workers. UNI claims a membership amounting to 15,000,000 while at the European level it represents 100 banking and financial companies' trade unions with a membership of 1,500,000 employees.⁴⁵ According to the OTOE leadership, the federation believes that "the developments in the contemporary period characterized by the globalisation of markets and services require cooperation and solidarity between the working people. Main fields of activity for OTOE at European and international levels are the following: I) Conferences and other activities in the framework of UNI, UNI-Europa and UI-Europa Finance. II) Cooperation and solidarity in the Balkans and South-eastern Europe. III) Cooperation with trade unions of South-European and Mediterranean countries. IV) European Works Councils."⁴⁶

As of 1995 OTOE is represented to UNI's Executive Committee by its current president, who was recently OTOE's International Relations Secretary. OTOE is also represented to the following committees:

- a. UNI Global Women's Committee
- b. Executive Committee of ETUC's EUROCADRES
- c. European Committee for Social Dialogue with the Employment and Internal Markets General Directorates
- d. UNI-Europa Finance Coordination Committee.
- e. UNI-Europa Finance Network for European Works Councils
- f. UNI Finance Committee for Social Dialogue with countries to be affiliated with the EU
- g. Congresses: UNI-Global, Pan European UNI-Europa. Annual Financial Sector Conferences of UNI-Europa Finance

The trade union political faction system in Greece.

⁴⁴ As of 1990, the fifteen European Industry Committees officially recognized by the ETUC were: European Metalworkers' Federation (EMF); European Federation of Agricultural Workers' Unions (EFA); European Regional Organization of the International Federation of Commercial, Clerical, and Technical Employees (EURO-FIET); Postal, Telegraph and Telephone International-European Committee (PTTI-Europe); European Committee of the Arts, Mass Media, and Entertainment Trade Unions (EGAKU); Contact Office of the Miners' and Metalworkers' Free Trade Unions in the European Communities; European Council of Food, Catering and Allied Workers' Unions within the International Union of Food and Allied Workers (ECF-IUF); European Public Services Industry Committee (PSI-Europe); Committee of Transport Workers' Unions in the EC; European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE); European Federation of Building and Woodworkers (EFBWW); European Graphical Federation (EGF); European Trade Union Committee for Textiles, Clothing and Leather. See: Campbell J. (1992) *European Labor Unions*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, p. 534.

⁴⁵ According to UNI's website information "UNI Finance, as part of Union Network International (UNI), is the global union for finance workers. It represents over 200 unions with 3 million employees in the banking and insurance sectors. Key issues include globalisation, the rise of multinational companies and offshoring. Our aim is to forward and defend the interests of workers in the rapidly changing environment of the finance industry worldwide. The main tools are enhancing cooperation among unions, establishing social dialogue with employers, and to work together with governments to safeguard employment and just working conditions" [http://www.union-network.org/unifinance.nsf/\(\\$Web\)/\(\\$Home\)?OpenDocument](http://www.union-network.org/unifinance.nsf/($Web)/($Home)?OpenDocument)

⁴⁶ <http://www.otoe.gr/grammateies/dsxesewn/dsxesewn.htm>

At this point we must take a brief look at the political faction system in trade unions and their relationships with the state and the political parties. Although we can trace the political parties' interventions throughout the history of Greek unionism, the main conflicts that we can recognize as long lasting are those between the each time state controlled union leaderships and the left wing (mainly communist) factions. The other factions (conservatives, reformists, socialists) consisted of loose groups clustering around trade unionists either on personal basis (patron-client relationships) or on ideological basis (socialists, Trotskyites).⁴⁷ After the fall of the military dictatorship the organized intervention of political parties assumed an entirely new form with the setting up of faction sympathizing with the parties' aims. It was not only PASKE that was set up. The split of the Communist Party of Greece (KKE) into two competing Communist Parties (KKE and KKE-interior) during the dictatorship period led to the setting up of two more anti-dictatorial factions (United Trade Union Anti-dictatorial Movement-ESAK and Anti-dictatorial Workers' Front-AEM) that moved on as party directed trade union factions in the new period. Right-wing trade unionists continued functioning as usual through loose factions that were directed by the conservative leadership of the further reactions by the trade unions vis-à-vis economic measures that would have negative effects on their members' incomes and working conditions. Rupture with the past was the recognition by PASOK's government of the industrial workers' movement that was independently mobilised during the first post-dictatorial years even without the consent of left-wing parties. The trade union faction system that was officially established after the passage of Law 1264/1982 was proved viable since it created an electoral body for the political parties that were trying to consolidate their presence in Greek political life. General Confederation of Greek Workers (GSEE) sympathizing with the policies of the New Democracy government of Konstantinos Karamanlis and (after his election to the Greek Presidency) by Georgios Rallis. At this point we must stress that trade unionists sympathizing with the military dictatorship adopted a strategy of adhering to conservative factions.⁴⁸ This alliance between conservative and extreme right-wing trade unionists lasted until its overthrow from the leadership of the confederation by magisterial decision following PASOK's rise to government by winning the absolute majority of votes and seats in the elections of October 1981. At the national elections the 18th of October 1981 PASOK triumphed over the outgoing New Democracy's government.⁴⁹ This political change brought about changes in a significant number of political and social spheres. In the sphere of relations between government and trade unions as well as between political parties and trade unions, we can notice elements of both rupture and

⁴⁷ The presence and intervention of the organized forces of the outlawed Communist Party of Greece (KKE) and of the tiny mid-war Socialist Party of Greece (ΣΚΕ) were characterized by distinct features that cannot be discussed in this paper. On this subject see Koukoules G., 1995, *To Helliniko Sindikalistiko Kinima ke e ksennes paremvassis 1944-1948 (The Greek Trade Union Movement and the foreign interventions 1944-1948)*, Athens, Odisseas Editions. See also: Livieratos D., 1976, *To ergatiko kinima stin Hellada:1918-1923(The labour movement in Greece:1918-1923)*, Athens, Karanassis Editions; id, (1985), *Oi koinikoi agones stin Hellada:1923-1927 (Social struggles in Greece: 1923-1927)*, Athens, Communa Editions; id. (1987), *Oi koinikoi agones stin Hellada:1927-1931 (Social struggles in Greece: 1927-1931)*, Athens, Communa Editions.

⁴⁸ These extreme right trade unionists set up a faction named Free Democratic Labor Movement (E.EK) that was amalgamated with the conservative faction in the leadership of GSEE in 1976. For more details, see Theodore K. Katsanevas, (1994), *To synchrono sindikalistiko kinima stin Ellada (The modern trade union movement in Greece)*, Athens, Nea Synora-A.A.LIVANIS, pp 157-163.

⁴⁹ For a chronicle of the events that led to this magisterial decision see G.F. Koukoules & V. Tzanetakos, 1986, *Syndikalistiko kinima 1981-1986: He megali efkairia pou hathike (Trade union movement 1981-1986: The great opportunity that was missed)*, Athens, Odisseas Editions, pp 91-93.

continuity. The new government used the existing legal framework in order to overthrow the previous pro-government leadership of the General Confederation and appoint of a new leadership constituted by a majority of PASKE's members and a minority of left-wing factions' members. This manipulation showed that PASOK would be inclined to use legal and other means in order to safeguard the implementation of its government policies and to tame any further reactions by the trade unions vis-à-vis economic measures that would have negative effects on their members' incomes and working conditions. Rupture with the past was the recognition by PASOK's government of the industrial workers' movement that was independently mobilised during the first post-dictatorial years even without the consent of left-wing parties.⁵⁰ The trade union faction system that was officially established after the passage of Law 1264/1982 was proved viable since it created an electoral body for the political parties that were trying to consolidate their presence in Greek political life.⁵¹ From a functional point of view the faction system served as a communicational channel for the political parties and as a pool both for gaining votes and recruiting political personnel.⁵²

The EU debate was never conducted officially between the competing fractions of the left in the trade unions. Due to the rivalry between these fractions, which was intense mainly because of the pro-soviet Communist Party's stance more hard-mouthed and stiff against dissidents coming from its ranks that against right-wingers or reformists.

⁵⁰ The Communist Party of Greece, a proponent of branch unions, was not in favour of factory and enterprise based unions, because its leadership believed that they could easily be taken over by employer-loyal trade unionists. Nevertheless, a strong labour movement was formed promoting self-organization, direct democracy and on-site general assemblies of all members of the personnel without distinctions due to their jobs and professions, and using work stoppages and wildcat strikes.

⁵¹ This law caused both positive and negative effects for the growth of the trade union movement. For example, the industrial workers' unions were legally recognized but on the other hand new trade unionists that weren't affiliated with parties were excluded from the allocation of seats in executive and administrative boards of unions due to the "simple proportional" electoral system, which favoured party-backed factions. In order for a faction to participate in the second allocation of seats they must gain a seat from the first allocation and they must have a remainder of votes equal to 1/3 of the electoral quota.

⁵² Political parties as main constituent parts of contemporary parliamentary democracy:

- a) articulate the mass of societal interests so that politics do not be dominated by special interests;
- b) recruit and socialize future political leaders;
- c) play a significant part in the communication between leaders and voters;
- d) contribute to policy shaping by securing the placement of new ideas in the political agenda;
- e) mobilize the voters during electoral campaigns.

Interest pressure groups on their side socialize future political leaders, play a significant part in the communication between leaders and voters, and contribute to policy shaping. In some cases they also take on functions (a) and (e) when they themselves become political parties (e.g. British Labour Party or German Greens or Greek Women for Another Europe etc.). In our case, all these function are taken up by trade union political faction bypassing the pressure groups or social movement organizations of which they are members. See Tsakiris A. (2003a), (2003b), and (2004), *op.cit.* See also: Lavdas K. (1997) *The Europeanization of Greece. Interest Politics and the Crises of Integration*. London: Macmillan; Diamandouros N. (1998) "The Political System in Postauthoritarian Greece (1974-1996): Outline and Interpretations" in Ignazi P. and Ysamal C. (eds) *The Organization of Political Parties in Southern Europe*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, pp. 181-201. For special Greek cases, see: Spourdalakis M. (1998) "Pasok: The Telling Story of A Unique Organizational Structure" in Ignazi P. and Ysamal C. (eds) *The Organization of Political Parties in Southern Europe*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, pp. 202-220; Pappas T. (1998) "Nea Demokratia: Party Development and Organizational Logics" in Ignazi P. and Ysamal C. (eds) *The Organization of Political Parties in Southern Europe*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, pp 221-238.

Instead, the debate was expressed through articles published in the special trade union press of the banking industry (i.e. the newspapers *Trapeziko Vima* and *Trapezikos Agon*, respectively *Bank Employees' Tribune* and *Bank Employees' Struggle*).

In the few months preceding the official entry of Greece in the EEC prominent trade unionists or active groups of employees of the banks and other opinion makers started writing about the subject matter. One of these teams (*Trapezitikos*) published a series of articles in various issues of *Trapeziko Vima* trying to talk about topics other than “bread-and-butter” ones. The banking industry “modernization issue” was part of the europeanisation debate. In 1980 the right-wing government under the premiership of Georgios Rallis, who was also the leader of the party of New Democracy, appointed a number of technocrats as members to a special Committee for the Study of the Banking System in Greece (hereafter Harissopoulos’s Committee). The Harissopoulos Report concluded that the main objective should be the boost of the powers of competition within the banking system. The members of the *Trapezitikos* group interpreted the same conclusion as “an expression of an economic policy that generally does serve the interests of the people.”⁵³ Although this group overtly challenged Harissopoulos’s Report and by extension the government’s strategy, they do not challenge the political choice to enter the EEC. Instead, they tried to promote an alternative strategy for joining the EEC in order to protect the interests of the working classes and the people’s interests more generally. They also believed that negotiations were not carried out properly and did not take account of the special risks facing the banking system. These risks emanated from the implementation of the various Banking Directives issued by the EEC aiming at the facilitation of capital circulation.⁵⁴

Save for these positions and some hints in trade union factions leaflets and announcements during the 1980s the European issues were not discussed widely. It was only near the end of the decade that the debate started when it was becoming clear that the Second Banking Directive was paving the road for the restructuring of the banking system before the European market integration in 1992. As 1992 was becoming something like an ‘icon’ for pro-European wings of political parties and trade union factions, the main factions of the Left were trying to find ways to overcome their differences in the context of the foundation of the united Synaspismos, downplaying thus the vertical opposition to the EEC (mainly the renewing communist tendency of KKE). However, their conflicting positions could not but divide the parties and groups that founded “Synaspismos” and its affiliated trade union factions. The signing of the Maastricht Treaty and its ratification completed the split between Synaspismos’s and Communist Party’s factions both centrally and in OTOE.

In its wider sense the Left includes PASOK’s socialists even though when their party was in power its government policies were often characterized by the parties of the

⁵³ See Trapezitikos (1980) “O ‘eksyghronismos’ tou trapezikou systimatos kai to ergasiako kathestos” (“The ‘modernization’ of the banking system and the work regime”, *Trapeziko Vima*, No. 81-82, April-May).

⁵⁴ For the consequences of the implementation of the EEC Banking Directives on the banking system and internal labor markets see Petrinoti X. (1998) *He Domisi ton Esoterikon Agoron Ergasias. Fylo, Technologia kai Antagonismos: He Periptosi ton Trapezon (The Structuring of Internal Labour Markets. Gender, Technology and Competition: The Case of Banks)*. Athens: Papazisis Editions, pp. 53-84.

traditional left as well as by PASOK's internal opposition as monetarist and neoliberal. G. Raftopoulos, a former GSEE president (coming from OTOE's ranks) and senior cadre of PASOK, who was also head of PASKE during the 1980s,⁵⁵ regards that since the signing of the treaty of Maastricht, the European trade union leaderships, especially ETUC, are being constantly transformed into conservative bureaucracies: "The national members-organizations of the European Trade Unions Confederation engrafted with the Maastricht ideology neither can nor want to intervene with the intention to stop the course that unavoidably leads to decline and defeat."⁵⁶ During the years that the Maastricht treaty was debated in national parliaments a Greek committee fighting against its adoption by the Greek parliament was formed by members of the renewal left and various extra parliamentary left groupings that were active as trade unionists in the banking sector as well as in public utilities and public educational institutions.⁵⁷

One of the greatest problems in the field of industrial relations in the Greek Banking Sector has been the continuous conflict between foreign banks' administrations and their employees on the implementation of Greek Labour Law and collective agreements that had been invested with legitimacy through acts such as laws passed by the Parliament, international agreements and EU directives. During the 1970s there were powerful unions in foreign banks active in the Greek market. These unions' influence was so powerful then that they could appoint a president in OTOE coming from their ranks during the early 1980s when the party in government (PASOK) and its trade union fraction (PASKE) were acting divisively against the organized labour movement.⁵⁸ This success story did not last forever, since during the 1980s many foreign banks decided to shut down their local branches and turn to more profitable countries and regions. The reasons for the foreign banks unions' membership losses

⁵⁵ Especially during the 1985-1986 state's judicial intervention to overthrow the confederation's legally elected leadership in the face of the monetarist twist of governmental PASOK's policies, G. Raftopoulos's role in determining the outcome in favour of the government and against the trade union movement's reaction to the monetarist austerity programme. For a brief account of the PASKE's role in that crisis, see Tsakiris A. (2003a) The Janus-faced political intervention of Greek socialists (PASOK) in the trade unions in the 1990s: the case of PASKE in OTOE (Hellenic Confederation of Bank Employees' organizations)" in *1st LSE PhD Symposium on Modern Greece "Current social sciences research on Greece"*, London, June 2003. For a personal account of those events, see Raftopoulos G. (2000) *Avrio: Mia allyleggii koinonia (Tomorrow: A Solidarity Society)*, Athens: Nea Synora- Ant. A Livanis Editions.

⁵⁶ See Raftopoulos G. (2005) *Enas Allos Kosmos einai Efiktos (Another World is Possible)*. Athens: Odysseas Editions, pp. 42-43.

⁵⁷ Many members of PASKE who disagreed with PASOK's decision to ratify the treaty at the special Parliament vote joined the committee and campaigned jointly with eurocommunists and leftists overcoming past political differences. This joint action was extended throughout the governance of Greece by the conservative party in many instances of strikes and demonstrations (e.g. bus workers strikes, strikes against social security cuts etc.). For a brief account of that period's strikes against social security reforms see Tsakiris A. (2005) "Greek bank employees' "rebellion" against social security reform in Greece: A reborn social movement?" Paper presented at the 10th *Alternative Futures and Popular Protest Conference*, Manchester Metropolitan University (30/3/05-1/4/05). See also Tsakiris A. (2003b) "Kratos-Komma-Syndikato 1980-2001: metaxy ensomatosis kai amfisvitisis" ("State-Parties-Trade Unions 1980-2001: Between Incorporation and Challenge") Paper presented at the 9th Conference of the Sakis Karayiorgas Institute on *Social Change on Contemporary Greece*, Athens, Panteion University (April.2003).

⁵⁸ See Tsakiris A. (2003b) "Kratos-Komma-Syndikato 1980-2001: metaxy ensomatosis kai amfisvitisis" ("State-Parties-Trade Unions 1980-2001: Between Incorporation and Challenge") Paper presented at the 9th Conference of the Sakis Karayiorgas Institute on *Social Change on Contemporary Greece*, Athens, Panteion University (April.2003).

are not only of structural nature. These losses can be attributed to the more general attitudes towards the individualization of the employees' relations, to the divide-and-conquer strategy implemented by most employers as well as to the feeling of abhorrence expressed by employees against the partitocracy (party machine politics) that reigned in the trade unions (especially in the ranks of the confederation).⁵⁹ A European novelty was the signing by HBA and OTOE in 1984 a collective agreement that provides for the obligatory absorption of the laid-off employees by the Greek public banks, when their employers decided to shut-off their businesses. Thus these employees were carefully integrated to the public banks and this sector was not experiencing a rise in unemployment figures. The conflict between foreign banks managers and employees kept on going as long as the banks kept restructuring, downsizing, relocating their businesses to other countries etc. During the late 1980s Chase Manhattan and Continental Banks were been targeted by OTOE and the unions due to their decisions to relocate their branches to other countries. Clashes with the police who had come to aid the strike-breakers in their efforts to work were quite violent compared to the practices used by the unions during the previous years.

Foreign banks were present in the Greek market since the 1960s. Their methods were: a) the establishment of branches, b) the opening of agency offices and c) direct participation in the share capital of an existing Greek bank.⁶⁰ The most usual case is the establishment of branches. Moreover, during the 1990s the third method began prevailing as a consequence of the country's admission to the EMU facilitated "synergies" and "strategical collaborations".

At the outset know-how transfer from foreign banks concerned non-standard types of services while foreign banks outclassed Greek banks as regards to critical indicators such as assets risk degree, banking operations differentiation coefficient, deposits per employee, know-how on new financial products developed at the international level etc. Foreign banks, thus, were in a better position in order to gain market shares in money and capital market products attracting clients away from Greek public and private banks. Competition between foreign banks in Greece according to the Second Banking Directive, which was transformed into Greek law in 1991, had a number of consequences on employment and salaries. Initially banking corporations were hard-pressed to structural reorganizing and automation of operations driving hundreds of employees out of work. Many back office jobs were slashed and at the same time new front line jobs were created as the "modern bank" aims at "product selling" and at the transformation of the traditional bank employee into a "financial consultant". As a result two main groups of employees have been created, that is those who work at flexible employment jobs and those who work at jobs demanding specialized knowledge and flexible mentality constantly readjusting to the changes occurring in the contemporary banking market. At the same time payment systems are being

⁵⁹ See Tsakiris A. (2004) "He antiparathesi kommatikou kai aftonomou syndikalismou sto horo ton trapezon kata ti diärkeia tis Tritis Hellenikis Demokratias" ("The duel between party-sponsored and autonomous trade unionism in the banking sector during the 3rd Greek Democracy, 1974-2004". Paper presented at the Conference on *Trianta Hronia Dimokratia: To Politiko Systima tis Tritis Hellenikis Dimokratias (30 Years of Democracy: The Political System of the Third Greek Democracy, 1974-2004)* Rethymno, Crete, May 2004: Kritiki Editions.

⁶⁰ See Pontikos G. (1994) "He parousia xenon trapezon sti chora mas" ("The Presence of foreign banks in our country", *Trapeziko Vima*, May-June. G. Pontikos is a prominent member of ESAK (the fraction that transmits the Communist Party's political line in the trade unions) active in fields such as foreign trade unions relations and trade union research.

continuously adjusted to the logic of fluctuant and changeable earnings according to individual performances and productivities. In order to get rid of old-aged employees who lack contemporary banking skills or “technological literacy”, banks use methods such as “voluntary exit” accompanied by “remuneration packages”. During the 1990s foreign banks introduced a new category of employees hired by subcontracting agencies with temporary employment contracts bypassing the Greek Manpower Employment Organization. In the middle of the decade this category of employees amounted to more than 10% of the “core” personnel in foreign banks and to 4-5% of Greek public banks that were traditionally using temporary employees who were “clients” of the each time governing political party. The latter case is a political phenomenon diachronically growing in Greece.⁶¹ These new temporary employees are used in a variety of jobs ranging from janitors, security guards and cleaners to accountants, marketing researchers and advertisers. As a result of this process new and sharper salary and pension inequalities were produced since senior executives were now awarded with extremely high salaries and profits coming from surplus values of stocks given to them either free or at prices lower than market prices.

Foreign multinational banks fall under the proposal of a European Commission’s Directive that established processes for informing and consultation of the employees on decisions taken by corporate managements that would affect the interests of the employees having to do with the restructuring of the enterprises and changes in industrial and labour relations. This option should have been utilized by the employees, despite the difficulties due to secrecy commitments, bureaucratic creation and operations of these consultation bodies. At the same time new trade union bodies should be created in order for the consultation bodies not to be alienated from their constituencies. Main trade unionists of ESAK adopt this position and it is by extension adopted by the Communist Party of Greece. This means that despite calls to withdrawal from the EU institutions and from the EU as a whole because EU is regarded as a political expression of multinational monopolies and as a major imperialistic force, the intervention of communist trade unionists is crucial both for

⁶¹ Political patrons and clients exist in all political systems. However, some political systems are characterized by the great intensity in the expression of this political phenomenon due to the small-minded politicization of the society and the limits imposed historically by the political system on the collective action repertoires that can be used by the people in the process of claim making. For the political “clientelism” phenomenon in Greece, see the following works:

a) Mouzelis, N. (1978): ‘Class and Clientelistic Politics: The Case of Greece’, *Sociological Review* 26 (3), pp.471-497.

b) Mouzelis N. (1986): “Politics in the semi-periphery: Early parliamentarism and late industrialisation in the Balkans and Latin America”, London: Macmillan.

c) Lyrantzis, C. (1991) “Political Parties in Post-Junta Greece: A Case of ‘Bureaucratic Clientelism’”, *West European Politics* 7. No.2 pp 91-118.

d) Lyrantzis C. (1991) *To Telos ton Tzakion: Koinonia kai Politike sten Achaia tou 19ou Aiona [The End of Notables: Society and Politics of the Achaia Region in the 19th Century]*, Athens: Themelio.

d) Hadjiiossif, C. (1994): ‘Demokratia kai Pelateiakes Scheseis: Treis Prosfates Analyseis tes Hellenices Politikes tou 19ou Aiona’ [Democracy and Patronage Relations: Three Recent Analyses of Greek Politics in the 19th Century], *Mnemon* 16, pp.167-197.

e) Mavrogordatos G. (1997) “From Traditional Clientelism to Machine Politics: The Impact of PASOK Populism in Greece”, *South European Society and Politics* 2, No.3, pp. 1-26.

e) Papakostas Ap. (2001) “Why Is There No Clientelism in Scandinavia?: A Comparison of the Swedish and Greek Sequences of Development”, in *Clientelism, Interests, and Democratic Representation: The European Experience in Historical and Comparative Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 31-53.

For a critical review of certain views on clientelism and trade unions in Greece, see Tsakiris A. (2003a)

the sake of information and the organizing of workers' struggles against downsizing, lay-offs and closures of enterprises.

Sometime in the late 1980s and early 1990s foreign banks' trade unions were minimally operating, having been heavily defeated both due to the reengineering and reorganizing of the banks and the closure of some of them. Union density had been reduced to less than 30%. After 1992 new European banks started business in Greece and there was a need to create new personnel unions in these banks and to be coordinated with existing ones in a fight for gaining new rights for the employees. OTOE promoted and succeeded in creating a single Foreign Banks' Personnel Union. Together with the new union, OTOE utilized the new legal framework (Law 1767) concerning the creation of Works Councils aiming at the promotion of claims and demands for drawing personnel regulations, transparency in the distribution of premiums and bonuses, enforcement of labour laws etc.

Another policy field to be blamed by left wing factions for EU driven is that of social security and pension systems. During the previous years both socialist and conservative governments have launched political attacks against the social security rights of banking employees.⁶² The renewing left" trade union fraction highlights that all recent governmental decisions on pension fund policy have been influenced –if not immediately directed - by the European Commission: “The governmental proposal's starting point is the general dismantlement of the rights of ALL banking employees. Coming next is the “second social security plan” that will strike each and every one of those insured in special funds and in the Social Security Foundation. We must not have any more illusions such as ‘this attack has nothing to do with us’ or ‘it's a matter of manoeuvres and we will avoid the blow’. Moreover, the decision (report) taken by the EU and the Greek commissioner gives the finishing stroke with the three points: relief pension scheme-degraded supplementary pension-private insurance companies in social security-increase of age limits-reduction of pensions.”⁶³

The Communist Party's opinion is even more unequivocal: “The government headed by K. Simitis, a puppet of the Americans and the European Union, strives to discharge even the most ‘reactionary’ right wing party of its most pathetic duties. This government has taken over all these duties. They hand over the country and its interests to foreign capital and its international repressive (NATO) and wealth redistribution (European Union) apparatuses (...) Above all, they rape the Greek citizen's character and consciousness.”⁶⁴

The “Resistance and Action Initiative”, a far-left group of trade unionists from various banks, believes that “the overthrow and removal of our rights is conducted under the auspices of EMU and EU. This is not Peoples' Europe the but Capital's,

⁶² The socialist government's social security reform plan was defeated in April 2001 by a huge strike and demonstrations organized by all trade union fractions, mainly by the socialist fraction that revolted against its party government. For more details see Tsakiris (2005) *op.cit.*

⁶³ See Agonistiki Synergasia's Action Plan Declaration for the 26th Congress of OTOE (November 2000).

⁶⁴ See ESAK's Action Plan Declaration for the 26th Congress of OTOE (November 2000).

Multinationals' and Bankers' Europe.'⁶⁵ This view is also shared by groups of dissidents coming from PASKE.⁶⁶

Although the above opinions hold EU policies responsible for the dismantling of the Greek welfare state and the removal of employees' rights mainly through privatisations and pension fund reforms, differences between them are substantial.

IV) First Conclusions

Our conclusions may only be preliminary for the time being. The reason is that since European integration is still an outstanding issue, especially after the rejection of the proposal for the "European Constitution". EU is in the middle of a on-going crisis regarding its future direction. Atlanticists and pro-Europeans are showing to different directions. Labour movements are trying to resist further neoliberal policies concerning the right to work, unemployment, labour market flexibility etc.

The political parties and trade union factions of the Left are also trying to find ways out of their current political and ideological stagnation. Although the Communist Party's reframing is not a long-lasting process, it still dominates the agenda of the Left. On the other hand, Synaspismos is still a fragile party and its trade union factions do not seem to play a significant part in Greek trade unionism save for some "pockets" of resistance (OTOE) to certain dimensions of EU policies. In the meantime, both trade union factions attempt to concentrate to a different extent in building coalitions in order to expand their activities to the European level. Synaspismos's factions play a significant part in World, European, and Greek Social Forums mobilizing some groups of workers and employees along with young students, ecologists, and feminists against the negative consequences of both neoliberal globalization and EU policies. On its side the Communist Party through PAME and its affiliated factions do participate in some mobilizations at the European level without, though, doing much in terms of effective political interventions due to its opposition to what it regards as opportunistic and reformist strategies and tactics of Synaspismos and its allies in World, European, and Social Forums.⁶⁷ With the exception of a few unionists that were active in multinational banks in the past and who gained significant experiences there are now no signs of actions taken in that direction.

So the big differences between the two main political currents and their trade union faction remain intact: KKE insists on fighting at the national level and Synaspismos and its allies move on both at the European-international and the national levels. KKE prefers to mobilize its members under the banner of the IFTU and Synaspismos and its allies through UNI, ETUC and Social Forums. Although KKE rejects the EU as a whole it is reluctant to propose its demise as a strategical goal for the labour unions

⁶⁵ See Protovoulia Antistasis kai Drasis's Action Plan Declaration for the 26th Congress of OTOE (November 2000).

⁶⁶ See DISK's Action Plan Declaration for the 26th Congress of OTOE (November 2000). For more details on DISK that belonged to PASKE before the privatization and sale of Ionian Bank to Alpha Bank resulting to a 55-day strike, see Tsakiris (2003b) *op.cit.*

⁶⁷ In its website PAME hosts vitriolic and bitter articles against World Social Forum written by Brazilian "orthodox" communists who regard the World Social Forum's meetings at Porto Alegre as gatherings promoted by... local capitalists.

and especially for OTOE. On the other hand, Synaspismos and its allies take a critical stance vis-à-vis the dominant ideology and politics of the current EU but they insist in promoting the idea of a politically integrated social Europe (Europe of Workers) against neoliberal and social-liberal domination.⁶⁸

Where do all these lead us to? We can draw the inference that KKE is much more successful in that it could adjust its frames and tailor its strategies and tactics vis-à-vis the European Union and the national level in order to mobilize old and new constituencies to its purposes and goals by offering them a sense of “collective identity” as guardians of the values of national working classes. New working class strata in insecure jobs as well as workers in declining industries might be attracted and recruited by its anti-EU and national issues rhetoric but it is difficult for the party to gain politically with such a stance in banks where the field of action is more open to European influences, thus allowing Synaspismos and its allies in trade unions having a pro-EU although critical stance to advance their positions both at the local, national and EU levels (ETUC and UNI).

⁶⁸ For an evaluation of the EU trade unions’ actions, see C. Papadopoulos’s interview in the Appendix.

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APPENDIX

Interview with Christopher Papadopoulos (Employee at the National Bank of Greece; ex-member of the Executive Committee on behalf of Autonomous Groupings; now member of the Central Political Committee of the Coalition of the Left, Ecology, and Social Movements. He was also one of the three candidates for the position of the President of the Coalition in the last Congress of the Party)

1. Through which organizational structures are bank employees represented at the EU level? Directly to ETUC, through UNI, combined or else?

As far as I know, bank employees are represented directly through ETUC and GSEE (through the channel of central party-sponsored factions), and indirectly through UNI. For example, D. Tsoukalas, president of OTOE, is elected to the executive committee of ETUC, and sometimes he represents GSEE to UNI as a member of the former's administrative board.

2. What about European Works Councils in Multinational Banks in Greece? Do they exist? How do the employees' representatives participate? Are Works Councils parallel/antagonistic to the unions or do they cooperate?

Works councils exist and as far as I know, or better as far as I remember, it is the unions that determine the mode of representation. That is, the administration of the union of ABN authorizes D. Tsoukalas, who is the president of the union, to represent it to the works council. The same happened in the case of NAT-WEST and its union then with G. Pontikos. In this sense works councils to the extent that they do not replace the union and its function is a complementary field of action for trade unionism, which is useful for gaining experiences and potentially valuable to the development of internationalized labour struggles.

3. How do you evaluate the actions of the representatives both in the European Trade Unions and in Works Councils?

It is more than half a century that European trade unions bear the exercise of political control by the mainstream political powers and the creation of a "modernizing" bureaucratic apparatus which gives its consensus and does not wish any joint pan European struggles. I do not write off, for example, the difficulties and fears of the Scandinavian trade unions that joint pan European struggles would lead to a peculiar social dumping and to the reduction of autonomy and flexibility in bargaining, nevertheless, and in the final analysis, the inexistence of joint struggles, or the fact that these struggles do not develop as quickly as it is expected vis-à-vis the internationalization of problems, is clearly a matter of political will and as such it is rated. It is negatively rated indeed, in so far as any minor correction to a more radical direction such as the rejection of neoliberalism or participation in the European Forums does not pardon the dominant correlation. As I said before, works councils only as complementary trade union action may be conceived; valuable but marginal. In this sense there is no matter of assessment and evaluation, or even substitution; it is a matter, though, of gaining experience and drawing examples.

4. Lastly, is the EU to put the blame on for everything or is it a matter of correlation of forces at national and European levels? Did Maastricht and Amsterdam treaties play a part and how did the trade union Left in OTOE act?

It is obvious that it is a matter of correlation of forces at the national and European levels. Moreover, when speaking of correlation of forces we must include the issues of consciousness and perception, in other words of political dialectics. Under this angle of view, the responsibility of the Left is much greater in proportion to its trade union correlation. Of course, even today, under the conditions of globalized neoliberal capitalism, a great part of the Left - perhaps the majority - remains hung up to the level of national state as the main field for the development of struggles; in practice this part of the Left underestimates the need to internationalize labor as well as wider social struggles, Social Forums for example, and understands internationalism only as an expression of verbal solidarity. In reality, it quits from trying to establish its own hegemony on this field and gives in minor defensive and lastly ineffective struggles. That part of the radical Left both in the banking sector and elsewhere in the field of economy that produces the political analysis for joint pan European struggles in reality lacks not only in terms of political correlation of forces but also in terms of political initiative, social experimenting, militancy and radicalism required by a political vanguard in order to mark its alternative approach.