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The Politics of Integration in Europe

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"The United States of Europe has begun,"² wrote one of the fathers of European integration, Jean Monnet, in 1955. He was referring to the fact that in the European Coal and Steel Community there had come into existence on an all-European level a new and unprecedented institution possessing governmental powers. How much more true would his words have been after the creation of the European Economic Community, the Common Market, in 1957—a new community with jurisdiction over all European economic affairs and aiming toward the creation of an all-European government? Common Market President Hallstein characterized the first four years of the Common Market by saying it had passed the "point of no return"³, i.e., that the forces then set in motion would lead inexorably toward an United States of Europe.

Not only is the Common Market today the embryo of a new European government, its present institutions may well be the actual framework in which the future power of government over Europe will accumulate. The internationally minded Europeans would prefer to have it that way. In a recent address, President Hallstein said: "The EEC is in no way a purely economic venture requiring it to be duplicated by a political venture . . . From what has just been said of the political nature of the European Economic Community, it follows that the Commission is bound to adopt an unreservedly positive attitude towards any extension of European unification to other fields than that of economic and social policy, notably defense . . . [and] foreign affairs . . . ; in short, to whatever comes under the heading of "political union" . . . it can legitimately be felt that such an extension ought to take the form of an enlargement and strengthening of the existing Communities . . ."⁴

One can not grasp the politics of this new European entity by merely reading the constitutional provisions of the Treaty of Rome that founded the Common Market in 1957. As Sorbonne professor Maurice Byé has recently put it:

"Europe cannot be viewed as a prize piece of architecture designed at Rome in a perfect treaty with ideal lines. Europe will be the new scene of new conflicts between new powers."⁵

It is the purpose of the following passages to explain what the new powers are, how they interplay, and what kind of political order they are evolving toward.

New Powers: The new foci of power on the European level are the political organs of the Common Market:

the Council of Ministers, the Commission, and the European Parliamentary Assembly. All three wish to augment their power, and all three are more or less devoted to the cause of European unity. The Council of Ministers consists of one representative from each member government, but the weights of their votes vary according to the size of the governments on certain issues. Its purview is the question of European integration in all respects, economic and political; and this is an important feature that the name "Common Market" tends to blur. The decisions of the Council have the force of law, and are reached according to a complex voting system. Although at first most decisions required unanimous approval, the Rome Treaty provided for the introduction later of a qualified majority voting scheme whereby no great power could block a decision unless it had an ally.⁶

The Council occupies an important part of the time of the corps of west European foreign ministers, who spend better than half of their professional lives together, if not on Common Market business, then on NATO or other organized European business. It is the highest echelon of European statesmen below the heads-of-state. Not only do the ministers have considerable political power in their own right, but they are for the most part internationally minded and want to promote the Common Market's evolution. One misapprehends the ministers if one views them as a brake upon the Common Market, always to be feared by the internationalists. They are more apt to plead the cause of the Common Market to their home governments than the other way around. Service in delegations to the Common Market is a training ground for national civil service advancement, moreover, not a burial ground for men unwanted at the home capitals. The Council is highly bureaucratized with permanent national delegations in Brussels numbering up to fifty each, including specialists that meet in sub-committees continually to prepare decisions for the Council. These staffs are also supporters of the Common Market.

For all their stature and internationalism, the foreign ministers are still confined to the limits of policy imposed on them by their home governments. The Council failed to agree on a common set of cereal prices in March, 1963, for example, because Germany would not lower and France would not raise prices far enough to reach an accommodation.⁷

The Commission consists of nine international civil servants chosen jointly by the governments and including two each from the great powers and one each from the small. It has influence over Common Market pol-

icy in that it drafts the original policy proposals and can, if it wishes, present them to the Council on an all-or-nothing basis.⁸ As more regulations are adopted by the Council, the Commission will, in its rôle as implementer, emerge as an important administrative institution for Europe. The Commissioners have fixed terms, but this is merely a reserve device for ridding the Commission of undesireables. The terms are ordinarily renewed, and Commissioners resign in mid-term if they find better jobs. They employ a secretariat of about 1,800.⁹

The Commission has often been misrepresented as a body of "technocrats", heading a new sort of European technocracy.¹⁰ The Common Market is, on the contrary, no more a technocracy than any other political entity in Europe. Commission President Hallstein clarified this matter in his oft-quoted statement, "We are not in business at all: we are in politics."¹¹ The members of the Commission have either entered that body from the field of politics or have become politicians while members.¹² They have been ministers in their own governments, and they or their successors will be the ministers of the United States of Europe tomorrow. Each heads a direction, or ministry, organized parallel to the conventional national ministries: finance, foreign affairs, agriculture, etc. They meet as a cabinet each week to agree on policy and strategy, and the President of the Commission bears somewhat the same relation to the other Commissioners as does a national prime minister to his cabinet colleagues.

The success of the Commission has depended heavily on their ability to probe and prod the national ministries that have the ultimate power over Common Market progress. For a period, however, there went along with this political sophistication a tendency in the Commission to assume that somehow the Common Market would escape the natural weaknesses of a new international organization. Driven on as it was by the initial momentum of the Community's inauguration, the Commission was somewhat over-ambitious and over-confident; and when the momentum was checked in January, 1963, i.e., when British membership was vetoed, there was a serious break in morale.

The European Parliamentary Assembly consists of delegates chosen by the parties in each of the parliaments of the member governments, according to the ratio of party strength at home. Hence, there are large numbers of Christian Democrats, Gaullists, and Social Democrats, which caucus as international parties for the purposes of the European Parliament. The influence of the Parliament is today largely indirect, because it holds no legislative powers and may only advise or recommend action by the Council or Commission—with one exception. It can remove the Commissioners from office.¹³

The political importance of the Parliament today lies chiefly in the personalities it includes: from the elderly fathers of the movement for European unity to the young, ambitious politicians for whom service with the Parliament represents a political distinction. The influence of the parliamentarians is limited, however, by the fact that the national parliamentary leaders can not af-

ford time to be members of the European parliament. Members spend from one to three quarters of their time on European parliamentary business, a situation that limits the possible impact of European parliamentarians on their home parliaments. The European Parliament campaigns constantly for an increase in its power; but it is, in a more basic sense, biding its time and perfecting its procedures in anticipation of the day when it becomes a real parliament with compulsive powers derived either from its existing power to remove Commissioners (a power of little value until the Commissioners become themselves more important) or with the establishment of some new basis for power.

As one views the three political institutions of the Common Market together, they appear to form a constitutional oligarchy, the Council of Ministers being the oligarchic rulers, the Commission their body of chief clerks, and the European Parliamentary Assembly their sounding board for popular grievances. In a primitive political framework such as this, democracy is only a remote ideal.

The Interplay of Forces: Although today there is a distinct hierarchy of power among the political bodies of the Common Market, there are tendencies emerging in the interplay of new forces that suggest that the present arrangement of power is only transitional. These tendencies are reminiscent of the evolution of British government during the eighteenth century.¹⁴ The British monarch, once supreme in his realm, came to be dependent upon his cabinet in order to manage the Commons; and subsequently the Commons forced the cabinet to be responsible to it. In the case of the Common Market, as the Council of Ministers gains more decision-making discretion, it confers more power and responsibility on the Commission; and, as the Commission gains a stronger footing, the European Parliament will hold it more strictly to account.

The Council of Ministers is drawing decision-making authority away from governments in two ways. First, on a slow cumulative basis, the Council is enacting Common Market policies, like its anti-trust regulation of 1961, that will henceforth be outside the hands of the governments. Secondly, while passing through the prescribed steps in establishing the Common Market, the Council is gaining new power to act by majority vote, hence limiting governmental authority in a general way, i.e., an unwilling government can be bound to a policy adopted by majority vote of the Council.

The transmission of authority via the Council to the Commission is now just getting under way. The initial behavior of the Commission toward the Council of Ministers was timid. Although the Commission had the power to refuse the amendment of draft proposals they did not want changed by the ministers, they were in fact very solicitous of the ministers and amenable to change. Even rather early, however, the Commission exerted some of its authority when it slashed to a minimum the number of national exceptions to be allowed from new tariff reductions.

The general co-operativeness of the Commission was necessitated by the initial tendency of the ministers to avoid decisions. Although carrying through the tariff disarmament agreed to in the Rome Treaty, the Council dwelt so long over such matters as setting up the Commissions office that it was only ready to pass its enabling "legislation" in the fields of anti-trust and farm policy at the last minute before agreeing to allow the Common Market to graduate into its "second stage". In fact, the ministers were half a month late, and there was a possibility at Christmas, 1961, that the Common Market would be a failure. Being allowed to pass into the second stage was immensely heartening to the Commission, which proceeded to map out an ambitious schedule for future policy making, only to lose momentum once more over the blocking of British entry into the Common Market. Throughout the Gaullist period in France the Commission and Council of Ministers had accustomed themselves to French vetoes and anti-European attitudes, but the Anglo-French stalemate at Brussels looked especially menacing. Nor did Germany promise to compensate for the new situation. Although the President of the Commission was a protégé of German Chancellor Adenauer, the Chancellor was to be succeeded soon by Economics Minister Erhard, the political foe of Adenauer and a man known to have limited expectations of the Common Market. The Council of Ministers remained, therefore, comparatively weak; and the Commission could not yet insist on its full share of decision-making power without injuring the Council and the integration movement in general.

The Commission was accumulating administrative powers, however, and these were beginning to assume significant proportions. In administering the agricultural regulations adopted by the Council in 1962, the office of the Commission has been constantly fixing prices and levies on European trade in food and is coming to be relied upon in much the same way as a national agricultural ministry. Moreover, new administrative powers are created continually for the Commission, as when the Council authorized the Commission to take the requisite action should international migration drive up farm real estate prices excessively, to cite a recent example of February, 1963.¹⁵ One indication of the importance of the Commission's power is the establishment of some one hundred pressure groups in offices at Brussels, albeit that a number of them are promoted by the Commission itself as public relations aids.

Identifying the tendency for new power to be transmitted from the Commission to the European Parliament poses a difficult problem. Just as the Commission has been slow to press the Council in recent years, the Parliament has been slow to press the Commission, not wanting to compromise the Commission's new-found position of importance. Initially, the Commission and the Parliament have been in league with one another. It was no secret to the Commission that the Council regarded the Parliament with condescension, but the Commission pursued the support of the Parliament diligently. Although playing little rôle in the proceedings of the

Parliament, the Commissioners attended faithfully and tried hard to avoid unnecessary disagreements with the parliamentarians, hoping in the end to have the Parliament's endorsement for the draft proposals of the Commission being readied for decision by the Council of Ministers. So long as the Commission thought the Parliament was important, it *was* important, because the wooing by the Commission gave the Parliament *de facto* leverage where it was lacking in *de jure* legislative power and impressed the Parliament's ideas on the work of the Commission. Just recently the Commission conducted research into the breakdown of the Anglo-Common Market negotiations at the behest of the European Parliament.¹⁶ The Commission's faith in the Parliament is founded in the conviction that it is the best group to lobby in the national governments, which are, in the last analysis, in control of the members of the Council of Ministers.

As the Commission grows in power, its tradition of close consultation with the Parliament will act to transmit some of that power to the Parliament itself. More important still, however, the Parliament's power to remove the Commission will gain real meaning once there is some real decision-making power at stake in the Commission. Today, a rejection of the Commission by the Parliament might seriously damage the whole effort for European unity; tomorrow, a rejection of the Commission might make the Parliament clearly sovereign within the international household. The Commission, after all, has no power to dismiss the Parliament.

Once the Parliament has acquired material power, it will become critically important to implement the provision of the Rome Treaty for the direct election of Parliament, if the evolving governance of Europe is to have a rigorously democratic quality; and the Parliament itself is impatient for the direct election system to commence. Although there is no certainty that direct election now will actually increase the political stature of the parliamentarians, the Parliament is driven to demand separate election by the mere physical impossibility for its members to attend adequately to both their European parliamentary business and the business of their national parliaments at home. Certainly at whatever time direct elections become feasible and the issues faced by the Common Market are the ones of keenest interest to the voting public, an electoral victory for a European parliamentarian will confer upon him and his assembly the most basic kind of democratic legitimacy and power.¹⁷

The Political Order of Integrated Europe: If the pattern of evolution mapped out above were to be followed to a logical conclusion, the political organization of the Europe of the future might look as follows: The Council of Ministers might come to play a rôle like that of the Bundesrat in the German government, including as it does the representatives of states. It would act on Community measures just as the Bundesrat acts on German laws. The Commission may bifurcate, a tendency it is already showing, with the President becoming both

the titular head of government and also the guiding spirit of the executive cabinet, much like the Gaullist presidency of France. The Council of Ministers may well continue to choose the Commissioners, but as the Parliament gains in strength, the Council may be forced to choose, as a matter of course, the leaders of the principal party in the Parliamentary Assembly. Since the Parliament has the power of removal, it could turn out a group of Commissioners elected by the Council that was not to its (the Parliament's) liking. Thus the Commission would become responsible to the Parliament, as is true of any parliamentary government; and, if the Rome Treaty provision for popular election of the Parliament were implemented, a parliamentary democracy would exist. All of the foregoing could take place without formal change in any part of the present Rome treaty, and the result could be a government composed of a president, a responsible executive cabinet, and a two-house legislature, one a federal house (the Council) and the other a democratic house (the Assembly). The Community already has its own court system.

It is possible that the burgeoning institutions of the European Community will someday be set aside and a new and scientifically designed constitution adopted for an United States of Europe. Many years may pass, however, before such a reform could be possible; and during the interim the present Community institutions, evolving along the lines just indicated, will establish a European governing tradition that it will be difficult for any constitution-writers of the future to discard.

NOTES

¹ The characterizations of Common Market institutions contained herein are based upon interviews conducted at the headquarters of the organization 1961-1962 under a United States government grant.

² *Les Etats-Unis d'Europe ont Commencé* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1955).

³ "The European Economic Community," Address delivered before the National Press Club, Washington, D.C., April 11, 1962.

⁴ "Action Program, Second Stage of the Common Market," *Common Market Reports* (Chicago: Commerce Clearing House, 1963), pp. 12-13.

⁵ "Comment une Autorité communautaire prend-elle de l'Autorité," *Communauté européenne* (Paris), 7th year, No. 3, p. 10.

⁶ *Treaty Establishing the European Economic Community*, Art. 148. There are seventeen total votes and twelve are necessary for a qualified majority, while each great power has only four votes.

⁷ *Le Monde diplomatique* (Paris), No. 108 (1963), p. 18.

⁸ *Treaty*, Art. 149. When the Commission insists upon the integrity of its proposal, it may be changed by the Council only by unanimous vote.

⁹ Communauté économique européenne, Commission, *Cinquième Rapport Général sur l'activité de la Communauté*, 1962, p. 344.

¹⁰ Pierre Drouin, "L'Europe doit imposer au monde un nouveau 'savoir-vivre' économique," *Communauté européenne*, p. 11.

¹¹ "Economic integration and political unity in Europe," *Community Topics* (London: Information Service of the European Communities, 1961), p. 4.

¹² Cf. biographies in Assemblée parlementaire européenne, *Annuaire-Manuel 1960-1961* (Luxembourg: 1961), pp. 161-165.

¹³ *Treaty*, Art. 144.

¹⁴ Kenneth Mackenzie, *The English Parliament* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1950), pp. 80-90.

¹⁵ *Le Monde diplomatique*, loc. cit.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ The quest for "legitimacy" is a problem for the Parliament even now. Cf. Pierre-Olivier Lapie, *Les Trois Communautés* (Paris: Arthème Fayard, 1960), pp. 218-219.

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