



The Reluctant European

STEPHEN BROWN
**Putting Europe back
on the map**



Jon Bloomfield argues that the 'left and progressive forces' need to recognise the development of a 'more powerful Western Europe' as 'an objective fact'. The 'new West European identity taking shape' through the expansion and remodelling of the EEC, the revival of the West European Union (WEU) and the establishment of Eureka offers the Left, according to Bloomfield, an alternative to blinkered 'little-Englandism' and idealistic 'pan-Europeanism'.

Yet, do these developments mean that Western Europe is breaking free from US

hegemony? Will they create the opportunity for a break with Atlanticism that weakens military blocs rather than creating new ones? And, above all, will a stronger Western Europe lead to the development of a new foreign and defence policy which aims to reverse the arms race and heal the divisions of Europe?

There are considerable grounds for scepticism. However much governments currently in power in Western Europe may wish to challenge the economic and commercial hegemony of the US, there is little enthusiasm for breaking with the postwar military settlement. Political forces as diverse as West German Christian Democrats, British Social Democrats, French Socialists and Thatcherite Conservatives see little contradiction between their support for stronger Western European institutions in the areas of economics, foreign policy, even military affairs, and their pro-Atlanticist defence policies. In no way does the revival of the WEU imply a rejection of Cruise and Pershing II deployment in Europe.

Opposition to Atlanticism comes from quite a different quarter, one much closer to Ronald Reagan's White House. The diminishing place which Western Europe has in the global strategy of some within the Reagan entourage means a growing reluctance to commit American forces, US money and US territory for the defence of Western Europe. West European governments are alarmed by Star Wars precisely to the extent to which it reflects this reluctance and implies a potential decoupling of Western Europe from the US defence network.

In this perspective, embryonic military cooperation in Western Europe may be one way in which Western European governments can restore the balance within the Atlantic Alliance. A strong 'European leg' within NATO would reassure the US congress that Europeans care about their

defence. There are also signs that developments such as a 'European Defence Initiative' would be welcomed in the Pentagon. Richard Perle, the US Assistant Defence Secretary, has said that Washington would be 'quite sympathetic' if the WEU took up the suggestion of Manfred Timmerman, State Secretary in the FRG's Defence Ministry, who called for 'examination of a European anti-missile system' at the WEU's Munich meeting last September.

The WEU, with its seven nation membership, reinforces the hegemony of Britain, France and West Germany within Western Europe. The French Socialist government has already made moves to extend its nuclear umbrella over the Federal Republic of Germany. And talk of a special relationship between Britain and the US obscures the fact that the real 'special relationship' in the postwar years has been between the United States and the Federal Republic, under SPD-led governments as much as under CDU-led ones. Military integration within the WEU could be a way of resolving latent European-American tensions over decoupling by the US 'sub-contracting' European defence to an institution under West German, or Franco-German dominance.

How should the European peace movements respond to these developments? Rather than giving support to the revival of the WEU and the establishment of Eureka, they should keep the pressure on social democratic parties in northern Europe to keep to the positions - against Cruise and Pershing II deployment - which they have arrived at while in opposition, should they be elected in 1987 or 1988. The elections in the Federal Republic and in Britain are of crucial importance here. Strong peace movements, independent of political parties, and cooperating with other social institutions are a key factor.

Secondly, they should put Europe back on the map. This means resisting any

tendency to label the growth of a 'stronger Western Europe' as a process of 'Europeanisation'. Real 'Europeanisation' involves all the countries of Europe: East, West and neutral. The Helsinki process - contradictory though it is - should be at the centre of the peace movements' European perspective. West European peace movements should be promoting increased cooperation in all three Helsinki baskets, at all levels. Greater commercial and human contacts, at all levels, not only promote inter-government detente, but reduce enemy images and false perceptions. This applies not only to Western ideas of the 'Soviet threat', but also to the idea, current among some in some Eastern European countries that Western peace movements represent a Soviet fifth column. Countries from East and West could sign bilateral treaties with provisions that parallel the Helsinki agreement and promote security, commercial and humanitarian cooperation. Technical and economic cooperation between all European countries could be one way of responding to US economic dominance.

Such a process, however, depends not only upon developments in Western Europe and the United States. Political developments in Eastern Europe are important as well.

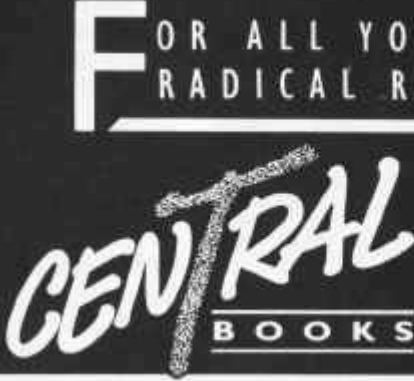
A 'pan-European' perspective such as this neither ignores the pivotal role of national politics, nor imagines that nation states can or will wither away that easily. For the peace movements to insist that independent national action to get rid of nuclear weapons remains on the political agenda and to strengthen a 'pan-European' Helsinki approach is the most hopeful way of preventing a nuclear armed West European military bloc.

We welcome your contributions to the Viewpoint section. Please write not more than 600 words and send it to the editorial office by January 10.



Relay has radical analysis and news of developments in 'alternative' radio, in Britain and internationally. Issue 10, just out, carries articles on: single vs multi-ethnic radio stations, innovative programming ideas, choosing an audio-mixer, and more.

For a FREE sample copy, write to:
RELAY RADIO MAGAZINE (MT),
FREEPOST London N7 9BR



**FOR ALL YOUR
 RADICAL READING**

MAIL ORDER,
 NEW & SECOND-
 HAND BOOKS

OPEN MON-FRI:
 10.00-6.00;
 SAT: 10.00-2.00

37 GRAYS INN RD,
 LONDON WC1X 8PS
 TEL 01-242 4146