

PERSONALISATION OF
LEADERSHIP,
PARTIES AND THE
CITIZENS

Jean Blondel's *Lectio Magistralis* on
the occasion of awarding a
Honorary Degree in Political
Sciences and International Relations

with the *Laudatio* by Maurizio Cotta



Siena, October 9, 2008

The Scholar, the Institution Builder, the Friend of the University of Siena. *Laudatio* for Jean Blondel

Maurizio Cotta

Rector, Deans and Colleagues, Students of the University of Siena, President of the European University Institute, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is for me at the same time a great honour and a deep pleasure to pronounce the *laudatio* of Jean Blondel. The long and warm relationship of cooperation that the University of Siena has established during more than a decade with this prestigious scholar has enabled me to familiarise with the human and scientific qualities of Jean Blondel and to deeply appreciate them.

In this short speech I will touch upon the solid grounds for this proposal, made by the Faculty of Political Sciences, and willingly accepted by both our university and the Italian Minister of University, to confer upon Jean Blondel the honorary degree we are celebrating today.

Blondel as one of the most distinguished contemporary scholars of democratic politics and of some of its crucial mechanisms, Blondel as an indefatigable promoter of political science studies and of the institutions devoted to sustaining their development; Blondel as a generous friend and

collaborator of the university of Siena: these are the three aspects that I will briefly illustrate.

Jean Blondel the eminent scholar of democratic politics. His accomplishments in this field are so well known internationally that if I were speaking only to political scientists I would feel even embarrassed to address this point. It is not a case that recently (in 2004) the University of Uppsala decided to attribute him the prestigious Johann Skytte prize, which deserves to be considered the Nobel prize of political science.

Many years ago in the first years of my academic career, if I may start from a personal recollection, I remember vividly when another great political scientist, Giovanni Sartori, who was at that time my mentor, suggested that I read an article by “the well known scholar Jean Blondel” (to be honest at that point he was not so well known to me). I was then doing a comparative study on parliamentary institutions and that article (*Legislative behaviour. Some steps toward a cross-national measurement*, published in the journal “Government and opposition” of 1969) proved particularly enlightening (I still have in my files a thoroughly worn off copy!). Jean Blondel published many more important things before and after this article written years ago, but I want to mention it here because it clearly illustrates some typical features of his work. It is first of all a comparative work stressing thus the importance of this method for political science. It also signals Blondel’s distinctive preference for empirical analyses and his keen attention for the development of new instruments of empirical observation. Finally it reveals his generosity in involving younger scholars in his research activities. We can rightly say that these three features have constantly characterised the long academic life of our friend.

Whoever reads Blondel’s curriculum vitae and list of publications will be truly astonished by the sheer quantity and even more by the continuity of his research work during more than fifty years. The number of books written entirely by

himself or co-authored and edited with other scholars, the articles published in international journals show with clear evidence that his passion for the study of politics has known no distraction. And I am quite sure, that given Blondel's young and vigorous age of seventy nine, this list of publications which started with a book on the political life of the Brazilian state of

Paraíba will grow even longer in the next years.

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Among the variety of topics covered in his publications it is easy to identify a number of dominating themes. The interest for the central institutions and for the crucial actors of democracy has without doubts been the guiding thread of the

research work conducted by Blondel. After a first comparative book on representative assemblies (*Comparative Legislatures* del 1973) Blondel increasingly directed his attention to the study of executives. Even when political scientists (under the influence perhaps of some sort of latent "populistic" leaning) privileged the study of elections and parliaments (and in general of the bottom up perspective in democracy) he had no doubts about the importance of studying the governmental institutions, their structure, functioning and components for a better understanding of the real working of contemporary democracies. To pursue this line of research, besides his own personal efforts, he has not spared his energy to create and mobilize collective research groups. Over the years a whole series of books have been produced in this way: from *The Organisation of Governments* of 1982 to *Cabinets in Western*

Europe edited together with Ferdinand Müller Rommel, to *Party and Government* of 1996, to *The Nature of Party Government* of 2000, until the recent *Governing New European Democracies* of 2007 edited once more with F. Müller Rommel and Daria Malova. In different ways all these works have attempted to analyze governments from perspectives that are both sound and innovative. Rather than studying the executives, as it is more usual, in their relationship with electoral competition, and concentrating on the processes of government formation and government termination these books have tried to open up the black box of the government itself and to understand its internal mechanisms. In some of these studies he has proposed a particularly innovative approach to the study of party/government relations by suggesting to analyze the less known face of this relationship, i.e. the impact of the executives upon their supporting parties.

Strictly connected with the study of governments is the second field of research dear to Blondel, the study of leaders, and of the role of leadership in democratic politics. Closer to the Schumpeterian and Sartorian interpretations of democracy, than to the tendency to reduce democracy to its horizontal dimension Blondel has never shared the view that leaders and leadership are irrelevant factors in this regime and has repeatedly approached this theme in his research work as can be seen in the books such as *World Leaders* of 1980, *Political Leadership* of 1987 and *The Profession of Government Minister in Western Europe* of 1991.

In recent years this interest for the role of leaders in governmental institutions (and for the institutional conditions favouring or limiting the exercise of leadership) has lead him to study the functioning of presidential systems in Latin America. In doing so he contributed to new threads of research such as the one concerning the relationship between the president and his cabinet.

It is not a coincidence that his doctoral lecture will be devoted to the theme of leadership and its study in political science, as we will soon be able to hear about it.

I will not mention many other topics covered by some of his studies except for his keen interest in the process of European integration, which has led him to contribute to studies on electoral turnout in European elections, but also to participate in the discussion about the concepts and models to be used for interpreting the nature of the new European polity and to actively promote studies on the political systems of the countries which have only recently entered in the EU. Here Blondel is not only guided by a genuine scientific interest but also by his long personal experience as a true “citizens of Europe” well before the Amsterdam Treaty defined this figure. Born and educated in France and still truly “Gallican” in some traits of his personality, Blondel has spent greatest part of his academic career in Britain where he absorbed the Anglo-Saxon style of university life and finally he concluded his official career in Italy. But his intellectual curiosity has left no corner of the European space unexplored and almost everywhere he has stimulated younger scholars from different countries to research and make comparisons.

I come now to the second point: *Jean Blondel as an active promoter of political science* in the academic world. The vital energies of our friend were never confined to the simple sphere of research (although, as we have seen he has never ceased to work indefatigably in this realm). Since the beginning of his career Jean Blondel has interpreted his academic role also as that of an “institution builder”, actively operating for the development of institutions dedicated to the promotion of research in the field of political science. In this role he has been guided by the belief that also in the field of human sciences and in particular of political science strong institutional structures must play a crucial role in providing support to the work of the

individuals and in promoting coordinated efforts for the development of research and advanced training.

Throughout his life Blondel has never abandoned this “mission” which has always walked hand in hand with his devotion to research. He started in the 1960s by setting up the Department of Government at the University of Essex which

soon acquired a national and European position of leadership in the field of political science and which still today maintains in its DNA much of the original imprint given by Blondel. His action

subsequently gained a transnational dimension with his leading role (together with other important figures of European political science such as Hans Daalder, Stein Rokkan, Rudolf Wildenmann) in the conception, foundation and development of the ECPR (the European Consortium of Political Research). Of this institutional masterpiece of European political science he was the first director in the crucial phase of its institutionalisation. As European political scientists well know, the role of this institution which today connects hundreds of departments throughout the continent, in overcoming the parochialism of national political science communities, defining new standards of scientific research, and providing instruments for the socialization and training of young scholars, can hardly be underestimated. Interestingly enough the true Europeanisation of political science on this side of the Atlantic has been achieved through a deliberate attempt to transplant into Europe the best academic practices of American political science.

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This effort however was not the end of Blondel's fight for the progress of political science. Having left for some time now his active role in ECPR he has not been afraid of taking up the challenge of Asian political science. Some years ago he decided to engage his friends and colleagues from Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, etc.. into starting an Asian Consortium for Political Research which should repeat the achievements of the European organisation. I have had the privilege to watch him at work in one of the first meetings devoted to this effort and I was truly astonished by the boldness of his intuition and by the unrelenting energy he put into it. It will take some time, when one considers the very special political and cultural conditions of Asia, to see if this Asian enterprise will be able to match the results of the European one, but the beginning in itself is a true milestone.

We reach now the third point: *Jean Blondel as a generous friend of the University of Siena.*

By the mid-1980s the long academic career of Blondel takes an Italian turn. In 1985 the European University Institute of Fiesole, which is represented here by its president professor Yves Mény, gave its chair in comparative politics to Blondel. From this moment, and thanks to a series of research projects on the comparative study of European cabinets, there began my personal acquaintance and research collaboration with him. From this personal relationship it was soon possible to develop a more institutional link with the University of Siena. Indeed Blondel was soon collaborating with this small group of Sieneese political scientists who were engaged in an attempt (still a bit uncertain in its goals and in its instruments) to create a stronger unit of research and advanced training in the field of political science. As his work at the EUI, already intense, could not exhaust his energies he immediately made himself available to help this new enterprise with his long academic experience, his ideas and much appreciated encouragements. I cannot go here

over all the details of this collaboration but it is easy for me to say that, if today the University of Siena has a research unit in the field of political science which has acquired some national and international reputation and a well established graduate school offering both a master and a PhD programme, this owes very much to the generous efforts of Jean Blondel who over the past years has never ceased to come to Siena to teach, talk with graduate students, oversee their dissertations, liaise with foreign scholars, and to stimulate us to go further.

I must remember also that when Jean and his wife Tess decided, to reduce their time in Italy and decided to move to a smaller apartment, he donated a large part of his rich collection of books to the “Circolo Giuridico” library of the University of Siena.

Before concluding I would like to say a few more words that do not specifically concern any of the above mentioned points but touch upon something which is even more important and that has to do with Jean Blondel’s personality. Given my age and having travelled a bit I have had the privilege to meeting many of the most important and influential figures in the international political science arena throughout the last decades. I do not want, here, to provide any kind of ranking, but I must say that I have been particularly struck by the traits that make Blondel a very special person. His absolute dedication to the scientific mission, his unrelenting determination in following the goals he has set to himself, but at the same time his simplicity and complete lack of academic pompousness and the almost unlimited generosity toward younger scholars make him really unique on the international political science scene.

For all these reasons, I believe that by honouring professor Jean Blondel with this degree the University of Siena honours itself at the same time for having established such a close relationship with an extraordinary personality.

Personalisation of Leadership, Parties and the Citizens

Jean Blondel

Magnifico Rettore,
Preside di Facoltà
Professori,
Signore, Signori,

Non posso ricordare senza grandissima emozione questi ultimi anni durante i quali ho avuto l'onore di essere associato all'Università di Siena, associazione che culmina oggi con il titolo di Laurea Honoris Causa che mi è conferito. A parte la ricerca in scienza della politica, il mio interesse principale è stato da tanti anni di poter contribuire allo sviluppo della formazione post-laurea in questa disciplina, ancora molto giovane ma tanto importante per il progresso delle società umane. Ho avuto la fortuna di poter contribuire a questa formazione in Gran Bretagna all'inizio della mia carriera; è stato per me una grandissima fortuna poter contribuire alla formazione post-laurea in questa Università verso la fine della mia carriera.

Sono stato tanto lieto di poter vedere che, nello spazio di una decina di anni, la scienza della politica è cresciuta qui fino a fare di Siena il primo centro di eccellenza al livello di dottorato. Sono dunque tanto grato al Professor Cotta ed a sui colleghi, alla Facoltà di Scienze Politiche e all'Università di Siena per aver avuto fiducia in me e per aver creduto che potessi aggiungere qualche cosa al lavoro del CIRCaP per la ricerca e la

formazione specialistica, particolarmente nel dottorato. Ricevo dunque con modestia l'onore che l'Università mi fa oggi, come la prova che la scienza della politica è vista a Siena come una disciplina maggiore, una disciplina che fa parte delle vetrine di questo ateneo.

Voglio dunque ringraziare il Magnifico Rettore, il Senato Accademico, il Preside e il Consiglio della Facoltà di Scienze Politiche per aver riconosciuto in questa maniera solenne la scienza della politica. Ma voglio anche scusarmi se, malgrado molti anni passati in Italia, non mi sento capace di esprimermi in una maniera adeguata nella vostra lingua. Spero che voi possiate accettare che io faccia in inglese, la lingua della vita accademica internazionale, la mia presentazione su un problema diventato cruciale nelle società occidentali, quello del ruolo di primo piano dei *leaders*, anche *leaders* di partiti, nei rapporti tra i cittadini e la vita politica.

I wish thus to examine with you today the extent to which 'personalised' leaders have come to play a greater part than previously in linking citizens to parties and to the political system, in particular in connection with general elections. I am discussing in this respect the Western European case only and not whether leaders are now becoming more influential in the rest of the world. This matter is especially relevant to Western Europe because after a number of decades during which parties, and not leaders, had dominated the political scene, the personalisation of leadership seems to have been on the increase recently. Is this truly the case? And, if so, why?

In the early and middle part of the nineteenth century, parties tended to be controlled by personalities, often local leaders; from the last decades of that century, however, national 'mass' parties emerged almost everywhere. The link between these parties and electors no longer resulted from loyalty to personalities, but from what has been classically referred to as 'social cleavages', especially the regional cleavage, the religious

cleavage and the class cleavage. Four such cleavages were indeed described in detail in a famous 1967 article of two well-known political sociologists, the American Seymour Martin Lipset and the Norwegian Stein Rokkan. (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967, 1-64). This article has dominated the interpretation of voting behaviour characteristics ever since: it seemed to bury once and for all the idea of 'personalised leadership' as if it was prevalent in traditional but not in 'modern' societies.

Yet the question arises as to whether there is not now a movement in the opposite direction, even in modern or post-modern societies, with leaders being central once more, especially at election times, although these leaders no longer are 'local notables', but national politicians. There seem indeed to be clear indications that this is the case, and not merely because the media have a built-in tendency to extol the crucial importance of leaders. On the one hand, the appeal of long-standing parties has declined in recent decades: there is now greater volatility from one party to another, erosion of the electoral pull of larger parties and even, in some cases, collapse of traditional parties. Thus parties seem to be in trouble, a point which even some strong supporters of the 'cleavages' thesis (as R. Katz and P. Mair) do not deny. Meanwhile, this seems to take place in a context in which personalities appear to have a larger role. New parties, rather small perhaps, but none the less significant, are set up, more so than in the past, by 'popular' leaders: this has been the case in Italy, France, Belgium (primarily Flanders), the Netherlands, Denmark and Norway; moreover, in Austria and Switzerland, existing parties have been wholly 'reconstructed' as a result of the impact which new leaders gave them. But long-standing large parties are also affected, perhaps the best examples being those of France and even more Britain, where such parties have seen their structure and policies profoundly modified under the influence, indeed the pressure, of 'highly personalised' leaders.

Admittedly, these movements are not sufficient to *prove* that personalities are generally the dominating element and do play a critical role in most national elections. Parties often lose

elections because of internal difficulties, policy failures or scandals, as was the case in Britain in 1979 and in 1997. In 1979, the departing Labour prime minister, Jim Callaghan, was indeed more popular than Mrs Thatcher, the challenging Conservative leader, in the opinion polls. Some attempts are now made to assess precisely the impact which leaders may have had on the election result (Sanders 1997, 354), but in the case of the long-standing parties it is still difficult to disentangle the specific appeal of party leaders from that of their organisation.

Yet the matter deserves more attention than has been given so far. The discontent with larger parties seems to have given rise to a 'demand' for something new – new parties and new programmes in the older parties. Why should this be the case?

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One notices also that there is a 'supply' apparently provided by some popular leaders who set up these new parties or are able to modify the programmes of more traditional parties. I wish to examine here some of the reasons for these movements. Before doing so, however, I wish first to reflect on what seems to have been missing in electoral behaviour studies: 'social cleavages' have been analysed at length, but 'psychological considerations' have been almost entirely neglected. Popular loyalty to individual leaders and personal bonds between citizens and the political elite are not taken into account. Thus a monopoly given to sociological or socio-economic explanations has led to an undue simplification of the relationship between leaders, parties and citizens.

I

Indeed and rather surprisingly, in the classical interpretation of the relationship between citizens and parties, no room whatsoever is provided for the personal reactions of citizens or, for that matter, of leaders. For some, such a situation indicates that there is little interest, in many quarters of academic social science, in a psychological dimension. “The emotional dimensions of political life are today broadly speaking ignored as objects of research in the social sciences. Such a state of affairs should be regarded as surprising” says P. Braud in what appears to be an understatement on his part (*my translation*)(1996, 7).

Admittedly, to an extent at least, the influential ‘Michigan school’ of electoral behaviour seemed to take the reactions of individual voters into account by means of the notion of a ‘funnel of causality’; this was elaborated to describe the way in which voting decisions become more precise as the date of the election becomes closer (Campbell *et al.*, 1960; Miller and Shanks, 1996). Yet the aim is not to account for psychological processes in the *voters’ minds*, but to sort out the relative part played by ‘party identification’ and various other influences exercised on voters, from early socialisation to the latest campaigning developments. At no point are the ‘personality characteristics’ of voters as such being considered. Indeed, the model elaborated by Miller and Shanks in their 1996 volume starts by discussing what are described as ‘stable social and economic characteristics’ (Miller and Shanks, 1996, 190). The voter’s particular ‘psyche’ is never mentioned at all. It is therefore not unreasonable to conclude that, for the ‘Michigan school’ as well as for Lipset and Rokkan, social ‘cleavages’ are fundamental.

Yet the social cleavages approach cannot ‘explain’ *why citizens* come to support a given political party. That approach operates at the level of relations between groups and parties exclusively; it shows that *parties* have come into existence, in Western Europe, by being backed by such ‘parent’ groups as, for instance, religious or class-based bodies; but *why* citizens support these parties can be discovered only if one looks at how

there comes to be a relationship between citizens and groups or parties.

Let us examine first what happens if there are no parties. This is far from unrealistic, as leaders have existed long before parties became widespread. Indeed, there are public bodies, for instance small local authorities, in which there are no parties. Moreover, political activity also takes place, as daily comments show so frequently, in private and semi-public organisations, such as universities, companies, trade unions, churches even: yet there are rarely organised parties among these bodies, as S.M. Lipset, M.A. Trow and J.S. Coleman showed *a contrario* in their study of the 'International Typographical Union' (Lipset, Trow and Coleman, 1962).

Where there are no parties, leaders have clearly a direct effect on the ways in which citizens feel and behave; citizens may also, conversely, influence leaders, although this is perhaps less frequent. Patterns of influence also develop 'horizontally' among citizens and among leaders. Importantly, the impact of leaders on citizens has two components: it relates to the '*substance*' of the problems or, more accurately, to the perception which leaders and citizens have of these problems; it relates also to '*appearance*': the leaders 'appear' to the citizens as being 'good' or 'bad', pleasant or unpleasant. When that appearance is judged to be very positive, the notion of 'charisma' is often used, at any rate by extension of the strict 'religious' definition which Weber (first) adopted. The way reactions to substance and to appearance combine is obviously complex: yet 'calculations' are made routinely among politicians and among citizens on these matters.

Let us now examine how the relationship is altered when parties become intermediaries between leaders and citizens. As was suggested earlier, the question here is not to challenge the Lipset-Rokkan view according to which political parties, as organisations, emerged from social groups which, so to speak, placed them 'in orbit'; the question is to examine the manner in which *individual* citizens come to relate to these parties. It is also to see whether social groups are the *only* way by which these individuals relate to parties: might not leaders be another

element in this respect, either in conjunction with social groups or, indeed, on their own?

How, then, do individuals come to relate to (existing) parties? This cannot occur 'automatically' or in an instant; a relationship takes place only if, first, individuals recognise that the party exists and, as a second step, if that party is judged by these individuals as worthy of support. There has thus to be a learning process and that process may even be spread over a substantial period. It always results from a variety of influences, even in those polities in which parties have long been part of the socio-political panorama: many agents are involved, for instance members of the family, friends, acquaintances, as well as the media and, through the media, the parties themselves and indeed their leaders. Moreover, in the same way as parties, groups have to be 'recognised' by the citizens and, therefore, a learning process takes place in the context of groups as well as of parties¹.

Furthermore, a distinction has also to be drawn, as in the context of non-party situations, between reactions to 'substance' and reactions to 'appearance'. In relation to such groups as families, churches, business organisations, trade unions, 'appearance' means that sentiments of loyalty, respect, love, or, on the contrary, dislike and even hatred are experienced by individuals: it is only natural that the same should occur in relation to parties. Moreover, sentiments of this kind are affected in part by the feelings that the persons concerned have for the prominent members and especially the leaders of the groups and, by analogy, the prominent members and leaders of the parties.

Even if parties emerged as organisations directly from 'parent' groups, as Lipset and Rokkan suggested for Western Europe, the relationships between citizens and these parties cannot be understood unless the psychological aspects of these relationships are taken into account and thoroughly understood. Among these psychological aspects, those which involve party leaders, both as actors and as recipients of positive or negative sentiments from the citizens, need manifestly to be assessed. This is why, whatever judgement is passed about the explanatory character of the Lipset-Rokkan model, it is difficult to

understand why party leaders are not mentioned as having played a part, even at the time when these parties were founded, in the nineteenth or early twentieth centuries².

Moreover, the fact that citizens relate to parties as a result of their allegiance to a 'parent' group and/or to leaders does not mean that the nature and characteristics of that allegiance are the same in both cases. Allegiance to a 'parent' group may be felt to be more 'basic', as groups (may) remain influential for much longer periods than personalities (although the allegiance to some leaders can last beyond the death of these leaders, as the Peron case amply demonstrates); since allegiance to a group is more 'basic', it probably fluctuates less. This may indeed be one of the reasons why the 'classical' theory stressed exclusively the role of social cleavages in building links between parties and their supporters: these links may be modified only slowly, while allegiance to personalities may oscillate more rapidly and with greater amplitude. Yet such a conclusion, if valid, does not affect the overall proposition that loyalty to personalities has to be taken into account alongside loyalty to groups.

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II

Let us now examine why there might be a 'demand' for personalised leadership among at least a substantial fraction of the electorate. We assumed so far that the attachment of citizens to parties was, for all intents and purposes, given either entirely

to a party or not at all. The notion that citizens related to parties by means of social cleavages led rather naturally to that kind of conclusion. Yet this situation appears increasingly rare in the European context. Empirical analyses suggest that *issues* now play a significant part in voting patterns and constitute an alternative to general and almost automatic support in the context of electors' decisions³.

There is thus a degree of 'independence' from the parties on the part of citizens: this is shown by the fact that the number of 'very strong' 'identifiers' has sharply declined in many countries (Berglund *et al.*, 2005, 106-24). In Britain, for instance, the proportion of interviewees in this category fell from 48 percent in 1964 to 23 percent in 1987 (Heath *et al.*, 1991, 13). British electors have become more distant from the parties which they support, a situation which is broadly similar, though less clear cut across Western Europe (Schmitt and Holmberg, 1995, 101)⁴.

This is not to say that issues played no part in the 'classical' model; but their role was overshadowed by the impact of the social cleavages as a result of which support to parties was taking place 'in bulk', so to speak. Social cleavages effectively controlled and dominated attitudes to parties and prevented any major 'dissonance' from occurring in the minds of citizens. It was not that citizens were attached to their party in an 'unthinking' manner, but that they were attached to their parties above all 'because' (or as) they felt that their party was the political complement of the social cleavage with which they felt profoundly associated, whether it was a region, a religion and, more and more, class.

There is no longer a strong association of this kind, at least in the minds of many, probably most, citizens: yet such a change of perspective can be fully understood only if we refer to the problems which are most important to citizens at a given moment: let us call *preoccupations* these most salient problems. The notion of preoccupation may not usually be referred to, but it has a stronger and more durable connotation than the concept of 'worries' which opinion surveys have used frequently in recent decades to find out about the societal problems affecting

respondents. 'Worries' are almost certainly rather fleeting: the concept of 'preoccupation' is more appropriate as what are at stake are profound concerns. Understandably, if the major preoccupations of citizens are 'in tune' with what they feel their party is 'for', there is real attachment to the party; if this is not or no longer the case, the strength of the support to the party is markedly reduced.

Why, then, given that individuals need to have strong preoccupations for them to owe allegiance to a party, did social cleavages seem, in Western Europe, at the end of the nineteenth century and during a large part of the twentieth, to *lead directly* from allegiance to a social group, regional, religious or class-based, for instance, to allegiance to a party? Why, in other words, were there no issues which were sufficiently strong to lead to 'demands' for alternative party policies, let alone for new parties? Lipset and Rokkan did not examine what social cleavages meant to electors, since their analysis focused on the relationship between groups and parties and not on the relationship between citizens and parties; but the gist of their approach implied that social cleavages were strong enough to prevent any serious 'rebellion' on specific issues.

Yet such a state of affairs has to be viewed as wholly unusual; it can be understood only if it is related to the industrialisation process which changed profoundly and very rapidly the social conditions of much of the Western European population. What occurred at the time which Lipset and Rokkan referred to was the fact that large numbers of citizens saw their *status* in society profoundly altered. They had a sense of deprivation because of the area they came from, of the religion they practiced or of the class they belonged to as a result of their job. For individuals who felt that way, *status* was the key 'preoccupation': to this extent, social cleavages could be regarded as an overall characteristic leading to almost unbreakable party support.

Since the last decades of the twentieth century, on the contrary, problems of status declined in importance, as regional origin, religious appurtenance and even class characteristics became less salient in Western Europe, except in a small number

of areas or among immigrants. Meanwhile, the preoccupations which became widespread, in many sectors of society at least, can be brought together under the general label of *feelings of insecurity*: but these feelings are diverse as they cover matters as distinct as those relating to crime, to immigration, to jobs or to the environment. Citizens intensely preoccupied by environmental problems are unlikely to be also intensely preoccupied by the level of crime or by that of immigration in their society.

These 'new' preoccupations are profoundly different from the preoccupations about status in two crucial ways. First, they are not associated with any social cleavage; they are not even associated with any kind of group, except to a limited extent with respect to the environment and, in theory at least, to jobs, as job security could be regarded as central to the questions which trade unions are expected to deal with; in reality, however, probably few citizens still believe that trade unions remain relevant in this respect. Citizens who are truly preoccupied by problems of insecurity relate therefore to parties directly *without* the solid attachment which social cleavages provided; the link between preoccupation and party is therefore likely to be somewhat weaker and more subject to substantial oscillations. Second, the way citizens regard existing parties tends to vary depending on the strength of their belief that some change has to occur and indeed can occur. There are those – and they are many – who are 'conservative' in this respect – or perhaps defeatist – in that they continue to support the traditional parties, but are somewhat sceptical about the probability and perhaps even the value of any policy change. There are the 'radicals' – perhaps found mostly among those who are particularly concerned with the impact of crime and immigration – who simply reject the party system as it exists and look for new developments. In all cases, attitudes to parties tend to be instrumental.

Thus the diminished appeal of the 'classical' preoccupation about status coupled with the emergence of new preoccupations has generated new 'demands', latent perhaps in many cases, but openly voiced by a minority. These are directly addressed to the

parties, as no social group can act as an intermediary. In the absence of social cleavages giving strength to the link between citizens and parties, there is now 'dissonance' based on the distance between party policies and what are regarded by many as major issues. One answer has been to withdraw from the political system and to abstain: abstention has indeed increased, as a matter of fact, across Western Europe in the course of the last decades of the twentieth century. Another solution, however, is for forms of 'supply' to attempt to meet these new 'demands'. Let us therefore turn to examine how this 'supply' has emerged and to what extent it has proved to be effective.

III

'Demands' are made in some sectors of Western European public opinion; they concern a variety of issues which have little in common except that they relate to some aspect of 'security'. To an extent, there is now a 'supply' of new parties whose leaders put forward policies aimed at meeting these 'demands'; there are also some efforts made by leaders in the long-standing parties to put forward – or at least suggest – some new policies. We do not know as yet, however, why this kind of 'supply' is found in some countries and not in others. We do not know because, so far at least, and with very limited exceptions, the psychological analyses

the notion of 'charismatic authority' ... turned out to be most fruitful in terms of the categorisation of leadership developments, but only after the event, as, once more, political science has not been concerned with the examination of psychological conditions

required have simply not begun to be undertaken.

We therefore do not know either whether long-standing parties will eventually collapse, as they did in Italy or, on the contrary, reassert themselves, as they did in Britain, or whether traces of change will be minimal, as in Ireland, Finland, Portugal or even Spain. We are much in the same predicament as Max Weber developed the notion of 'charismatic authority' nearly a century ago. That notion turned out to be most fruitful in terms of the categorisation of leadership developments, but only after the event, as, once more, political science has not been concerned with the examination of psychological conditions, either in the population at large or among leaders.

So far, the old party system collapsed in Western Europe in Italy only, although there was an earlier case, exactly half a century ago, in 1958. when a similar breakdown occurred in France, as the Fourth Republic died unable to solve the Algerian crisis and De Gaulle set up and led the new Fifth Republic on the basis of a party at his devotion. The Italian party collapse, as we know well, occurred in the early 1990s, when the Christian Democratic party and the Socialist party disintegrated in the aftermath of major financial scandals, thus giving an opportunity for Berlusconi to launch his *Forza Italia*.

In Italy, the party systems had already started to be seriously undermined by the *Lega* before the 1990s: but it is not much use to take the *Lega* into account in this respect as such a move does not help to build what is really needed, namely a 'theory' of what is occurring generally in Western Europe where long-standing parties suffer some decline but do not collapse. Little can be discovered by examining the cases of the French *National Front*, which remained in a ghetto for over twenty years in a country where the extreme-right has been endemic, or that of *Vlaams Belang* in Flanders as the profound Belgian regional social cleavage gave a major boost to the anti-immigration line of the party. The case of the Netherlands, as well as those of Austria, Denmark, Norway and perhaps Switzerland, on the other hand, are more likely to provide a basis on which to understand why a certain type of leader succeeds in beginning to break the

‘monopoly’ of the traditional parties, but without going much further than airing discontent or even, in some cases, helping traditional parties to remain in power.

In the absence of a sophisticated psychological exploration of citizens and of party elites, it is impossible to go beyond the presentation of examples and counter-examples. There are thus the cases of Norway and Denmark where the new issues have found leaders able to launch and sustain new parties which had some success, including at the governmental level. There are on the contrary the cases of Sweden and Finland where the parties which attempted to propagate demands of a ‘pro-security’ character did not take off, ostensibly because leaders with the required skills have no so far emerged.

By and large, the new parties have not gone beyond placing their problems on the agenda, in a situation where, except in Italy, long-standing parties have been able to maintain a dominating position, even if they have had to lose some feathers in the process. By and large, the leaders orchestrating demands for major change in the fields of immigration and crime and even those making demands for strong environmental protection have been more successful in terms of slogans than in terms of policy achievement, in part because the leaders of the long-standing parties have succeeded in maintaining a moderate course, with the backing of the European Union.

Does this mean that Western European politics will remain for decades in such a stalemate position? Is the battle between long-standing parties and new parties one in which the long-standing parties will always remain on top? Will those making new demands remain a small, if often vocal, minority and, as a result, will the leaders of the new parties remain indefinitely in a ‘limbo’ position? Is this because of their own limitations or is it because of the skills of the leaders of the long-standing parties? These are questions which only a large investment in psychological analysis can begin to answer; what is abundantly clear, however, is that ‘social cleavages’, being absent of the current debate, cannot be expected to provide any answer at all.

Meanwhile and to begin with, however, a number of manifestly important matters are raised at the periphery, so to speak, of such a psychological analysis. One problem to which more attention must be given is the analysis of the type of

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discourse adopted by leaders advocating major change. It seems assumed that the discourse of personalised leaders is by definition 'populist', on the understanding that 'populism' is defined essentially by reference to a direct appeal to the people rather than to 'representative' political arrangements. Yet even the leaders of Western European new parties

are only 'half-populist' since they create and nurture parties: what that 'half-populist' discourse entails and the extent to which the leaders approximate the 'ideal' model needs therefore to be explored. Perhaps a distinction has also to be made in this respect between new and old parties, as personalised leaders who successfully provoked changes in older parties in France or Britain, Mitterrand, Chirac, Thatcher or Blair, scarcely used 'populist' postures: their emphasis was on a 'new' form of modernity or on a better organisation of society. How such a discourse is to be described is somewhat unclear, but it is unquestionably not 'populist'. Nor can one assume that only 'populist' leaders are 'charismatic' in the eyes of their supporters: Le Pen's charisma took a very long time to emerge. Conversely, Mrs Thatcher was scarcely populist, but she was charismatic among some segments of the population;

this was also the case, for a while at least, in relation to Blair, although the fervour was perhaps less marked.

There are also many different ways in which personalised leaders affect the electorate. For instance, the *timing of the 'leadership effect'* does vary. Mrs Thatcher was leader for four years into her prime ministership before she became truly popular, for instance; Mitterrand and Chirac had to wait much longer; Blair, on the other hand, was popular before becoming leader. There is also a marked difference in terms of the way these leaders *approach politics*. In the British case, for instance, Blair's leadership was based on a desire to achieve the status of a 'celebrity' - a feature which seems to have been wholly alien to Mrs Thatcher. Blair did have a 'programme', but, unlike Mrs Thatcher, he was not concerned with a 'philosophy' of government: his impact may therefore be described as having been more 'administrative' than that of Mrs Thatcher. There is even a difference in the *durability of 'personalised leadership'* in particular with respect to incumbency. Contemporary leaders do not 'possess' 'personalised party leadership' from the moment they move to politics: they have to acquire it and do so by different means; they may also lose that appeal while they are in office.

While only if personalised leadership is available can a 'supply' be provided to meet at least in part the 'demands' emerging currently among many elements of the Western European population, the conditions under which that leadership is acquired, develops and declines are far from well-known. All that can be stated with a degree of assurance is that the forms which that personalised leadership takes go well beyond the obvious distinction between being involved in launching a new party or in changing the programmes and policies of a traditional one. Political science has thus still much to examine in this area before the picture becomes sufficiently detailed to be truly realistic.

The increased role of personalised party leadership in Western Europe is not an illusion brought about by the emphasis placed on the matter by the mass media, and especially the electronic mass media. Western European politics was dominated for some decades by the part played by a new social structure resulting from massive industrialisation, but the further changes which took place during the last decades of the twentieth century, especially as a result of the vast improvements in education, led more and more citizens to become 'independent' from the very social structure to which earlier generations had previously been tied. Independence meant a much less close relationship between status and political choice as well as a much greater degree of cynicism with respect to those persons and those bodies, including the parties, which had hitherto embodied the political system. Thus the psychological relationships which had seemed to have lost their relevance in contrast with region, religion or class came once more to be critical. One cannot understand what goes on in Western European politics unless one begins to understand the 'psyche' of Western Europeans, both citizens and leaders. The quicker electoral analyses confront the matter, the more it will become possible to understand fully the characteristics of current political life in the 'old world'.

NOTES

¹ Although Rokkan does not specifically state that groups in general emerge before parties, this is manifestly implied by what is pointed out in particular by him in relation to religious groups. This is so for example in relation to religious movements and the emergence of Christian parties. “The parties of religious defence generated through this process [the waves of mass mobilisation mentioned in the previous paragraph] grew into broad mass movements after the introduction of manhood suffrage and were able to claim the loyalties of remarkably high proportions of the church-goers in the working class. (Rokkan, 1970, 103). The point is made even more explicitly in an article published in 1977 “Towards a generalised concept of *Verzijling*” Three patterns are mentioned, but these patterns are said to be difficult to disentangle in concrete cases. However, it is noted that “In Catholic Europe, the Church clearly offered the best basis for network-building but the incentives and the costs varied very much from system to system [...]. In Protestant Europe we have a number of examples of network-building[...]. From a cultural base: religious parties grew out of lay movements opposing the established States Churches, the few ethnically based parties were simply extensions of organisations already set up outside the electoral channel. The same was the case with agrarian and social-democratic parties: they tended to be electoral extensions of organisations already active in the corporate channel” (reprinted in Mair, 1990, 144).

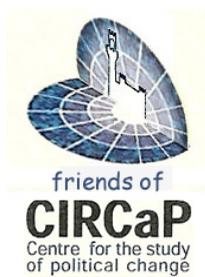
² Paradoxically, the modern edition of Michels’ *Political Parties* (1962) is due to Lipset (and it was published before the ‘classical’ article of Lipset and Rokkan). The point is that Michels is not so much concerned with the emergence of socialist parties as with what happens to them once they have emerged. Nor is the argument in favour of leadership, quite the contrary. Perhaps this is the reason why Lipset did not find it necessary to introduce leadership among the reasons why citizens become attached to parties.

³ This is of course not the place to examine the literature on issues, by now abundant. The point here is merely to note that they appear increasingly to constitute an alternative to the ‘general’ support to parties on the part of many electors. See in particular Miller and Shanks (1996), for instance at p. 202.

⁴ Schmitt and Holmberg also argue that partisanship tends to decline when the (main) parties are closer to each other and the reverse when they are in greater opposition. They then conclude: “Thus one would expect partisanship and the relevance of political parties to increase again if and when ideological differences and issue conflicts flare once more” (Schmitt and Holmberg, 1995, 123).

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