

The Europeanization of Labor: Structure Before Action

Lowell Turner
School of Industrial and Labor Relations
Cornell University
Ithaca, NY 14853-3901
(607) 255-2279

lrt4@cornell.edu

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Vignette: Popular Passion in Rostock

April 2, 1993.¹ From a makeshift stage blocking the street in front of the shipyards in the northern port city of Rostock, union leaders harangued a crowd of 5,000. These were "warning strikers," courageous men and women who, in circumstances of mass unemployment (40 percent or more in real terms), had walked off the job that day and marched in columns of protest from workplaces throughout the city. In an unexpected show of solidarity, and for most of them the first time they could do something like this without facing the threat of Red Army intervention, they protested the unilateral decision of metal industry employers to rescind a scheduled pay raise. News reports later in the day would show this to be one wave in a swelling tide of over 100,000 eastern German warning strikers, who within a month would stage a determined, high-risk, and ultimately successful two-week-long strike effort in the pattern-setting metal and electronics industries of the new German states. The organization of labor had passed in a few short years in eastern Germany from "transmission-belt" communist-led unions, to a tentative but enthusiastic mass membership in the new incoming western unions, to a remarkable and well organized mass movement that dominated German headlines over a two-month period.

After IG Metall leaders finished militant speeches to roars of approval, a DGB (German labor federation) spokesman rose to recount tales of international labor activity. On that very day, he reported, Italian unions were out on a one-day general strike to protest government policy in Italy, thousands of workers were on strike in the United Kingdom, and additional thousands called out in Maastricht by the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) rallied for jobs and other labor-supported demands within the single European market. Although the litany of simultaneous European labor demonstrations was impressive, few of the Rostock warning strikers showed interest. Italy, Britain, the Netherlands seemed distant from the day's exciting and immediate concerns. The crowd waited politely for the DGB speaker to bring the focus back home.

As a spectator/participant, I found it remarkable to hear European labor solidarity highlighted as a prominent theme at a union-led rally in eastern Germany. Crowd behavior, however, demonstrated two juxtaposed realities for labor in contemporary Europe. On the one hand, in the face of widespread gloomy predictions of its demise, labor is alive and well, still strong in its potential expression as a movement -- certainly in unified Germany where bargaining structures are comprehensive and effective. On the other hand, however, at a time of economic globalization when cross-national labor linkages appear both appropriate and necessary, there is little popular interest in such international solidarity. This is true even in Europe of the 1990s, where cross-national union collaboration has progressed farther than it has anywhere else.

It is commonplace to assert that social movements give rise to new structures of representation, which may consolidate some of the gains made and then live on after the movements subside. In the worst case, such structures may finally become lifeless, distant from the rank and file, unrepresentative, overly bureaucratic, and even repressive themselves. There is, however, an alternative possibility: that new structures may offer channels within which movements of popular protest can take shape, to grow,

expand, and make concrete gains. This is precisely what happened in Rostock (and throughout eastern Germany in the years after 1989); it is perhaps not beyond the realm of possibility that a similar phenomenon could happen cross-nationally in Europe in the years ahead.

The Europeanization of Labor: Institutions Precede Mass Action

The lines of causality for institutions of representation in modern democracies generally run from popular protest to structure. Aggrieved social groups such as auto workers in Flint, Michigan in 1937, or black sanitation workers in Memphis, Tennessee in 1968, rise up in semi-spontaneous mass protest that galvanizes community- and workplace-based struggle. Commonly, such protests occur as part of broader "cycles of protest" (Tarrow 1990): for the above examples, the mass upsurge of unorganized industrial workers in the 1930s and the civil rights movement of the 1960s. If successful (that is, if not fully repressed), such movements may result in the establishment of new rights for the aggrieved along with mechanisms and institutions to promote and sustain those rights. Thus in the above examples, both the Flint workers and Memphis drivers secured union recognition and collective bargaining rights, ensuring rising wages and stabilizing a system of representation that made future mass protest less likely.

Organized labor and its structures of representation, therefore, in democratic societies at least, provide clear examples of a widespread causal process: social movements give rise to organization and institutionalization. In general, these processes occur at national and sub-national levels. In the international arena, however, cross-national collaboration (among labor, peace or environmental groups, for example), rather than movement-driven, develops through networking and further institution-building on the part of representatives of already established organizations (which themselves were the earlier products of social movements). In these cases, new structures of representation may develop either prior to or in the absence of social movements. It is difficult to imagine, however, that in the long run such structures could be effective -- in other words, that the actors could acquire real power -- in the absence of mass protest. Two scenarios thus appear possible: that such cross-national collaboration will amount to little in its ability to influence the policy of either national or supranational agencies; or that such cross-national collaboration will acquire meaningful influence if and when it is bolstered by mass protest.

This is the dilemma facing current efforts on the part of numerous actors to "Europeanize" labor. The building of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), the EU's Social Charter and the social protocol of the Maastricht Treaty (based on negotiation between ETUC and its employer counterpart UNICE), recent legislation to require Euro-works councils (EWCs) at large multinational firms -- all of these impressive efforts reflect the building of new cross-national structures of representation by established representatives of national and supranational labor organizations, in the absence of mass popular demands or protest.²

The preceding discussion is based on the notion that there are two overlapping but conceptually distinct aspects of a labor movement: mass protest (or at least its credible threat, as in a strike threat) and structures of representation. Historically, both appear necessary to the consolidation and maintenance of labor movement influence in politics as in the economy. The Europeanization of labor, however, is characterized by only one of these: institution-building, so far largely in the absence of mass protest.

Conceptually, I argue that in spite of widespread skepticism on the part of observers and participants alike, there is in fact a European labor movement, more so today than there has ever been. Evidence is presented below to substantiate this claim. This developing labor movement, however, is based on networks of contacts and new structures of international representation; it is not based on or empowered by mass protest. Analytically, I argue that these developing networks and structures, that together define the European labor movement today, are a product of politics and strategy -- on the part of both national and supranational actors (national union leaders, officials of the European Commission, institution-builders at the ETUC) -- in a context of growing economic integration in Europe. The implications of this argument are the following: unless the new structures can open space for cross-national collective action or mass protest, the European labor movement is likely to remain a

rather formal construct, stunted by its distance from mass action, limited in its power and influence within the European Union; and this is true even where European labor is most influential: in the social dimension of new international regulation.

The Evidence: Building Labor's European Superstructure

Beyond defending national rules and institutions at home, perhaps the best thing that unions can do in response to growing economic integration is to build a cross-national labor movement (see, for example, Platzer 1991; Altvater and Mahnkopf 1993). Although progress has been slow, labor in Europe is farther along in this effort than are unions in any other region of the globe. The biggest obstacle to the Europeanization of labor is closely related to the imperative to defend national bases: the contrasting interests and structures found among widely diverse national unions. Efforts at building a European labor movement are nonetheless real and can be seen in both formal structures, such as the ETUC, sectoral European Industry Committees (EICs), and the Euro-works councils (EWCs), and in growing informal networks of cross-national information exchange and collaboration. Below we consider evidence concerning the development of the two most prominent of these efforts: the ETUC, based in Brussels, and the recent drive to establish EWCs at large European multinational firms.³

The European Trade Union Confederation

The ETUC is an inclusive confederation of western European labor federations, from countries within and without the EU. Founded in 1973 and based in Brussels, the ETUC has a long history of lobbying at European Community offices for a variety of social issues: from gender equality, plant closing protections for workers, and health and safety in the workplace in the 1970s, to the broader provisions of the Social Charter and action program in the late 1980s and 1990s, to a more recent focus on jobs and macroeconomic policy.⁴ A growing organization with a staff of about 45, ETUC anticipates future revenue increases and growing influence in Brussels, and has recently moved into a new headquarters building shared with the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU).

With only one remaining exception, all major labor federations in western Europe are now members of the ETUC. With the Spanish and Portuguese communist union federations finally in (reflecting among other things the end of the Cold War), the French communist Confederation Général du Travail (CGT, still the largest labor federation in France) is now the last remaining holdout (or excluded federation, depending on the interpretation). Although the CGT campaigned to good electoral effect against "Europe" in the September 1992 Maastricht referendum in France, many well-placed observers are predicting CGT membership in ETUC soon, for two reasons: first, with the Cold War over and all other prominent communist (and former communist) labor federations in western Europe now in the ETUC, it is only a matter of time before CGT leadership softens its line and CGT's opponents in the ETUC (principally its French rivals CFDT and FO) give up their opposition; and second, the Maastricht social protocol will accelerate the pace of ETUC-UNICE/CEEP (social partner) negotiations, giving the CGT added incentive to be on the inside where it can influence bargaining demands.

In any case, membership is one thing but active participation and organizational commitment are another. ETUC faces a number of intransigent organizational problems. By its very nature, it is limited in what it can do as a confederation of federations. Many of its prominent members, including the German DGB and the British TUC, are umbrella organizations at home that do not in themselves possess bargaining power. The ETUC is thus a long way from many of the real sources of industrial relations clout on the workforce side within the EU.

Beyond the structural limitation, ETUC suffers from a widely diverse membership, not only in national origin but in structure (ETUC includes centralized and decentralized federations; federations that are inclusive at the national level and those that contend with other federations for workforce membership; federations whose member unions engage in autonomous collective bargaining and those

used to a strong state presence) and interest (such as federations from both low-wage and high-wage countries). Diversity of interests has led Timmersfeld (1992) to predict, from a study of member positions and coalitions on key issues, an insurmountable collective action problem for the ETUC, while Lange (1992) predicts a "fragmentation of interests" in social dimension debates, instead of a stable, class-based coalition around which ETUC could coalesce as an organization.

National unions and federations, however, have surprised observers in the past in their ability, at certain times and places, to overcome great internal diversity to build cohesive organizations (by various means ranging from side payments to exceptional leadership to dramatic, defining actions such as strikes or participation in new political alliances). Diversity of structure and interest are obstacles that may well be surmountable if and when the commitment of actors to cross-national collaboration, based on other common interests, becomes substantial.

A number of national federations are frequently cited as the most committed at the European level; often mentioned, for example, are the Dutch, Belgians, Italians, and lately the British. But even for these federations, the European commitment is typically expressed by the engagement of a few key activists (David Lea, assistant general secretary of the TUC, is a good example). Even in these best cases, it is questionable how much real commitment to European unionism exists among the broader ranks of national union leadership, let alone among the rank and file. Unless leaders and members can see tangible benefits, there is not a great deal of incentive to focus beyond the plant, firm, or at most sectoral or national levels. This does not mean that key Europe-oriented national union leaders could not possibly bring along the troops at some future critical moment; but it does mean that even the commitment of the most committed to the ETUC rests on shaky national foundations until demonstrated otherwise.

If even the committed are not as committed as they appear, minimal German union engagement has been glaring and quite problematic for the future vitality and influence of the ETUC. On paper, things look fine. The DGB, by virtue of its size and relative wealth, is the largest financial contributor to the ETUC (about DM 1 million per year). German unions are active in the sectoral EICs, which as a result of organizational reform in 1991 now also have seats on the ETUC executive board. Because of its size, wealth, and relative success at home, the DGB arguably speaks with the most influential voice within the councils of the ETUC (Markovits and Otto 1991). Participants claim, in fact, that DGB is the only member with de facto veto rights in ETUC decision making on issues of importance (although this is officially denied).

In spite of appearances, however, many participants (inside and outside the ETUC, including German union Europeanists) claim that as regards active participation, energy and commitment, German unions have been the critical missing player. Some maintain that German unions have never been very active beyond the above appearances, tacit veto power, and financial support. An often cited illustration of weak commitment is the fact that Franz Steinkühler, former president of the IG Metall, had a seat on the ETUC executive board for many years as a member of the DGB delegation but never once attended a meeting.⁵ Others claim that German union presence effectively vanished when the life-threatening problems of unification began in 1990. In either case, it is clear that an ETUC team without the enthusiastic participation of its most heavy hitters is not likely to contend for great influence within the European Union.

And it is important to reiterate here the importance of the Franco-German alliance at the core of the EU. French CFDT-linked activists are scattered throughout the Commission (led for many years by former Commission President and long-time CFDT ally Jacques Delors) and have maintained close ties to their compatriots at the ETUC, where the CFDT also plays an active role. But again, the largest French labor federation, the CGT, remains outside the fold, completely absent at the ETUC level.⁶

As if organizational problems of membership diversity and commitment were not enough, ETUC faces a very practical external problem in its attempt to negotiate even the most modest non-wage framework agreements on specific, limited issues at the European level: its primary bargaining partner, UNICE, has neither the interest nor the mandate to bargain. UNICE is a confederation of employer associations from across western Europe whose primary social dimension concern in Brussels is to prevent the passage of any binding legislation that will restrict employer discretion. UNICE will bargain with ETUC to produce non-binding joint opinions or to delay or water down any possible Commission directives; but UNICE has little interest in negotiating substantive outcomes with ETUC, nor does UNICE possess any mandate from its diverse membership to engage in collective bargaining. In the substantive meaning of the term, ETUC is a prospective social partner without a suitor.⁷

Given the above organizational and political problems, it is remarkable that ETUC has played any role at all. External support has been crucial. Martin and Ross (1992) are surely right in their central argument: that supranational institutions of the EU, in particular the Commission, have played a critical, independent role in opening up space and facilitating the development of cross-national union collaboration. This is especially true for ETUC, which has developed a range of activities and influence that would be considerably diminished without the political and financial support of the European Commission. The Commission finances the European Trade Union Institute (in practice ETUC's research arm) and the promising new Trade Union College along with a plethora of meetings and activities that ETUC undertakes as a designated social partner. Meetings with UNICE, for example, are facilitated and subsidized by the Commission, and ETUC in turn has facilitated the distribution of Commission funding for pilot meetings of prospective Euro-works councils. Cross-national meetings typically involve heavy travel and translating costs which are often paid for with EU funds. Most important, perhaps, the Commission has designated ETUC as the representative social partner for European employees, affording the ETUC stature in Brussels and drawing it into countless discussions, negotiations and "dialogue" concerning social dimension initiatives.⁸

For a confederation of federations with so many demonstrable weaknesses, ETUC has had impact at the EU-level worth noticing. ETUC has led the campaign for the Social Charter (1988-89) and its subsequent partial implementation in the action program (1990-93), the social protocol of the Maastricht Treaty (1991), and the continuing passage of binding social directives such as the recently adopted legislation on information committees (Euro-works councils) at multinational firms (1994). Only time will tell the extent to which ETUC will play a significant role in the building of a truly European labor movement. The mere existence of these channels of communication and organization, however, along with the ETUC's entrenched position within the councils of the EU in Brussels, provide a useful institutional framework for early efforts at cross-national union collaboration (Ross 1994).

Euro-Works Councils

Along with post-Social Charter debates on employee participation legislation and the recent wave of newly established EWCs has come a new literature on the meaning and importance of this issue (cf. Northrup et al. 1988; Martin and Ross 1992; Streeck and Vitols 1993; Turner 1993). The Social Charter calls for employee rights to "information, consultation and participation." But the issue goes back to the 1970s, when workers and unions found national rights (where they existed) to information and consultation increasingly undermined as business went international. Early attempts to legislate such rights for all employees of large firms in the EC culminated in an intense battle over the Vredeling Directive in the early 1980s. Although labor lost this battle against the combined opposition of European and American business and Prime Minister Thatcher's veto power, the issue reappeared in the Charter as a key element of the social dimension.

Once again, British veto readiness combined with united employer opposition prevented adoption of the Charter action program's implementing legislation. Although employers face very different national rules on this issue in different countries (ranging from detailed codetermination rights for elected works councils in Germany to no legislated or broadly bargained rights at all in the U.K.), they nonetheless united in opposing EC-level legislation. While German employers, for example, may like their system at home for its contribution to workforce stability, training, high productivity, and cooperation, they want the right to do business as they see fit in other countries. While UNICE endorses principles of information-sharing and employee participation (as stated in the Charter), it consistently opposed binding legislation that would make implementation mandatory. Business on the whole favors employer-led participation (quality circles, employer-dominated information-sharing and the like, especially at the plant level) as opposed to negotiated participation (based on employee rights, up to and including participation at the strategic level; Turner 1993).

This is an issue on which ETUC developed a rather united position and lobbied intensely at the European Commission. Officials at DG V sympathized, and with input from supporters at the Economic and Social Council (a tripartite advisory body) and the European Parliament developed various versions of a directive calling for information committees at large multinational firms.

Although progress was stalled until 1994 by opposition from UNICE and the British government, the Maastricht social protocol finally allowed the long-term ETUC/DG V campaign to succeed. After final Maastricht ratification in late 1993, the Commission (pushed by Parliament, ETUC, Delors, and supportive member states) proposed a new directive on information and consultation rights. With qualified majority voting for this issue under the social protocol, prospects for adoption brightened.⁹ Under the new protocol, UNICE and ETUC could use their "social partner" rights to negotiate the terms of an EWC agreement, and were allowed nine months to do so. When negotiations reached impasse in 1994, the Council adopted the legislation by majority vote.

Although lacking veto rights in management decision making (as German works councils possess), information and perhaps even consultation committees will now become standard practice at large European firms (to be phased in through company-level negotiations over the next few years). Wolfgang Streeck's much feared "supranational neo-voluntarism" (Streeck 1992) has given way surprisingly quickly to mandatory supranational institution-building.

In the meantime, ETUC, EICs, and national unions, with the support of DG V, have made a major effort since 1991 to establish forerunner EWCs at up to 100 large European firms. The Commission, for example, provided 14 million ecus for 1992 and 17 million for 1993 to finance the first rounds of meetings.¹⁰ By the end of 1993, there were at least seven recognized EWCs in the metal sector alone, and twenty or more all together (Streeck and Vitols 1993). Since then, and especially in recent months in response to the new legislation, the numbers have grown steadily.

Although a special case that is not yet generalizable, the EWC at Volkswagen, for example, is widely regarded in labor circles as worthy of emulation. The original initiative for the establishment of a Euro-works council at VW came from the company's general works council in Wolfsburg, Germany. This body is made up of representatives from six VW plants in Germany; all members of the general works council belong to the IG Metall. The German Works Constitution Act provides not only for works councils at all workplaces of five or more employees, but for general works councils at firms with more than one plant. In addition, the law provides for "conglomerate" works councils (Konzernbetriebsräte) for firms that include more than one independent subsidiary. The VW Euro-works council was established under this latter provision at a meeting in August of 1990, by works council representatives of VW and Audi in Germany, SEAT in Spain, and VW in Belgium. The council consisted of eight representatives from VW in Germany, two representatives from Audi, five representatives from SEAT, and two representatives from VW in Belgium.¹¹ The council also planned to bring in representatives from VW-owned plants in Saxony, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia.

The general works council promoted this EWC for a number of reasons: a desire to exert greater influence in VW's growing internationalization of production within Europe; concerns about social dumping, meaning the danger of increased VW investment in lower wage and labor standard countries at the expense of investment in Germany; a desire to work with Spanish and Czechoslovak colleagues to help raise wages and labor standards in those countries; and disappointment with progress at the EC on legislating works councils for European firms. The conscious intent of activists on the new VW Euro-works council was not only to receive information and begin to negotiate jointly with VW management across Europe, but to use German law to set an example for the spread of Euro-works councils at other firms.

VW management has taken a "friendly" attitude toward the new EWC and was present at the founding meeting; and in February of 1992, the company formally recognized the council and its right to meet at company expense, receive information, and discuss issues of strategic importance with management (consultation rights). Leaders of the council expected such recognition and contractual legitimation from the start, if only because VW management places a high premium on cooperative relations with its already established works councils, especially in Germany, and because VW is in part a publicly owned firm that responds to pressure from the SPD-controlled state government of Lower Saxony (where the firm is headquartered).

Even prior to formal recognition, works councillors claimed already to have accomplished important things. First, they set up a viable cross-national labor body that met regularly and laid the groundwork for an official role at Europe's largest auto firm. Second, they exchanged information among union and works council representatives from several countries and set in motion a regularized exchange process to inform national and plant bargaining (Fuchs, Uhl, and Widuckel-Mathias 1991). Third, cross-national information exchange paid early dividends in bargaining outcomes: discussions at

the EWC of a shorter work week in Spain were followed by concrete bargaining gains in this regard at SEAT.¹² And finally, the council quickly achieved recognition, especially in labor circles, as an attractive model for the spread of EWCs at European multinational firms.

The EWC at VW is clearly a special case, based as it is on German law, a powerful German works council and union, partial public ownership of the firm, and a tradition of labor-management partnership at VW. Yet this case is important in setting a standard of what is possible, stimulating strategies by others to strive for similar gains. For the present, similarly strong cases (exceeding the mandate of recent EU legislation on EWCs) appear possible only where national law in the firm's home country supports such employee rights (as in Germany), and where an already existing and strong works council, with union backing, mobilizes for this kind of institution building. Even in Germany, however, more typical in the early 1990s were the cases of GM-Europe (including Opel) and DEC.¹³

In the GM-Europe case, plant representatives from across Europe met in 1992, with Commission funding, to organize an EWC. Although GM-Europe moved its headquarters from Germany to Switzerland in the 1980s, Opel remains the dominant member of this family and operates under German law with strong IG Metall-organized works councils and a supervisory board with significant workforce representation. IG Metall works councillors from the flagship Rüsselsheim plant played a leading role in setting up the meeting, intending to follow the VW model. Louis Hughes, however, the participatory-minded president of GM-Europe (and former president of Opel), attended the meeting, listened to the discussion and arguments in favor of an EWC, and then simply announced that GM-Europe would not recognize the body, provide information, or pay future costs. Participation, he maintained, is fine on the shopfloor and in the plants, but not in an added and expensive bureaucratic Euro-level far from the rank and file.

In 1994, Opel and other GM-Europe workforce representatives followed VW's lead to establish a conglomerate works council (see above) and demand new negotiations for establishment of an EWC at GM-Europe.¹⁴ With the passage of the new EU directive on information committees, the founding of such a cross-national body was now only a matter of time.

Management's response at Digital Equipment Corporation was similar to the response at GM-Europe. DEC plant and union representatives from ten countries met twice, in 1991 and 1992, with EC funding. Although the company refused to recognize this would-be EWC, the workforce representatives themselves decided to establish a permanent body for the purpose of information exchange. At their second meeting in 1992, they elected a Euro-works council and set up a number of working groups (in such areas as layoff rules, health and safety protection in computer work, firm strategy such as outsourcing, and pension funds). Although costs were a problem, these were manageable given the nature of the DEC representatives: they tended to be professional and technical, speak English (reducing the need for translation), and could exchange information rapidly through electronic networks. By 1993, they claimed to have an effective network that had already enhanced bargaining capacities for particular cases in Germany and Belgium.

EWC enthusiasts at DEC, in fact, viewed their unrecognized body as accomplishing the main positive function foreseen for EWCs at European firms: the exchange of information and the building of a cross-national network of plant activists. They argued that this outcome was in fact better than some officially recognized EWCs for which management paid the costs but also dominated the meetings, allowing little time for plant and union representatives to meet without management present. At Moulinex, for example, a French company that bought the German firm Krupps, EWC meetings followed the French works committee model, resulting in the development of less cross-national exchange and networking than in the "unofficial" DEC case.

Streeck and Vitols (1993) were probably right that EWCs had only been established where a national government promoted this (as at French firms such as Bull and Thomson) or where a strong national union with participation rights in national legislation took the initiative (as at VW). They also assumed, however, that such bodies were not forerunners of legislated EWCs throughout the EU but rather the end of a neo-voluntarist line, in which market forces burst free of national regulation. This does not appear at all as a foregone conclusion, especially now that Euro-legislation requiring at least cross-national information committees (at firms with 1,000 or more employees with plants of at least 150 employees in two or more member states) has been officially adopted. Certainly the activists involved in building both officially recognized and unofficial EWC networks have seen themselves as early participants in something bigger than supranational neo-voluntarism -- and as it turned out they

were right (Goetschy 1994). Whether these new bodies of cross-national representation prove significant (as opposed to serving merely as window dressing for a very limited social dimension) depends on quite unpredictable developments, including implementation of the new EU legislation, future social partner negotiations in Brussels, and the effects of network spreading and nascent informally coordinated cross-national collective bargaining.

Prospects for Expanding Cross-National Collaboration

There is, therefore, now solidly in place a "superstructure" for European cross-national collaboration. The institutional framework and the networks of exchange are densest in western Europe, within the European Union. In addition, however, western unions, including the umbrella ETUC, have been active in eastern and central Europe since 1989, promoting the development of independent trade unionism and laying the groundwork for new future memberships as the European market expands eastward (Seideneck 1993).

Prospects appear bright for the continuing expansion of such institutional arrangements and regularized contacts, both among union officials (e.g., within ETUC) and among elected workforce representatives (e.g., within firm-level EWCs). As the European market continues to develop internally, there is more and more incentive for unions and other workforce representatives to collaborate (from information exchange to the coordination of bargaining demands and the mobilization of pressure on firms and governments). Although barriers of diversity among national unions in structure, interest and ideology remain important, other prominent barriers to greater cooperation appear likely to fall away, in particular the problematic Franco-German union commitment cited above. The French CGT, long excluded on ideological grounds, now appears set to move toward full membership in the ETUC. And the powerful German unions, having achieved three consecutive favorable settlements in the face of a renewed employer offensive at home (in the pattern-setting metal industry in eastern Germany in 1993 and in western Germany in 1994 and 1995), look to have stabilized their domestic position in unified Germany and appear ready to engage more actively in the European arena.

If a European labor movement requires both structure and collective action, the former at least appears to be developing steadily. Institutions -- such as the EWCs and the ETUC considered above -- are growing in influence, comprehensiveness, and legitimacy. Most importantly, perhaps, these structures encourage a thickening web of cross-national union contacts, at firm, sectoral, and macro levels. Such contacts offer at least the possibility of growing labor networks that could underpin future cross-national labor collaboration, ranging from information exchange to mass action.

What is missing in the presentation of evidence here is precisely the latter: cases of cross-national mass protest on the part of labor. For the most part, these simply do not yet exist. The emphasis in this paper has been on structures of representation because that is where the action lies so far in the Europeanization of labor.

Conclusion: From Structure to Action?

Sidney Tarrow suggests that the most likely form of Europeanization for social movements may lie in national protest against European-level (EU) policy and its consequences (Tarrow 1995). This is a sensible perspective: one can more easily imagine nationally-based labor protests against specific EU policies (German labor protest, for example, against EU policy that allows a Spanish or Portuguese construction firm operating in Germany to pay sub-German wage levels to its imported Spanish or Portuguese workers) than one can imagine European-wide labor protest against a common target (be it a corporation, business association, or EU policy).

For this reason, actor strategy, along with the political interaction and negotiation between different actors, appears to offer the most persuasive explanation for developing structures of cross-national collaboration. To a significant degree, actors engaged in the building of such bodies as the ETUC and EWCs are working against the prevailing tide. Market developments, the effects of

increasing economic integration within Europe, push both ways: toward collaboration, to meet multinational firms and supranational agencies on the new international terrain, but also toward the sort of national protest Tarrow highlights against the increasingly strong (and for the losers potentially devastating) effects of the internationalization of markets. As for "spillover," there does not appear to be any necessary logic at work within the expansion of EU responsibility that pushes toward cross-national labor collaboration; again, the opposite effect appears just as likely, especially given great diversity in structure, interest and ideology among national labor movements. Indeed, well-informed observers have long argued that the ETUC would accomplish little (Timmersfeld 1992) and the EWC would amount to no more than "neo-voluntarism" (Streeck and Vitols 1993). To the extent that such predictions have already been confounded, this reflects the uncertain outcomes of politics and the capacity of determined actors to collaborate, overcoming both institutional barriers and the deregulatory effects of market integration.

While Tarrow's scenario implies the rise of mass protest in part against structures of cross-national collaboration, an alternative scenario also exists for European labor. The new structures examined in this paper have been fought for and painstakingly developed on the part of actors both nationally and supranationally positioned. Is it possible that if such structures continue to develop, they could in time open up space (creating a "political opportunity structure") for mass protests to move into channels of collaboration among European-minded activists and movements? Next to the proletarian internationalism predicted by Marx, such cross-national labor protest and collaboration -- aimed only at the regulation of an increasingly competitive and international capitalist market economy -- may seem quite tame. From this perspective, the ETUC and EWCs are mild indeed. Reinforced in time by mass protest, however, such nascent structures may well bolster the contemporary social-democratic mission in the post-Cold War world: to bring a measure of justice and regulation to the no longer fundamentally challenged market economy.

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