

'The rigged campaign' from Le Monde (20 June 1979)

Caption: On 20 June 1979, French daily newspaper Le Monde harshly criticises the campaign preceding the first elections to the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage and condemns the results of the vote.

Source: Le Monde. dir. de publ. Fauvet, Jacques. 20.06.1979, n° 10 695. Paris: Le Monde. "La campagne truquée", auteur:Claude Bourdet , p. 2.

Copyright: (c) Translation CVCE.EU by UNI.LU

All rights of reproduction, of public communication, of adaptation, of distribution or of dissemination via Internet, internal network or any other means are strictly reserved in all countries.

Consult the legal notice and the terms and conditions of use regarding this site.

URL:

http://www.cvce.eu/obj/the_rigged_campaign_from_le_monde_20_june_1979-en-cafc1db1-e99a-49d1-8665-6b9a3773b418.html



Last updated: 06/07/2016

The rigged campaign

by Claude Bourdet

A murky election campaign ended in a meaningless vote. Why? The establishment tried very hard to give the impression that this election would not change anything, so why vote? In addition, the scandalous electoral laws and the biased behaviour of the media ensured that only the large political parties were given coverage and gave an added advantage to the ruling party. This certainly encouraged abstentions and spoilt papers.

However, it was the lack of transparency, of strength of character and honesty that probably disappointed the electorate most of all. In spite of the abundance of posters and the clamour of the televised debates, the fundamental questions were ignored. No one acknowledged that the European federal state has been growing systematically over many years, driven by the three major German political parties, the Brussels Commission, the Court of Justice and their supporters in France and elsewhere. This should surely have been the time for animated debate. As for the Opposition, it did not have the guts to be any more honest and, in its own way, helped make the election campaign an uninspiring muddle.

The Treaty of Rome established free trade and the free movement of capital, key factors at the heart of capitalist Europe and its multinationals. It has ensured the pre-eminence of the West German colossus, its efficient industrial and banking systems and even its agriculture. We cannot blame the Germans, it is the system which is at fault. In such an ultra liberal economy, the strong devour the weak. In this system, there is no room for a worker-friendly government; it would not have the freedom to intervene in monetary policy or matters of tariffs, nor would it have the financial powers required to prevent the unemployment caused by free market policies. To make any difference, the Treaty of Rome would have to be completely changed, and who is seriously contemplating that when the German Social Democrats benefit from it and its working classes enjoy many of the fruits of the free movement of capital? No 'European' projects worthy of the name can be envisaged. As soon as any investment is directed toward projects for the workers, developing the poorer regions, giving new life to troubled sectors, the logic of the Treaty is fundamentally contradicted. The workings of European and world capital flows would be distorted, and it would damage the economic supremacy of the FRG, which neither the Social Democrats nor the right-wing German political parties would allow.

In addition, there will be a right-wing majority in the European Parliament, which is logical for an institution created by capitalists for their use. Owing to the deep-rooted opposition of the German Social Democrats — which is governed by internal German politics — an alliance between Socialists and Communists is impossible, be it on a political or trade union level. It would nevertheless be the only way to strengthen the very little influence of the working classes. So, when are we going to see 'Europe of the workers'?

As for the 'Independent Europe' plastered all over Jacques Chirac's posters, it is just as elusive. Independence, to the West, means a *certain* amount of independence from the United States which Great Britain, under the Conservatives or Labour, would never contemplate. For the Government of the Federal Republic, diplomatic and military independence from the Americans is of no interest, because the politics of the Social Democrats involve détente with the East and complete reliance on the American nuclear umbrella. Certainly, if the CDU-CSU came to power, if Mr Franz-Josef Strauss were to have a controlling influence, one might imagine the FRG conducting a different foreign policy, one possibly based on West German nuclear arms or under the banner of a 'European military authority', perhaps based initially on French strike capabilities. However this kind of independence would make 'Europe' into the a new front-line rather than encouraging 'non-alignment'. Perhaps we shall live to regret American influence.

But the prize for lack of realism must go to the European campaign conducted by Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber. He favoured 'full employment for Europe', while — see above — the whole logic of the Treaty of Rome, which Mr Servan-Schreiber does not see fit to query, encourages an ultra liberal economy leading to the maximum amount of unemployment. It seems to me that, if the campaign had not been based on such falsehoods and illusions, if one side had come out in favour of an ultra liberal Europe and the inevitable

Federal Super-State (its ultimate embodiment), and the other side had dared to question the Treaty of Rome and the resulting Europe of multinationals and unemployment and admitted that they would like to recast the Treaty, or failing that, leave the Common Market and join countries like Sweden, Norway, Austria, Finland and Switzerland, which are not doing too badly outside the EEC, then, yes, we might have been able to work up some enthusiasm for this campaign.