

Note from Achille Albonetti on the gradual building of a European Political Community

Caption: On 23 November 1970, Achille Albonetti, former senior European civil servant and Director of the National Committee for Nuclear Energy, forwards a note to the President of the Commission of the European Communities, Franco Maria Malfatti, in which he announces initiatives relating to the creation of a European Political Community.

Source: Archives historiques de l'Union européenne, Florence, Villa Il Poggiolo. Dépôts, DEP. Franco Maria Malfatti, FMM. Coopération politique européenne. Union politique, 03/12/1969-09/07/1971, FMM 37.

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Achille Albonetti's notes (23 November 1970)

Subject: Notes for a paper on the gradual building of a European Political Community.

1. The Heads of State and Government of the six members of the European Communities, meeting at The Hague on 1 and 2 December 1969, mandated their foreign ministers to study how best to achieve progress in the sector of political unification with a view to enlargement, and to submit proposals by 1 July 1970.

2. On 19 November 1970, after the Council of Ministers of the Six had approved what is known as the Davignon report, the first of the six-monthly consultations advocated by the Report was held.

Within two years, the Committee of Directors of Political Affairs of the six foreign ministers will also be submitting further proposals to bolster the process of political construction.

3. Political unification among the Six is all the more desirable since the Paris and Rome Treaties have created a close community of interests among them. There are already special ties between the six countries of the European Community at an economic level. Those ties will be strengthened when the Rome and Paris Treaties are implemented in full, and that implementation will be significantly helped by the entry into force of common policies, particularly in the economic and monetary sectors.

4. It is perhaps worth noting that the Economic Communities are currently little more than a customs union. If the Communities are to develop fully, the Member States will have to achieve the most important objectives of the Communities, namely:

- common policies, and
- political union.

5. The Common Market was never conceived by its creators as an end in itself. Nor did they see the Common Market simply as a way of achieving the economic union of Europe. The Common Market was devised because the road to political union for Europe was barred in 1954 by the failure of the proposed European Defence Community (EDC) and the proposed European Political Community (EPC).

That was why the 'relaunch of Europe' in Messina in 1955 identified economic union as the way to continue on the road to European unification.

And so, in March 1957, the two Treaties establishing the EEC and Euratom were signed. Nor was this the first time that economic union was used as a way of making progress.

6. The same option was chosen in May 1950. Given the difficulties in further developing the Council of Europe and the OEEC (Organisation for European Economic Cooperation), it was decided to embark on the road to economic unification, albeit of a 'vertical' nature. The result was the creation of the ECSC (European Coal and Steel Community), which proved a major instrument for progress in building Europe and for strengthening European solidarity.

But it must be pointed out that neither the ECSC nor the Common Market, nor indeed Euratom, was conceived, as I mentioned earlier, as an end in itself. They were and are ways of attaining a more ambitious goal: the political unification of Europe.

7. The ECSC, the Common Market and Euratom were accepted by the governments and parliaments because underlying those objectives was a political goal: the building of Europe.

By that, I do not mean to belittle the huge achievements of the Communities over the past five years. But it is appropriate to mention here the ultimate objectives of those bodies.

Strictly speaking, in fact, developments in recent years could be taken to imply that it is possible to enjoy economic growth, prosperity and well-being while remaining outside the Common Market and the customs union.

In the final analysis, the gap that the creation of the Communities was intended to fill was not so much economic as political.

8. Now, as then, moreover, it must be stressed that if we do not embark on the construction of a political Europe, it will be difficult (a) to achieve the common economic policies provided for under the Rome and Paris Treaties or (b) to bring about a successful conclusion of the negotiations for the accession of the applicant countries, in particular the United Kingdom, or, above all, (c) to increase Europe's influence on the political stage.

9. Based on experience with the Community mechanisms and bearing in mind the stages yet to come in strengthening and enlarging the Communities, the periods that it will take before complete economic union and the accession of the applicant countries may well correspond to the number of stages in the development of political union.

In particular, the aim should be to coordinate developments in the economic sector with those in the political field, ensuring that progress in both sectors is mutually reinforcing.

The start of political cooperation ought also to help bring about solutions to problems pertaining to the strengthening and enlargement of the Communities.

10. The treaty establishing the Political Community should enter into force once the negotiations for the accession of the applicant countries to the European Economic Communities have been completed and the 'transitional period' has begun.

For a certain period, the process of establishing the Political Community should go hand in hand with the completion of the Economic Communities. At a second stage, the two Communities should merge.

11. The final objective we should be setting ourselves is a federal-style united Europe, which could be achieved via intermediate and preparatory stages.

It is important to determine our goal from the outset — both to enable us to steer developments in the new construction in that direction, in close alignment with developments in the Communities, and because the individual Member States will draw inspiration from them in their daily political activities and in their domestic legislation.

12. That final objective could alternatively be attained:

(a) by transforming the existing Communities; or

(b) by establishing new mechanisms, albeit temporarily: for instance, the establishment of a 'European Political Community', developed in parallel with the 'Economic Community', the product of the merger of the EEC, EAEC (European Atomic Energy Community) and the ECSC.

The first question that arises is whether it is preferable to move towards the existence of two separate organisations for a certain period, even if they are made up of the same States, or towards a single Community, which would embrace both the economic and the political sectors from the outset.

13. The single-Community solution might seem the most natural one. But we must bear in mind that the

existing Communities have now been with us for 12 years, and the whole of their experience has been in the economic sector. That therefore poses the question of whether the Communities themselves, if given political responsibilities, might not encounter problems in striking an internal balance between the political and economic aspects. Furthermore, the inclusion of the political element in the already existing Communities would have a profound effect on the operation of their organs and their interrelationships, with the risk of undermining efficiency at such an important stage in their development.

14. In the light of all this, it appears that the creation of an independent provisional political organisation would be the best solution. Naturally, this would be with a view to the merger of both the organisations to form a single Community, after the Political Community has had an opportunity — based on a certain number of years of activity — to assert itself and become established.

15. If that approach were approved, it would be possible to move towards the establishment of an organisation with political goals, provisionally separate from the existing Economic Communities.

As regards then the merger, at an appropriate juncture, of the Political Community and the Economic Communities, there would be the option of adopting the same criterion as was followed for the merger of three existing Communities in anticipation of the merger of the Rome and Paris Treaties. That involves first merging the executive bodies, making it then possible to proceed — without further impeding the activity of the now unified Community — to the merger, with the appropriate amendments, of the three founding treaties.

16. In planning for the gradual development of the Political Community, it would be possible to envisage *three main stages* marked by internal development and linked to specific time limits in the development of the Economic Communities.

That linkage appears necessary both because of the new developments that the transition from one stage to the next will involve for both the organisations and, more particularly, because without the gradual consolidation of the political organisation, it will be extremely difficult — within the framework of the Economic Communities — successfully to align common policies in certain very sensitive sectors, such as the monetary sector.

The lack of a Political Community, even as a future possibility, could also undermine the very process of enlarging the Economic Communities.

17. A *first stage* might commence with the entry of the applicant countries into the existing Communities and end with the beginning of the ‘normal period’. That is likely to occur during the period 1973–1978.

A *second stage* might cover the intervening period between the commencement of the ‘normal period’ and the completion of the common policies.

The third stage would be the final stage. On its commencement, probably during the early years of the 1980s, the practical merger of the political Community with the Economic Community should take place.

18. In principle, the Political Community should be endowed with executive political bodies *equivalent* to those of the Economic Community (Council of Ministers and Commission), particularly with a view to the subsequent merger of both, as well as two *common* bodies from the outset (European Parliament and Court of Justice).

It would, however, seem preferable for the Political Commission to take up office only during the second stage, given that there would probably be too few issues for the political organisation to deal with in the first stage to justify the existence of a body of that nature, which would have to enjoy the necessary prestige from its inception.

First stage

19. For the first stage, the Council of Ministers and a secretariat, with a permanent seat, might be created, which could act as a driving force and implement the decisions of the Council.

The first stage should be specifically dedicated to periodic meetings, preferably at least once a quarter, of foreign ministers, defence ministers, education ministers and justice ministers, in order to harmonise their respective policies.

In the intervals between those meetings, there should be meetings at a technical level.

20. A list of issues would have to be drawn up — and gradually extended — and be subject to compulsory preliminary consultations, in order to establish a possible common policy.

The Commission of the Economic Communities should be invited to attend the meetings at ministerial level, particularly where problems relating to subjects falling within the competence of the Community itself are being discussed.

A link with the European Parliament should be established from the outset, keeping that body informed of the activity of the political organisation, giving it the right to put questions to ministers and so on.

21. The responsibilities of the Political Community should include, at this stage, encouraging the expansion and strengthening of bilateral and multilateral initiatives — in close cooperation with the Economic Communities — in the field of technological cooperation, particularly in the more advanced sectors and sectors of interest for defence purposes (the aeronautical, space, nuclear and electronics sectors, for example). In those sectors, in fact, given the scale and characteristics of the projects, European cooperation has a scope and significance with high political value.

22. During the first stage, efforts should also be made to implement the plan to establish the European University.

23. The first stage should end as the ‘normal period’ of the Economic Communities begins, namely when the three existing Communities have merged (that is to say when the Community has its own resources and the powers of the European Parliament have been extended), provided that the ‘transitional’ period for the new members has been completed.

Second stage

24. In the second stage, at the beginning of which the Political Commission should take up office, the Political Community would assume increasingly extensive responsibilities, moving towards a confederal format in foreign and defence policy. Decisions would therefore still be adopted on the basis of unanimity in the Council.

25. In the *foreign policy* sector, the compulsory preliminary consultations should be extended to all issues of common interest.

During the second stage, in particular — and in relation to the developments that will need to take place within the Economic Community through the gradual implementation of common policies in the various sectors — a common European policy on the main aspects of foreign, defence and education policy and so on should be devised and defined.

Ministerial consultations should be intensified, and the same applies to the meetings at technical level (meetings of the defence ministers, meetings on issues of disarmament, meetings to tackle the problems of the Mediterranean and so forth).

26. The Commission of the Political Community which, like that of the Economic Community, should be

independent of the Member States and given powers of initiative, should have better coordinated and more extensive services than those provided for during the first stage.

27. The confederal stage ought also to include greater supervision by the European Parliament of the activities and developments of the political organisation and the Economic Community.

For example, the European Parliament might be envisaged not only as discussing the various issues on the agenda of the Political Community but also as having the right to approve certain formal acts, in particular the budget.

The election of at least part of the European Parliament might also be by direct universal suffrage.

28. During that stage, the Political Community should perform the necessary task of acting as a driving force in the context of the general process of European economic integration — mainly within the institutional framework of the Economic Community — in launching and completing a number of major projects in the high technology sector, such as:

(a) integration of the European *aeronautics* industry, through the joint construction of the main civilian and military aircraft required on the European market (helicopters, supersonic aircraft like the *Concorde*; tactical support aircraft like the *Jaguar*; fighter bombers like the *Mirage* or *MRCA-75*; *Airbus*; *Mercure*, and so on);

(b) integration of the European *space* industry, but enhancing ELDO (European Space Vehicle Launcher Development Organisation) and ESRO (European Space Research Organisation), as well as possibly launching new common projects;

(c) integration of Europe's *nuclear* industry through:

— the construction of a European facility for the production of enriched uranium;

— the creation of a European consortium for the construction and marketing of advanced nuclear reactors (in particular high-speed reactors);

— the joint construction of ships and nuclear submarines;

(d) integration of the *heavy electronics* industry and the joint construction of a *large-scale computer*.

29. The objective could also be set of pooling a percentage of the Member States' defence budgets, and drafting and defining a common defence procurement policy.

30. In the *cultural and public education* sectors, interministerial cooperation and the Commission's activity could be directed towards both the recognition of qualifications at all levels and the establishment of a common education policy.

31. Transition from the second to the third stage should be subject to unanimous verification, by the Member States, that the conditions laid down for that transition have actually been fulfilled. That verification should relate in particular to establishing that:

— the common economic policies provided for in the Rome and Paris Treaties (economic and monetary

policy in particular) have actually been devised and implemented;

— a common approach to the main problems of foreign and defence policy has been drawn up by the confederal organs;

— the more advanced technological or defence-related industries of the Member States have been integrated as far as possible (aeronautics; space; nuclear energy; electronics and computers, etc.).

Third stage

32. The third stage should see the Political Community also adopting a federal format, with decisions adopted on a majority basis.

33. The stage reached by both the organisations should make it possible to set about merging them by unifying their executives (Councils and Commissions). In the light of experience in the second stage, a single Treaty could then be drafted. Subject to the necessary amendments, it would take the place of the treaties establishing both the Communities.

34. The commencement of this stage could be seen as coinciding with the election of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage.

35. The single Commission, destined, over time, to become the federal executive body, should be given additional powers which would gradually be extended further still.

36. The sphere of competence of the political and economic Community in negotiating international agreements on behalf of the Member States should also be gradually extended to cover an ever broader range of sectors.

37. The European Parliament's supervisory powers over the activities of the federal executive bodies should also gradually be further extended.