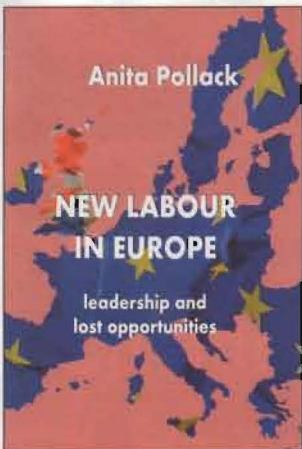


Books



New Labour in Europe

Leadership and lost opportunities

*Anita Pollack, John Harper
Publishing, 288 pages, £17.50*

Former Labour MEP Anita Pollack relates the approach taken by the New Labour governments towards the European Union between 1997 and 2010, and gives first-hand insights into the important role played by Labour MEPs.

Pollack shows that while prime minister Tony Blair made a number of pro-EU affirmations, there was very little effort to explain or sell the EU to the British public.

UK engagement with the EU was generally presented as one of fighting for British interests against dastardly plans from Brussels. And European Parliament elections were fought with instructions to avoid discussion of the EU altogether.

New Labour governments also prevented progress in one area of EU policy popular with the public – the social dimension – seeking to block proposals to increase employment protections.

Instead, the focus was on “economic reform” and creating more openings for business, with alliances formed with right-wing governments in the EU against socialist ones.

Published in the lead-up to the referendum on EU membership, Pollack concludes by asking whether New Labour’s failure to do more to convince the public of the benefits of EU membership would prove not just a lost opportunity, but a fatal legacy.