The European Marches Against Unemployment, Insecurity and Exclusion[1]

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Amsterdam, 14 June 1997. During the European summit, almost 50,000 people march along the roads of the city. For the first time, the movement of the 'European Marches Against Unemployment, Insecurity and Exclusion' demonstrates its capacity for mobilisation. The media impact is significant. The event is even more remarkable for the fact that the demonstrators come from a large number of European Union (EU) countries. For more than two months, small groups of permanent marchers had, in fact criss-crossed Europe, stopping off in many towns and finally converging on The Netherlands and calling for the demonstration. This was not a once-off event. On the third and fourth of June 1999, this time on the occasion of the European summit in Cologne, the Marches also took place, gathering some 30,000 people. Without attracting as much attention, over the last three years, other less important Marches have been organised from – and between – several towns most particularly in France, Germany and Belgium. In general, the protests hinge upon the denouncement of the worsening of social inequalities, the necessity to guarantee and improve rights for those deprived of job security and the unemployed with more general claims essentially concerning the reduction of the working week to thirty-five in the EU[2].

Introduction

The mobilisation of the unemployed and those finding themselves in a situation of significant insecurity has always been considered to be highly improbable. The withdrawal into oneself, the tendency to concentrate on sheer survival and the atomisation that generally characterise the condition of these individuals renders uncertain, or even impossible, the emergence of organised action (Lazarsfeld, Jahoda and Zeisel, 1981; Bagguley, 1991). This difficulty also relates to the fact that the mobilisation of individuals around the very situation from which they seek to emerge may appear to be paradoxical. The question of the collective action of this group, supposing that it may be foreseen, thus refers to the violent, sporadic and uncontrollable movements characteristic of riot situations. The interest and surprise displayed by all observers are due, not only to the fact that the unemployed are mobilising but also, and perhaps above all, to the fact that this mobilisation takes place in the spatio-political dimension of the EU, while generally

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[2] For the survey research, principally interviews were carried out, mainly semi-directive, with a diversity of actors who had participated, in one way or another, in at least one of the Marches. Moreover, I participated in several preparatory meetings. As often as possible, documents – written or audiovisual – produced by the movement itself were consulted. In a less systematic manner, factual data available in the national or foreign press was taken into account. Research carried out on the European Trade Union Confederation (CES) at its Brussels headquarters, but also in Helsinki during its ninth conference in July 1999, completed certain aspects of the analysis. Finally, I approached, by telephone or especially e-mail, acquaintances of all those who, almost throughout Europe as experts and/or participants, could respond to specific questions of information.

the 'Europeanisation of protest movements' in their various forms remain limited (Imig and Tarrow; forthcoming). Paradoxically thus, it is the group believed to be less able to organise itself collectively that demonstrates its capacity for initiative and innovation by placing itself within the still embryonic tendency towards the Europeanisation of protest-based action[3].

In order to understand not only how but also why the European Marches emerged, the analysis must be placed within a sufficiently large interpretative framework that accounts for both the elements that refer to the internal dynamics of the movement (resource mobilisation paradigm), including their cognitive dimensions (identity construction paradigm), and those that refer to the general socio-political context in which they develop (political opportunities paradigm). It is therefore within the combination of these theoretical currents (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, 1997; Klandermans and Tarrow, 1998) that I intend to position myself, insisting firstly on the third aspect. Effectively, the more a social group is dominated, the more its activation is dependent on 'political opportunities', in that its capacity to influence them is reduced (Lipsky, 1970; Tarrow, 1998). The unemployed[4] undoubtedly fit this case. Even the most elementary regulations of democratic control do not seem to allow them to exploit their interests. Therefore, within each national space, the process of changeover in political power did not result, at least over the last two decades, in any significant improvement in their situation: the overwhelming majority of Western European countries in fact experienced an aggravation, during this period, of unemployment and/or social inequalities (Crouch, 1999: 69-72). Moreover, the acceleration of the process of European integration, particularly the obligation imposed on Member States to satisfy the 'convergence criteria' in view of the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty, leads the latter to adopt or reinforce austerity measures which appear to prevent any policy of full employment (Martin, 2000). The beginning of the 1990s is thus marked, on the one hand, by a significant increase in unemployment levels, a tendency towards job insecurity and the two-levelled stratification of the social fabric – without the reasonable prediction of a perspective of improvement – and on the other hand, by the lack of a credible and efficient political response. The fact that an essential social problem, which constitutes the main preoccupation amongst European public opinion, is not satisfactorily dealt with politically is also a trigger for the emergence of protest movements (Cloward and Piven, 1977).

In parallel, the persistence and size of the phenomenon, which increasingly affects groups in society thus far left relatively untouched, transforms the perception of unemployment. In the eyes of a growing number of people, it is the functioning of liberal capitalist economies that is fundamentally under question. While the systems of production and redistribution characteristic of the 'Fordist pacts' of the post-war period (Van Ruysseveldt and Visser, 1996) were certainly unegalitarian but beneficial to all, the financial and economic success of some seem from now on to imply the impoverishment of others or to take place without them[5]. This situation is reflected by the growth of a feeling of anger and injustice that is also an important precondition for action (Gurr, 1971).

It is within this context that the intervention of a small number of leaders or 'political entrepreneurs' (Olson, 1978) has proved determinant of the birth of the European Marches. Kingdon (1984) has shown how one or several leaders may provoke a protest mobilisation benefiting from a configuration linking three dimensions: the more or less latent receptivity of public opinion to a given social problem; the mediatisation of this problem; and the more or less significant capacity of a political system to respond to a social demand. Here, the organisation of the European Marches converging on the very location of the Council allows at the

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[3] This is a tendency that it may be considered will develop, if one follows the logic of Charles Tilly who suggest that collective action is always structures, in its form and in space, in response to the emergence of correspondent political systems. Cf. *The Time of States*, Center for the Study of Social Change, Working Paper no. 172, New School for Social Research, 1993.

[4] In order not to uselessly encumber the text, 'the unemployed' will be used for designating also, without specific indication, those lacking job security and the social excluded, who are often the long-term unemployed.

[5] This is no doubt the most fitting illustration having been provided by those enterprises who lay off workers while generally making profit.

same time for calling upon and putting pressure on both the States and the EU while seeking – through the publicisation of the event – to make use of the support of public opinion to defend the interests of the unemployed.

In this chapter, I shall firstly examine the conditions for the emergence of a most unexpected movement. The attempt shall be made to show how a small number of leaders, despite the weak support of the institutional representative frameworks, come to give collective and political meaning to the dissatisfaction of the unemployed (**I – The reasons for a difficult and improbable mobilisation**). It shall be further seen that the movement was able, by means of the 'March' format, to make itself visible to the media and, more generally, to public opinion, both used then as resources (**II – The unfolding of the mobilisation**). Therefore, the diversity and complexity of the cognitive and strategic orientations that run through the movement and whose articulation leads to a new mode of the Europeanisation of action shall be insisted upon: 'the externalisation of protest' (**III – A fragile and problematic cohesion**). In the concluding section I shall attempt to identify some of the effects induced by the Marches, both on the level of their claims as well as on the cadres of the mobilisation and, in particular, on the relations between trade union representation and the defence of the interests of the unemployed.

I – The reasons for a difficult and improbable mobilisation

It is difficult, in Western Europe, to imagine a group whose social, cultural and financial resources may be as weak. "The more collectivities are disorganised and powerless, the more they are in need of professional organisations and political entrepreneurs for making their protests" (Chazel, 1992: 301). Now, the institutional representative frameworks, be they trade union or party-based – on the national or EU level – take very little account of the interests of the unemployed and the socially excluded.

The weak support of the frameworks of institutional representation

On the national level: the trade union movement plays an extremely limited role of representation – even in cases when the unemployed may become members of trade union organisations – concentrating the main part of its activity on stakes related directly to the sphere of work (Richards, 2000). Political parties undoubtedly take up the claims of the unemployed to an even lesser extent for three main reasons. On the one hand, this is because they most often remain organised around a general right/left cleavage that from the outset presupposes specific interests. On the other hand, it is due to the fact that the most marginalised groups do not make up a sufficiently homogeneous and captive electorate that, following the strategic logic of the conquest of power, justifies defending their interests (Martin, 1993). Finally, it is because in the majority of the Member States of the EU, the fight against unemployment, now waged for over twenty years by governmental majorities with different tendencies, has either globally failed or is largely dependent on the international economic climate and/or on demographic developments over which political powers have no control (Fitoussi, 1999). In the last two cases, parties are more inclined to remain neutral than to confront the issue of unemployment which is conceived of as a political stake.

On the EU level: Here too, the representation of the unemployed is almost non-existent. Thus, the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), the main representative organisation at this level, clearly prioritises the least anti-establishment modes of action that aim above all to perpetuate and consolidate the Social Dialogue process, initiated by Jacques Delors (Gobin, 1996; Dølvik, 1997). The acceptance of the fundamental laws of the market, under the condition that they be regulated and controlled, testified to by the orientations that it develops, is difficult to see as compatible with the mobilisation of those who, more or less directly, suffer the consequences of a competitive economic system. In terms of the European Parliament, supposing that certain of its members or political groups make the cause of the unemployed heard, its influence, although growing, remains rather marginal and its representative role constrained (Delwit, De Waele and Magnette, 1999). Considered as a unified political entity, 'the European arena' is selectively open to interests representation (Richardson, 1996). The integration process, at least since the Treaty of Rome, clearly prioritises economic objectives and subordinates

the progress of a (hypothetical) social policy (Liebfried and Pierson, 1998) to the demands of the market, in particular labour mobility and flexible working conditions. The complex and opaque decision-making system of the EU is characterised by a 'multi-levelled governance' (Marks and McAdam, 1996), in spite of its 'windows of opportunity' (Keeler, 1993; Tarrow, 1998), that it incites in its tendency to favour the influence and interests of employers and/or business to the detriment of those of employees, without even considering those of the unemployed (Streeck, 1998).

The fact that the interests of the unemployed are little accounted for by the representative institutional frameworks is due to the qualification of the stakes that they constitute. Although the question of unemployment is constantly present within their discourse, the way in which the theme is approached seems in fact to deny the possibility of constituting a politically organised group: unemployment, as a social and economic problem, is a constant worry, while the representation of the unemployed, in and of themselves, generally remains a subject of taboo[6]. In general, it is thus in terms of 'employment' that such debates are held. Therefore, the European Commission, national governments, political parties and trade union organisations have all, at one time or another, developed 'programmes for employment'. This displacement — from unemployment to employment — is strongly significant. Through it the specificity of the condition of the unemployed finds itself subsumed by the designation of a global approach. The wish not to enclose them within a situation of exclusion but, on the contrary, to help them to integrate into the labour market that often justifies this process, also results in denying the acceptance of the particularity of this group, its difficulties, processes and, finally, its very existence.

Peripheral standpoints

How could a group thus deprived of resources and so socially and politically isolated mobilise itself in such a way? As highlighted by Lipsky, "the 'problem of the powerless' in protest activity is to activate third parties to enter the implicit or explicit bargaining arena in ways favourable to the protestors" (1970: 2). In the case that concerns us, the European Marches were made possible due to the activation of three main networks of actors that may be analytically distinguished:
- A body of associations of the unemployed mainly constituted at the local and national and, much less, the European level[7]. The slow and fragile co-operation between these associative actors owes enormously to the struggles waged within national frameworks over the last years. The case of France in this regard is exemplary and a driving force. Since the creation, in 1994, of *Agir contre le chômage* (AC!) and the social movement of November-December 1995, protest actions foster these associations' potential for mobilisation (Demazière and Pignoni, 1998; Combesque, 1998). These operations are essential, on the one hand because they contribute to the thickening of the associative links at local level in a relation of proximity with the unemployed and, on the other hand, because they break with the tradition of charity that still often orients social activity (Salmon, 1998).
- The actors of a 'European civil society' in the process of being constructed (Boual, ed., 1999), as the tendency to the Europeanisation of the collective action of associations attests (Weisbein, 2000). The taking into account of the existence of a new level of power results in the emergence of a multitude of networks of associations that carry out their activities at the EU level and/or make Europe the principal object of their involvement. Extremely fluid, explosive and heterogeneous this 'galaxy of associations' nonetheless allows for the progressive formation of 'epistemic communities' (Hass, 1992) that often centre their efforts around social and civic concerns, particularly on the themes of employment, the

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[6] In France, Martine Aubry broke this taboo in 1992, as Minister for Employment, sustaining heavy criticism for having publicly posed the question of the necessity of establishing a union of the unemployed.

[7] With the European Network of the Unemployed (ENU). "An international network for the fight against unemployment, job insecurity, flexibility and exclusion on the European level and open to solidarity with people, the employed and the unemployed throughout the world'. This small association, lacking any significant power and having limited mean, is above all a leader in the co-ordination of action.

environment and European democracy. Citing only two examples concerning the more active associations, the Permanent Forum for Civil Society, created in September 1995, today gathers almost 17,000 local, national and international organisations that work in domains as varied as the environment, citizenship or education; globally dealing with the same issues, the Inter-Citizen Conferences regroup some thirty organisations, often influential and quite clearly left-wing that are increasingly better positioned in a critical relationship with the European institutions and national governments. In all cases, these are locations and spaces of exchange, training and reflection and action that are being created and intensifying.

- Militants from the 'far left' that are currently gaining importance in some European countries, particularly France (Pingaud, 2000). Tendencies emerging from extremely diverse realities – academic, trade unionists, members of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), artists and/or political personalities, in particular – thus identify, in a minimal sense, with the protest against economic liberalism and its extension to a growing number of sectors of human activity. It is difficult to draw a coherent and homogeneous picture of that which constitutes more of a haze, or a mosaic, than a movement with clearly identified ideological and organisational contours. However, it has demonstrated, over the recent period, a rebirth of its activity and a growing acceptance among public opinion. In France, the exceptionally high electoral result (5.3%) won by *Lutte Ouvrière* (LO) during the 1995 presidential elections, the growing success of the SUD (Solidarity, Unity, Democracy) unions, or the unusual audiences, within spheres far beyond the mere enclaves of academia, of Pierre Bourdieu speaking against the ravages of liberalism, are the signs of the renewal of a current of critical thinking that, although never completely disappearing, had, since the dissolution of Communism, considerably lost speed. A similar phenomenon may be located, to a lesser degree, in Germany around Günter Grass, but also in Scandinavia or Spain where, in different ways, the anarchist movement and/or the extreme left are enjoying a slight growth. Much more generally, 'liberal globalisation' incites an opposition - rather disorganised but sufficiently strong and/or publicised - to, for example, disturb negotiations at the last World Trade Organisation (WTO) summit in Seattle (Marino, 1999).

The decisive role of a hard core of leaders

These three categories are obviously not mutually exclusive. They are even sometimes distinctly inter-linked. A small number of actors (less than ten), situating themselves on the 'far left', relatively young (between 40 and 55 years old), multi-activist – current or former trade unionists as well as often being active in associations of the unemployed[8] – also play a particularly decisive role at the heart of the European Marches. It is they who, since Spring 1994, a little after the birth of AC! – of which the majority are members – initiated and organised the first Marches against unemployment in France. This event is crucial. The size of the mobilisation – around 20,000 people – in spite of the very weak publicity, is in fact significant of the fact that the ordeal of unemployment is less and less perceived as a result of failure, weakness or personal incompetence, leading to the individual's isolation, but more and more as a social injustice, ascribable to the overall functioning of the economic system and against which it is impossible to fight. The social movement of December 1995 confirms this analysis by bringing about a new proof of the capacity for mobilisation of the unemployed, of the apparently unfailing support of a large sector of the population (Béroud, Mouriaux and Vakaloulis, 1998) and of the significant protest against both governmental action and the constraints imposed by EU integration. While unemployment levels in the Western European countries grew in an almost generalised sense in the 1990s, the leaders of the French marches began to envisage the organisation of a similar demonstration, this time at the level of the EU.

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[8] For example, Christophe Aguilon: co-founder of SUD-PTT (Solidarity, Unity, Democracy – Post, Telegraph and Telecommunication), co-ordinator of AC! and the European Marches, he is also a member of the LCR (*Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire*), the bureau of ATTAC (*Association pour la Taxation des Transactions Financières pour l'Aide aux Citoyens*) and, more generally, involved in the international movement against the WTO.

Ideologically, these leaders have in common the incarnation of a revival of an overtly anti-Capitalist social critique which, however, clearly distances itself from the experience of Communism which they unequivocally denounce. Their activist socialisation is sometimes marked by the influence of a demand and protest-based Catholicism – like that, for example, of the *Jeunesse Ouvrière Catholique* (JOC) – much more frequently by a long involvement in trade unions, generally within a Trotskyist organisation and, more rarely and/or in an ephemeral sense, by membership of the French Communist Party (PCF) or the CGT (*Confédération Général du Travail*).

Their action on behalf of the cause of the unemployed is fed by an intense reflection upon the discrediting and disaffection faced, in the majority of European countries, by those traditionally engaged and politically participant, and particularly on the tendency towards de-unionisation, extremely strong in France (Duchesne, 1996). The interest they hold for the analysis of the recomposition of the contemporary forms of collective action (Perrineau, ed., 1994) or, more specifically, of what it is acceptable to call the 'New Social Movements' (NSMs) (Melucci, 1983; Dalton and Kuechler, eds., 1990; Chazel, ed., 1993; Kriesi, ed., 1995), as well as the spectacular development, particularly in France, in the middle of the 1980s of 'co-ordinations' largely defying and competing with unions (Hassenteufel, 1991; Chabanet, 1997) is revealing of the concern with taking account of the aspiration to participation and autonomy, to judgement and action of future generations. Denouncing the processes of intellectual indoctrination, having themselves often broken with a union's dominant line from which, in some cases, they had been separated, they seek, in the continuation of many mobilisations appearing at the beginning of the 1990s, particularly those against social exclusion (Siméant, 1998; Aguiton and Bensaïd, 1997), to promote and to put into place "supple, flexible forms, appealing to events specifically defined as projects (...). Those who lend a hand to these events are not asked for complete adhesion in every respect but only a limited agreement as to the validity of the action carried out. These movements in fact make their claims against the project of ideological homogenisation of the traditional organisations, denounced as totalitarian, a respect for the heterogeneity and of the plurality of the modes and motifs of engagement (...) The question of belonging is substituted by that of collective action that itself is only posed in a circumstantial manner situated in well-defined occasions" (Boltanski and Chiapello, 1999: 434).

The capacity of these leaders to strategically think the movement in a global political context and to attempt to reply to the expectations and values of the people they mobilise, their more general activist know-how and, more prosaically, the financial and logistical resources that they may locate at the trade unions and organisations of the unemployed[9] of which they are members make them pivotal actors in the organisation of the Marches.

II - The unfolding of the mobilisation

The genesis of the movement may be reconstructed thus: the Intergovernmental Conference (CIG), instigated in Turin in March 1996 with the objective of giving a new impetus to the European integration process by taking greater account of its social dimensions, incited a small number of associations of the unemployed as well as some trade union organisations to seek to benefit from this conjuncture by organising Marches against unemployment and exclusion, this time on the European level. In June of the same year, the 'Florence Appeal' that made official their decision, was launched as the principal initiative of AC!, the *Mouvement National des Chômeurs et des Précaires* (MNCP), *Droit au Logement* and the ENU with the support of part of the left-wing trade unions, particularly the Spanish CGT and the Italian CGIL, activists of the German magazine *Express* (close to the DGB) and a diversity of other, less important organisations. Progressively, the alliances were enlarged, notably to include the Coordination Paysanne Européenne of which the *Confédération Paysanne Française* is a member, the Greens and the Permanent Forum for Civil Society. The organisation of the Marches essentially

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[9] The marchers themselves also make a, variable and often very modest, financial contribution (under 100 Francs).

depends on French and German structures and/or activists. The very weak involvement of the British should be pointed out. Several reasons may be considered. Firstly, links between British and continental activists have traditionally been rare and difficult. Further, British unionism is in a phase of reconstruction, still considerably weakened, particularly at national level, by measures taken against it during the Thatcherite era. Finally, the Trade Union Congress (TUC) which officially refused to participate in the Marches is largely under the influence of the Labour Party whose current orientations do not at all match those of the unemployed and those denied job security. In these circumstances only an intermittent and distended co-operation with local associations of different sizes and with little co-ordination between them — such as Reclaim the Streets and Jubilee 2000 — has been possible.

At the heart of the movement, communication between people of different nationalities has not always been easy. The language barrier provokes a certain sluggishness, of translation in particular, but is not an insurmountable obstacle. Another, more significant, difficulty arises from that fact that, during the preparation phase, the individuals present dedicate a lot of time to 'getting to know each other', allowing them to obtain a minimum of information about the socio-political and cultural situation of their neighbouring countries. Each meeting allows for this process of familiarisation to be continued. Like many contemporary social movements, that of the Marches made use of the most modern tools of communication. The creation of a well-documented Internet site, accessible in several languages, plays an essential role in the exchange of information, almost in real time and without geographical limitations.

The movement's dynamic finally led to the Amsterdam March that to date remains the event that most mobilised the unemployed in Europe. The major challenge posed to the organisers was both to bring the group into existence in and of itself by means of the mobilisation and to raise the situation of the unemployed and those deprived of job security in Europe as a political problem. From a relatively limited choice of 'action repertoires' (Tilly, 1984), the March allowed for this dual process.

The March format

Unable to use the weapon of the strike, or even to brandish it as a threat, the unemployed on the other hand have the time necessary to participate, ultimately for several weeks, in this rather particular type of mobilisation. Historically, the March format has allowed dominated groups, enjoying extremely restricted - or no – access to the 'loci of power', or wishing to circumvent them, to make themselves visible (McAdam, 1982; Traugott, 1985): it is thus public opinion that is called upon in the hope of being able to influence political institutions. The leaders of the European Marches whom I have interviewed refer particularly to the Marches of the *Mouvement Beur* that marked, in France at the beginning of the 1980s, the initiation of the collective action of young people of immigrant background struggling against certain forms of racial and social discrimination (Bouamama, 1994). Like the latter, they attempt to create the group in and of itself. In this perspective, the identity dimension of the movement — inseparable from the form of mobilisation — is as important as it is problematic. In effect, the March gathers, causes to converge and exposes publicly, by means of an action whose duration and slowness demonstrates the inevitable need for 'self affirmation' of people who often are neither identified nor identify themselves as more than 'useless to the world' (Castel, 1995). The Amsterdam demonstration, as a founding event, thus marks an, at least symbolically, significant reversal. The unemployed and those lacking job security have proved (to themselves) their capacity to organise collectively at the EU level. The films they made during the two months of the Marches, largely shown within the movement but also on several television channels in France and abroad, are thus a means of prolonging and consecrating a strong human experience, unleashing an enormity of emotions. This involvement in a common space/time — that of the Marches — is compatible with the high degree of sociological and ideological heterogeneity of a group whose unity remains most uncertain. The 'multitude of lesses' - the jobless, the homeless, the document-less etc. - moreover protest displaying a principle of solidarity with all those around the world who may have suffered discrimination and/or may have been 'left behind' by economic development. They come across

much difficulty, beyond the dynamics of a systematic opposition, in formulating precise and coherent claims that may be shared by a large majority of mobilised actors. The March facilitates, at least for a time, this fragile equilibrium between the identity of a relatively fluid and scattered group and a weakly elaborated political programme: here, it is the form of action and action in itself, that is the exposure of the self to oneself and for others that is of importance above all.

Media and public opinion as resources

As it can be seen, the question of the movement's visibility is essential. Capturing media attention and getting its support becomes primordial (Lagneau and Lefébure, 1999). Several methods testify to this concern. For this reason, it was decided in Germany that the daily distance covered by the Marchers would be quite short and almost exclusively concentrated in large urban areas in order to ensure the best possible media coverage. In most of the countries, working groups dedicated to media relations were established. In France, the unemployed Marchers were even able to follow a week-long course on the media given by trade union activists. As is underlined by Christophe Aguiton, "on themes such as unemployment, we have no other solutions than to solicit the sympathy of public opinion[10]." The March format, because it presents itself as a pacific mode of intervention in the public space, closer to a dynamic of exposition than to one of confrontation[11], may moreover be considered a means of achieving this objective. While the French movement of the unemployed was identified and generally made known by its criminal actions – the occupation of ANPE (Agence Nationale pour l'Emploi) and ASSEDIC (Association pour l'Emploi Dans l'Industrie et le Commerce) premises – sometimes going as far as the detainment of personnel members, the organisers of the European Marches, many of whom are French, on the contrary, deliberately chose the path of respectability. According to my interviews, this suggests the voluntary and strategic adaptation to the European dimension by a mobilisation that seeks the approval of national public opinion that sometimes possess extremely diverse cultural traditions and who certain amongst which would undoubtedly not tolerate acts of crime. Thanks to the media, the Marches were ultimately covered almost throughout Europe where certain imitation and spiral effects could be witnessed. "Since the Winter of 1998, the movements of the French and German unemployed took off within only a few weeks of each other. Television and the media played an important role in this phenomenon of contagion" (Aguiton, 1999: 86). Thus, on several occasions, in Germany, Austria or in Italy, the unemployed marched to the cry 'we do as the French!'.

By insisting on the March format and on the importance of the media as elements constructive and structuring of the movement, I would like further to suggest the general uncertainty of its internal cohesion.

III – A fragile and problematic cohesion

The Marchers values refer to two main orientations that are generally considered to oppose each other or even considered incompatible: those of a protest-based, at times revolutionary, trade unionism, on the one hand; and those of a 'post-materialism', relating to a much more recent cultural phenomenon, on the other (Inglehart, 1977; 1990). The explanation proposed by Inglehart is the following: generations born after the end of the Second World War in the countries of Western Europe were socialised, in the long-term, in contexts of economic prosperity and peace. The needs of human existence on the level of subsistence thus being generally satisfied, other expectations more centred around the individual, his/her personal development and autonomy, are, therefore, tended to be put first. Based on such an analysis, one of the essential questions to ask is whether the persistence, over now more than twenty years, of a high level of unemployment within the EU, as well as the worsening of inequalities and, finally, the impoverishment of the most weakened social groups – in particular the young – confuses, or even invalidates,

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[10] Interview extract.

[11] That which, not only on this point, differentiates it from the majority of other street demonstrations. Cf. Danielle Tartakowsky, Le pouvoir est dans la rue. Crises politiques et manifestations en France, Paris: Aubier, 1998.

this tendency. In other words, do those who are social excluded formulate post-materialist demands? The example of the unemployed, those denied job security and the mobilised activists allows us to develop some elements of response: not only are the two aspirations – 'materialist' and 'post-materialist' – referable to different individuals but, in the large majority of cases, they are associated or closely linked within a single individual. The demand for the right to work and for decent pay, for example, in terms of one's engagement, seems as determinant of the valuing of one's individuality and, in particular, the management of the meaning of one's action.

The link between political radicalism and cultural liberalism

Politically, the movement of the Marches is characterised by the linking of two relatively diversified discursive levels: the first is characteristic of the rhetoric of the extreme left, denouncing the mechanisms of exploitation inherent in the capitalist system, distinguishing between antagonistic classes (those of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie) and calling, often in an incantatory manner, for the over-throwing of the economic system; the other, more pragmatically seeks to fight against unemployment and job insecurity, taking into account the rules of a market economy which exists *de facto*. This second approach aims to formulate well-argumented positions, focusing on the theme of the reduction in working time. This "from all the evidence constitutes the main response to the rise in unemployment, for an essential reason: it is the only rational means to use the rise in productivity and to repartition it equally between all, across countries (...). Such a measure has the advantage of not going against economic efficiency (...). The estimated potential in terms of employment of such a measure was measured with economic models. It is the following: a 10% reduction in working time would allow, in a short space of time, for unemployment to be reduced by half in all of the European countries" (Husson, 1997: 20-1). These two tendencies - the one revolutionary, the other more reformist – complement rather than oppose each other. Concerned not to appear dogmatic and, at the same time, to propose significant changes towards the halting of the processes of exclusion, the Marchers at times readopt proposals made by economic and/or financial actors - *a priori* little inclined towards the defence of the interests of the unemployed and those denied job security - but who, nonetheless, fundamentally question some of the principles of liberal capitalism. This is true of the consistent claim of taxing speculative financial fluxes at the level of 0.01%, known as the 'Tobin tax', after the American winner of the Nobel Prize for Economics, approved notably by George Soros, upheld by the ATTAC and adopted by the European Marches which proposed that this taxation be dedicated to a re-balancing and redistribution of wealth. In general, the movement of the European Marches seeks to make credible its programme, sometimes using the arguments of those considered socially to be the agents of 'economic competence' while, at the same time, remaining anchored in a relation of radicalism (Collective of the European Marches against unemployment, job insecurity and exclusion, 1997).

These political objectives are associated with other much more individualised and personalised expectations (Ion and Peroni, 1997) related to the participation and the expression of each individual by means of the Marches movement. The will for 'autonomy', by which the social actors intend their own identification of the meaning of their action, is thus fiercely proclaimed. It is, in this sense, inextricable from the 'social experience', a notion which illustrates individual and collective behaviours dominated by the heterogeneity of their constitutive principles and by the activity of individuals who must construct the meaning of their practices within this very heterogeneity (Dubet, 1994: 15). This aspiration is, moreover, often opposed to the bureaucratic functioning - impersonal, cold and authoritarian - characteristic of the party and trade unions organisations, and even of some associations of the unemployed. This multiplicity of sentiments and the connection of very different values by a single actor - incorporating both 'political radicalism' and 'contemporary cultural liberalism' (Bell, 1979) - considerably modifies traditional ideological and organisational guidelines. This is evidenced by a very strong demand upon, or even suspicion, with regards the structures framing action, decisions as to their engagement seemingly being taken step by step. The volatility that follows is not solely due to a situation of insecurity that would make difficult a stable and long-term investment, but rather results from a personal judgement, always susceptible to

questioning, and in some cases, from a reluctance to accept the constraints of action (Ion, 1997).

Two competing strategic orientations

Two major orientations emerge and tend to oppose each other within the Marches. The first has a long term perspective, based on an historical analysis of the development of class (or power) relations and considers imperative the establishment of a European, or even global, social movement. The reasoning is the following: while the trade union movement gradually established itself at the end of the nineteenth century within nation-States in response to the rise of an essentially national industrial capitalism, the globalisation of economic processes - and the creation of free trade zones - today should lead it to becoming better organised at the supra-national level. For many of the Marches' leaders, there are two pitfalls to be avoided. On the one hand, the basing of trade union action within national spheres that are no longer the exclusive, or even merely the dominant locations of decision-making. On the other hand, fighting against the tendency towards the institutionalisation of a European trade unionism seen as being insufficiently anti-establishment and not defending adequately the interests of those exposed to the play of international capitalism. By means of mobilisations such as the Marches, they aim above all to pave the way for future transnational social movements. Therefore, the strictly claims-based dimension of the Marches is considered to be of secondary importance. The action undertaken does not so much aim at the immediate attainment of the specific demands made, than at the creation of the conditions for the development of struggles, in particular at the EU level. The conflict is envisaged as a means of making possible - or rather, conceivable - the emergence of such movements amongst all those in Europe who are at risk of social marginalisation. Here, it is an enlargement of the 'scope of solidarity' between the latter that is sought, in both a structural (the existence of networks ensuring mobilisation) and a cognitive dimension (that such social actors may mentally conceive of together defending their interests). From this perspective, one of the questions currently being posed - openly discussed within the movement - is that of its eventual opening up. Two possibilities are under discussion. Some foresee the possibility of a *rapprochement*, or even a more or less regular alliance, with political partners (The Greens or the Communist Party in particular), in order to further the institutionalisation of the movement and reinforce its negotiation capacity, but at the risk of its losing its autonomy and its mobilising strength. Others, in greater numbers, prefer to work towards a widening of the demands made around the theme of insecurity, in the aim of more easily mobilising the most weakened sector of the European workforce, beyond the unemployed.

Saying this also comes back to underlining the fact that the movement of the Marches is grounded, in its own way - that is by means of protest - in the process of European integration. In the different countries, it is most rare for the Marchers to oppose the building of Europe itself. To my knowledge, the only overtly anti-European organisations to have participated in the Marches were Danish, in celebration moreover, on the 2nd of June 1997 - little before the Amsterdam protest – of the fifth anniversary of voting 'no' on the Maastricht Treaty (Salmon, 1998: 217). Opposing its current development, the Marches' leaders are generally favourable to the construction of a different European social and political system, to which they attempt to contribute. The questioning of national frameworks, as locuses of sovereignty, that results is either acknoweldged or hoped for. Due to either political belief or, particularly, to the principle of solidarity with those most disadvantaged, the questions of internationalism and supra-nationalism are not seen as problematic. The majority are convinced by the need for a means of social organisation - to be put in place - that would regulate both the action of States and (other) international economic actors. Far from being 'anti-European', the movement of the Marches calls, on the contrary, for 'another Europe' and, to a great extent, for 'more Europe'. The European social movements may play an essential role by giving a different orientation to the building of Europe if they are capable of co-ordinating and acting towards the advancement of their social claims. Such mobilisations would assist in the formation of European public opinion, by means of the elaboration of shared demands and the feeling of acting together towards the construction of a political and social space at the continental level. "This should, in my opinion, be the priority,

for the coming years, of the European trade union and associative structures" (Aguiton, 1999: 87). This analysis is often based on the idea that the construction of the EU, especially the representation and defence of interests that operate within it, far from being established, is in its coming into being, therefore, susceptible to being influenced and put into question by the emergence of protest-based actions. Numerous participants in the Marches make a clear distinction, in this regard, from the socio-political configuration of national spheres, marked by an institutionalisation, an historical grounding and, consequently, by a much stronger and solidified reproduction of social interests. Within the EU framework, the situation would be relatively more open for at least two reasons. On the one hand, the notion of the democratic deficit of the European political system is unanimously agreed upon - particularly within the European institutions - thus creating the conditions for a consideration, or even an expectation, of all forms of action, protest-based or otherwise, provided they prove the engagement of European citizens. On the other hand, the very functioning of the EU, characterised by a game of progressive influence between institutions with sometimes badly defined roles, may allow social groups with very little access to decision-making spheres to at least be heard, taking advantage of the competition between institutions that constantly try to establish their legitimacy (Imig and Tarrow, forthcoming). Thus, the unemployed have been able to find an audience for their claims within a Parliament concerned with the valuing of its ability to play a representative role, in particular vis-à-vis the Commission and the Council[12]. It is also within this framework that they gain access to various information about a considerable number of political and trade union actors in Europe. The Parliament is undoubtedly the European institution to which they have the most easy and regular access, although a delegation of the European Marches was received by the German Minister for Employment within the context of the European Council in Cologne. Finally, many of the trade union and associative activists I met have the feeling that, although mobilisation is more difficult at European than at national level, the possibilities for influencing the institutions towards looking favourably upon the interests of the employed and the unemployed are, nonetheless, much larger.

The other orientation generally prioritised by the organisers of associations of the unemployed, or the unemployed themselves, is increasingly defined in terms of its urgency. Politically clearly less developed, it does not necessarily imply any particular societal project, or especially, any concept of Europe. The visibility of the unemployed at the European level is significant, but only in the sense that it allows for pressure to be placed on national institutions and for the negotiation, under better conditions and within each Welfare State system, of the improvement of social terms. The attainment of immediate material gains (a rise in social minima, unemployment benefit, different premiums etc.) is the main motivation for the engagement. Here, the extension of the stakes and claims to groups other than the unemployed is not only not sought but also not wished for. From this perspective, the assembly of two main categories of excluded groups at the Marches - the unemployed and the 'universe of others lacking security' - the first outnumbering the second, lead to two types of problem. On the one hand, it tends to fragment, but also to dilute, the demands and thus make it more difficult to satisfy those of the main group: the unemployed. On the other hand, the latter do not readily accept being associated with those who are often in a worse-off situation and, sometimes, display signs of 'social anomie'[13].

A new mode of the Europeanisation of action: 'the externalisation of protest'

These two currents articulate themselves differently - experience showing that even the minimal re-valorisation of the social conditions sought by the

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[12] Several encounters, debates and working meetings have taken place with European parliamentarians, for the most part members of the European Unified Left, one of them taking the initiative of launching a petition in favour of 'full employment', signed by several hundred parliamentarians, trade unionists, politicians and other personalities.
[13] The 'co-operation' could be fraught to the extent of leading, over the two months of preparation for the Amsterdam demonstration, to the exclusion of certain people whose behaviour was deemed incompatible with the group co-existence.

unemployed is followed, on each occasion, by a very clear and rapid drop in mobilisation - but maintain, albeit temporarily, a complementary relationship. Bert Klandermans has shown that in all protest movements actors pursue differentiated objectives and interests over longer or shorter periods of time. He distinguishes between two, not necessarily congruent, dimensions in particular: "consensus mobilisation (the deliberate attempt by an actor to create consensus among sectors of the population)... from consensus formation (the convergence of meaning within social networks)" (Klandermans, 1988: 191). Here, the Marches juxtapose two orientations that - de facto - are united within a single movement, but from within quite clearly demarcated perspectives: those that hope for the emergence of a European social movement seek to enlarge alliances and/or the mobilisation in order, on the long-term, to influence the general political configuration. They are obviously in need of the participation of a greater number of the unemployed; those more concerned with the achievement of immediate material demands have a better chance of doing so at the national level by benefiting from the significance and visibility of a European level action. The fact that there is no agreement within the movement as to its ends does not mean that all the Marchers do not work towards the same visibility and, beyond this, the securing of public opinion support. In this case, 'consensus mobilisation' does not necessarily imply 'consensus formation'. The conjunction of these two orientations and the configuration that they yield are at the basis of the originality – and perhaps the unique character – of the European Marches as a specific form of the Europeanisation of collective action. In an attempt to elaborate a typology, Doug Imig and Sydney Tarrow (forthcoming) define three cases in point, the last being by far the most frequent:

- 'co-ordinated internal protest': protests target the national level but organise simultaneously in different countries;
- 'transnational conflict': transnational actor coalitions target the EU or some other supranational or transnational actor in reaction to measures taken at the Community level;
- 'internal protest': national actors protest within a country against measures taken at the Community level.

The Marches lead us to the consideration of a fourth possibility, that of a transnational coalition, demonstrating at the EU level, against the economic and social orientations decided upon there ('transnational conflict') to be sure, but also, and above all, in opposition to the policies of national governments.

- 'the externalisation of protest': transnational actor coalitions target the EU in opposition to the policies of national governments. More or less excluded from all forms of traditional representation at the national level, the unemployed and those denied job security are completely reliant on Welfare State systems. While they demonstrate massively during the European summits, many amongst them expect nothing – on the short term – from the European institutions on which their futures do not directly depend. They protest in order to make themselves visible in the European public space, and thus, to pressurise national governments (it is, moreover, not by chance that it is the Council that is targeted), the sole sure guarantors of their social protection. It is in such a sense that these two orientations – the first, on the long term, aimed towards the building of a European social movement, the other, on the short term, seeking national improvements – prove compatible.

Conclusion

In all respects, the European Marches appear to be both innovative and paradoxical. They testify to the capacity for mobilisation of a social group who, until recently, was characterised by its withdrawal and as not belonging to the dynamics of collective action. Reduced, but not non-existent, political opportunities were generally seized by a small number of leaders/activists for linking and orienting the grievances of the unemployed towards a political movement seeking visibility at the EU level. This largely falls outside classical frameworks of analysis with regards at least three points: 1) They borrow from a traditional action form – 'the March' – while at the same time using modern modes of internal communication (Internet); 2) They articulate claims and values that relate both to a radical, extreme left-wing critique and to contemporary cultural liberalism; 3) They include differentiated strategic-temporal interests and orientations, often in tension, but whose association

is constitutive of a new means of the Europeanisation of action: 'the externalisation of protest'.

The effects of the movement are very difficult to discern, on the one hand because they tend to develop over the long-term and, on the other, because they put on the agenda – and base themselves upon – processes that are not always strictly able to be evaluated. In terms of its demands, the movement's results are minimal. In several countries, the systems of assistance and social protection for the unemployed and those denied job security have been somewhat revised. One may obviously consider that the European Marches, by raising the political seriousness of the problem and by activating national mobilisation networks, more or less directly contributed to bringing about this improvement. Other aspects must be underlined. Therefore, over a few years, a previously non-existent mobilisation experience has been constituted at the European level. This is a considerable development. At the present time, meetings, seminars and discussion days between individuals and/or organisations, within each country but, above all, between different ones, are held regularly, maintaining this achievement. More generally, the Marches appear at a time marked by the appearance of conflicts (Renalult-Vilvorde, the railway workers and lorry drivers' movements etc.) that prioritise the necessity of reinforcing the European social mechanism. Their emergence is a factor, among many others, contributing to the orientation of the process of European integration. While their progress is slow, fragmented and notoriously insufficient, the general socio-political context has nonetheless meant that a separate social chapter shall henceforth be included in the Treaty of Amsterdam.

The Marches also influence the reconstruction of the power relations existing between trade union representation and the defence of the interests of the unemployed. It is – unsurprisingly – in France and Germany that this appears to be most significant. In France, certain trade union organisations that actively supported the Marches, particularly the SUD, have undoubtedly been reinforced, their leaders sometimes becoming privileged participants in the public debate. On the contrary, an association such as AC!, very involved in the movement, at the outset under the dominant influence of trade unionists seeking to unify the fight against unemployment and job insecurity within a global social movement, is today more oriented towards more selective action, prioritising the unemployed and those denied job security. In Germany, for the first time, a national day of protest by associations of the unemployed took place on the 5th of February 1998, bringing together almost 40,000 people in tens of towns. In the country, protests by the unemployed are increasing. The Bielefeld co-ordination, that brings together a hundred unionised associations of the unemployed, is becoming more and more critical of the DGB, on which it is dependent but which does not adequately defend its interests. In Spain, several changes are noticeable. The anarchist CGT, with quite a high presence at the Marches, recently made the fight against unemployment and exclusion one of its main objectives, thus gaining influence to the detriment of the CC.OO and the UGT, which a group of insecure workers reproach for supporting the governmental policy of economic growth (Smith, 1998).

Finally, associations of the unemployed see their role becoming reinforced and are recognised as 'social agents'. In France, they gained the right to be represented and to negotiate within the ANPE. More generally, their role within different bodies for the management of unemployment has been extended. On the other hand, any more political autonomous representation of the unemployed has always been very clear refused. For Prime Minister Lionel Jospin, "trade union organisations constitute the natural, direct and constant interlocutors of the public authorities. Their specific role in terms of negotiation, as inscribed in the employment code, is a key element of social relations. Trade unions must represent all workers, including those without employment".

The question of the durability of the Marches remains open. The movement's fragility is obvious. There are constantly three main problems to be overcome: a relative institutional weakness, which means that the Marches' organisation requires an enormous investment from a small number of people; the specificity of the social group under consideration, with little inclination towards collective mobilisation; the significant dependence on the media whose degree of attention generally determines the viability of the action. Signs of fatigue may be noticed. The Cologne Marches were thus marked by a reduction in the number of the unemployed mobilised, a shortened trajectory (some ten days), a dilution of the demands concerning

unemployment and job insecurity due to significant sensitivity to the political circumstances – the increasing protests against the Kosovo war – and by a clearly reduced press coverage, undoubtedly because the novel character of the protest was – already! – no longer a factor (Lagneau and Lefébure, 1999).

The future of the movement will in part depend on its capacity to evolve, in terms of its format – in order to continue to obtain the greatest visibility possible – and in the formulation of more unifying demands, agreed upon by a large part of the workforce, for example, around the question of the 'European minimum wage'. Proposals in this direction are today being debated in certain organisations participating in the planning of the Marches. The perspective of the return to full employment, today most seriously envisaged – in all cases by the heads of State and governments who met on the 23rd and 24th of March, 2000 at the Lisbon summit – although it was almost completely illusory at the time of the Amsterdam summit, may also have important repercussions for the movement. If this was to become confirmed, two very different scenarios could eventually be foreseen. On the one hand, the weakening, or even the fading away, of the movement, taking account of the progressive curbing of unemployment and thus, apparently, of the seriousness of the problem for public opinion. On the other hand, a shifting and enlargement of the mobilisation to take in all those – increasing in numbers – who are at risk of economic and social precariousness.

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Liste des sigles

AC ! : Agir ensemble contre le Chômage
ALVD : Arbeits-lösenverband deutschland
ANPE : Agence Nationale Pour l'Emploi
ASSEDIC : ASSociation pour l'Emploi Dans l'Industrie et le Commerce
ATTAC : Association pour la Taxation des Transactions financières pour l'Aide aux Citoyens
CC.OO : Comisiones Obreras
CES : Confédération Européenne des Syndicats
CGIL : Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro
CGT : Confédération Générale du Travail
CIG : Conférence InterGouvernementale
DAL : Droit Au Logement
DGB : DeutscherGewerkschaftsBund
ENU : European Network of the Unemployed
LCR : Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire
LO : Lutte Ouvrière
MNCP : Mouvement National des Chômeurs et de Précaires
OMC : Organisation Mondiale du Commerce
ONG : Organisation Non Gouvernementale
SUD : Solidaires, Unitaires et Démocratiques
SUD-PTT : Solidaires, Unitaires et Démocratiques - Poste, Télégraphe et Télécommunication
TUC : Trade Union Congress
UE : Union Européenne
UGT : Unión General de Trabajadores