Chapter 7
The Parties and the Direct Elections

Supra-National Groupings
In the European Parliament members sit in six supra-national political groups, rather than in national delegations. These groups, together with the independents, were made up as follows in the nominated parliament of 1978: Christian Democrats — 53 members; Communists and Allies — 18; Conservatives — 18; Liberals and Democrats — 23; Progressive Democrats — 16; Socialists — 66; Independents — 4. (Source: European Elections Briefing, European Parliament.)

Following agreement by the Nine on the holding of direct elections to the European Parliament, several groups have established more formal multinational parties or federations in order to fight the elections on a Community wide basis.

Christian Democrat Group: The European Peoples’ Party; the Federation of Christian Democratic Parties of the European Community
The group dates from 1953 and the European Peoples’ Party was formed in 1976 from the liaison committee set up in 1971 by the group and the European Christian Democratic Union.

Although based on a nineteenth century intellectual tradition, Christian Democracy has come to mean different things in different places and in different languages. The parties from Italy and the Benelux countries are centrist and wary of the right-wing German parties which together with some other Christian Democrats are also members of the European Conservative Union. The French Centre des Démocrates forms part of the new Giscardian Union pour la Démocratie Française, which in-
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cludes liberals and conservatives. The party’s constitution states:

... that the objectives include further European integration and ‘the trans­
formation of Europe into a European union with a view to achieving a
federal union’.

It also laid down that a congress should meet every two years to
which each member party sends delegates in proportion to the
number of seats in the European Parliament. Between congresses
decisions are taken by a political bureau in which each party has
at least two votes, plus extra votes in proportion to its seats in
the European Parliament.

Chairman of the Party: Leo Tindemans (Belgium).
Members are: Belgium — Christian Social Party (PSC-CVP); France —
Centre des Démocrates Sociaux (CDS); Germany — Christian Democratic
Party (CDU), Christian Social Union (CSU); Ireland — United Ireland
Party (Fine Gael); Italy — Christian Democratic Party (DS), South Tyrol
Peoples’ Party (STVP); Luxembourg — Christian Social Party; Netherlands
— Christian Democratic Appeal.

Communists and Their Allies

Communist Party members in the European Parliament, from
France, Italy and the Netherlands, together with their Danish
allies, have worked together as a group since 1973, for adminis­
trative purposes only, and Communist leaders have said that no
supra-national party is to be established. The official line is that
Communist parties have their specific characteristics in each
country; their collaboration cannot be an attempt to achieve
absolute identity of views and it must not lead to the creation
of a ‘European Communist Party’.

Each Communist delegation stands for what it perceives
to be national interests, but generally the Communists work
for major changes in the EEC. They oppose political inte­
gration, greater power to the Commission or the European
Parliament and any weakening of the national sovereignty
of the member countries. Thus the French leader, Georges
Marchais claims that real and solid European cooperation pre­
supposes respect for national independence, and that the
Communists aim ‘to remove European cooperation from the
sole logic of profit and to make it an instrument to serve our
country and its people’.

Chairman: (from 1973) Georgio Amendola (Italy).