

# Danes make history; nix Maastricht Treaty

by Poul Rasmussen

On June 3, the Danes did the unthinkable. In a public referendum, Danish voters rejected the fascist Maastricht Treaty, an agreement which would have relegated national sovereignty in Europe to the dustbin of history.

By the tiniest margin—50.7% opposed, 49.3% in favor—Danish voters put a stop to the dreams of turning the European Community into a tight political European Union with a European central bank and heavily centralized financial and monetary policy. Some 82% of the 3.6 million voters participated, and a majority said no to a treaty that would have stripped the 12 member nations of the European Community (EC) of their right to carry out independent financial policies and would within a few years subjugate everyone to a centralized bureaucracy in Brussels acting without any democratic political control.

The Maastricht Treaty was scheduled to replace the old Treaty of Rome, thereby transforming the EC into the EU by the beginning of 1993. According to the charter of the Treaty of Rome, however, any change in the treaty itself requires unanimity among the member nations.

Since Denmark will not ratify the new treaty, it would be absurd if the remaining 11 nations were to continue the process of ratification on their own. The governments would ask the parliaments to ratify a treaty that is already nullified. Ireland has already called off its referendum pending a full clarification of the fate of the Maastricht Treaty.

The panic among the political establishment of Europe is almost complete. Former German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher insists that the other 11 nations should form their own union without Denmark. Where, however, and how would such negotiations take place? It cannot be under the auspices of the European Community: That is ruled out by the Treaty of Rome.

In France, President François Mitterrand went into a frenzy the day after the Danish vote, making an about-face on the question of a popular referendum on the treaty. In an attempt to undercut any demands for an immediate stop to the ratification process, Mitterrand suddenly announced that he would favor a French referendum, an utterly absurd idea, since the French would be voting on a treaty already voided by the Danes.

What went on in Denmark that led to this political shock for all of Europe? As soon as the first results reached the international wires, frightened political commentators on

both sides of the Atlantic tried to dismiss the Danish rejection of Maastricht as the result of a silly, opportunistic national chauvinism. Nothing could be further from the truth: The entire Danish elite was extremely active in the attempt to secure a “yes” vote. If anything, the “no” vote could be seen as an angry rejection of the “gods of Olympus” by the Danish people.

Eighty percent of the members of the Parliament supported the treaty. So did all of the major trade unions, employers’ organizations, industrial federations, farm organizations, and, with a few exceptions, all of the press. Like the gods of Olympus, Denmark’s establishment tried to scare, seduce, and browbeat the Danes into voting “yes.” The Danish Olympians did not refrain from calling in like-minded “spirits” from abroad to help. Almost all of the leading politicians in Norway, Sweden, and Finland, including Swedish Prime Minister Carl Bildt and Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland, came to Denmark to put pressure on the Danes. Even influential Olympians like German Chancellor Helmut Kohl and President Mitterrand uttered some staunch warnings to the tiny rebels in the north. But it was all in vain.

But the vote was not a blind protest against the corrupt Danish politicians, as other international observers have insisted. Most Danish voters did actually try to read the text of the treaty. In all public libraries, post offices, and similar locations, free copies of the Danish-language text were available. The government had to reprint the booklet twice in order to fill the demand.

The Danes rejected the treaty because they did not like it. Some refused to put their signature on a contract they could not understand—a wholly sound reaction. Others recoiled at the idea of European federalism.

## The alternative to Maastricht

The main reason why the scare tactics of the gods of Olympus failed to sway most Danes, was the otherwise high level of political debate. A number of Danish economists publicly exposed the planned financial and monetary integration of the European Union as utterly unfounded and labeled it a dangerous economic experiment. Especially the planned European central bank and the single currency union came under heavy attack. It was also pointed out that the stringent budgetary regime stipulated by Article 104 of the treaty was bound to lead to mass unemployment and poverty in large parts of Europe.

With Maastricht dead, a new policy for European economic cooperation has to be worked out. The centerpiece of this must be East-West cooperation. This in turn must be founded on specific physical projects, high-speed train lines from the Atlantic to the Urals and beyond, buildup of infrastructure and modernization of the means of production, and collaboration among sovereign nations in a Europe of the Fatherlands. All this is now possible, since the Danes shot down Maastricht.