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A naturally supportive environment?: the European institutions and German unification 1989-1990

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A Naturally Supportive Environment?

The European Institutions and Germany Reunification

At first sight the international discussions and negotiations which surrounded the reunification of Germany and the end of the Cold War in Europe could be seen as a partial return to traditional great power diplomacy. Faced with great questions about Europe's overall balance and shape, and Germany's place within this new Europe, the smaller European powers found themselves all but banished to the margins as the traditionally dominant players reasserted their influence. The 2+4 mechanism in particular looks superficially like a return to the diplomacy of the immediate post-war era, albeit with a more active role for the Germans themselves than was either possible or likely in the late 1940s. The rhetoric of Mrs Thatcher and some of her fellow leaders meanwhile, with their constant references to the German problem and the dangers that an unbound Germany might pose to the whole international status quo, also have an element of time-warp about them. Some of the Iron Lady's sentiments recalled the views of that generation of British leaders – Clement Attlee, Anthony Eden or Harold Macmillan – whose perceptions of Germany had been shaped by both World Wars and by decades of deep Anglo-German antagonism. After all the hyperbole of the mid-1980s when European integration appeared to have rediscovered its dynamism, the events of 1989-90 might thus be used as evidence that the deeper realities of European diplomacy had not altered nearly as fundamentally as some of the enthusiasts for integration believed. On closer inspection, however, it becomes apparent that traditional great power diplomacy had not succeeded entirely in displacing European multilateralism. For alongside the resurgence of power politics *à l'ancienne*, there was also a significant element of newer, multilateral European dialogue and cooperation. There is thus ample scope for a study of the European institutions and the question of German reunification.

This paper will set itself three basic tasks. First of all it will seek to establish how the institutions of the European Community reacted to the events in Berlin and East Germany and then move on to suggest a number of factors which might explain why the collective EC reaction was rather less cautious – not to say churlish – than that of several of the individual member states. Second, it will trace the way in which this relatively

positive reaction was translated into Community action on the issue. Or to put it another way, what did the European institutions contribute to the unfolding of Germany unity during the eleven month period between the fall of the Berlin Wall and the achievement of Germany unity? And third, the paper will seek to establish what effect the whole process of German reunification had on the subsequent trajectory of European integration. Did Brussels reap the rewards of its early and positive reaction to events in Berlin? Or would the clear-sightedness shown by Jacques Delors and his colleagues in the immediate aftermath of November 9, 1989 prove to be a short-term triumph only? Throughout the paper, the focus will primarily be on the two European institutions that mattered most in this affair – namely the European Commission and the European Council – although a few comments will also be made about the role and position of both the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers.

‘Un ami du peuple allemand’ – Delors and November 9th

Jacques Delors, the President of the European Commission, could justifiably lay claim to having been one of the first active European politicians to react in an entirely positive manner to the fall of the Berlin Wall. Even before the moment when the Wall came down, he had made a speech in Bonn, in which he had departed from the prepared text and confronted the question of German reunification head-on adding: ‘La Communauté européenne offre le cadre le plus réaliste à cette perspective, à la condition d’affermir son essor et de renforcer encore son attrait. Ainsi notre Communauté, votre Communauté, a rendez-vous avec tous les Allemands. Pour vous rencontrer, n’a-t-elle pas déjà accompli un chemin irréversible ?’¹ He was thus well prepared to talk to the German press on November 12. Asked how he envisaged the role of the Community in the new situation created by the fall of the Wall, he responded: ‘D’abord je voudrais vous dire que je partage avec nos amis allemands leur émotion, leurs joies et leurs espoirs. La Communauté européenne est le centre de gravité de l’histoire de l’Europe. C’est vers elle que regardent les habitants de la République Démocratique Allemande, de Pologne et de Hongrie. Nous ne devons pas les décevoir, nous devons leur offrir notre aide et notre

¹ Jacques Delors, *Mémoires* (Paris: Plon, 2004), p.277

coopération.’² Similar sentiments were repeated to journalists of many other nationalities in the days that followed. Furthermore, Delors also appeared immune from doubts that afflicted many of his fellow leaders once it became clear, at the very end of 1989 and the first weeks of 1990, that the timetable for actual reunification was likely to be much shorter than originally foreseen. On January 9th an interview he gave on the topic to the *Irish Times* attracted a favourable response within the *Kanzleramt*.³ And a week later his speech to the European Parliament setting out the Commission’s priorities for the year ahead made clear his willingness to see and to assist a rapid move towards Germany unity. East Germany he reminded MEPs had always had a special status within the EC – the Treaty of Rome contained several protocols dealing with Berlin and the Soviet zones of Germany – and while it was up to the Germans themselves to choose the form and the manner of reunification the Community should not hesitate to welcome the additional population: ‘elle [East Germany] a sa place dans la Communauté, si elle le demande, pour peu que ce processus se réalise, comme la rappelle le Conseil européen de Strasbourg à travers une libre autodétermination, pacifiquement et démocratiquement, dans le respect des principes de l’acte final de Helsinki, dans un contexte de dialogue Est-Ouest et dans la perspective de l’intégration européenne.’⁴ Brussels would not stand in the way of whatever was decided in Bonn. The contrast with the ill-concealed distaste of Mrs Thatcher towards rapid reunification, or even with the hesitation which President Mitterrand was to show in publicly affirming his support, was very striking indeed.⁵

Part of the explanation for the rapidity of Delors’ acceptance of the idea of reunification can doubtless be found in the personal rapport between the Commission President and the German Chancellor. The two men had already developed an effective working relationship over a number of the key European debates of the late 1980s and Delors was particularly conscious of the debt that he owed Helmut Kohl following the successful conclusion of the so-called Delors I budgetary package of 1987. Without the Chancellor’s political backing – and willingness to shoulder a significant portion of the increased costs – this vital component of the Community’s revival in the latter half of the

² *Ibid.*

³ Horst Teltschik, *329 Tage. Innenansichten der Einigung* (Berlin: Siedler Verlag, 1991), p.102

⁴ *Bulletin de la Communauté Européenne*, Supplement 1/90, p.9

⁵ On Mitterrand see esp. Frédéric Bozo, *Mitterrand, la fin de la guerre froide et l’unification allemande* (Paris : Odile Jacob, 2005)

decade would not have been possible. Support for reunification was thus in a sense an opportunity for Delors to return the favour. But a full explanation needs to go beyond this theory – however appealing.

For a start there was a certain element of pragmatism in the Commission President's stance. The Brussels institution wields little direct power and knows full well that it can only exercise influence if it is able to maintain strong links with those who actually possess the capacity to take key decisions within the EC, namely the national governments. Adopting a position which might alienate the Community's largest and richest member state was thus not a risk to be taken lightly. Conversely, cementing further a Bonn-Brussels relationship would stand the Commission in very good stead in all future Community controversies. Supporting Bonn at a time when other allies were proving less than reliable thus made good tactical sense for Delors and the Commission. Calculations of this sort were flanked by a genuine enthusiasm for the transformations occurring in Eastern and Central Europe. In a speech to the College of Europe in mid-October, the Commission President had waxed lyrical about the changes underway in Warsaw, Budapest and elsewhere, changes which he asserted reflected in part the gravitational pull of the European Community and which strengthened the case for more European integration rather than less.⁶ In such circumstances, it would have been somewhat illogical to have objected strongly as the largest domino of all in Eastern Europe, the GDR, toppled over. (Although it is of course true that some leaders like the British Prime Minister were illogical in precisely this way.)

There was also what could perhaps be described as a more structural reason why the Commission reacted in the way that it did. The Commission it should be recalled was a real newcomer to the field of East-West relations and European political, as opposed to commercial or economic, diplomacy – indeed one of the manifest sources of Delors' enthusiasm for the changes underway was precisely the way in which he perceived these as an entrée for the institution into fields of activity from which it had been previously excluded.⁷ As a result it had little background in traditional diplomacy and almost entirely lacked staff with extensive experience of cold war and geopolitical issues. Many

⁶ *Bulletin CE*, No. 10, 1989, pp.124-6

⁷ This was particularly clear in his January 1990 speech to the European Parliament. *Bulletin CE*, Supplement 1/90, pp. 8-11

of those assigned tasks connected for instance to the Commission's new mandate to coordinate the G-24 effort to organise aid to Eastern Europe had little relevant experience and were instead recycled agricultural or commercial experts. In most respects this was a disadvantage – and a cause for concern.⁸ But it did mean that unlike many within the *Quai d'Orsay*, the Foreign Office, or the *Farnesina* those responsible for discussing the Commission's response to the events of 1989 had not spend their careers working within an environment where discussions of the 'German problem' or the various scenarios under which Germany might be unified and the manner in which this might disrupt Europe's geopolitical balance remained common currency. Instead they were much more likely to approach the issue with little eye to the past and a much greater openness to the emotions and excitement generated by the fall of the Wall – the sort of 'common sense' reaction also shown by a significant percentage of the European general public but much less widespread amongst diplomats and foreign policy experts. To put it perhaps more simply, the European Commission had no institutional memory of Germany as a problem for Europe. On the contrary, the Germany with which most of the Commission had had experience of dealing was the least problematical of the larger member states – less inclined to throw its weight about in a disruptive manner than Britain or France, and better at implementing Community law than either Italy or France -, the biggest contributor to the Community budget, the economic dynamo pushing forward Europe's economic revival in the late 1980s, and an enthusiastic supporter of many of the institutional reforms at a European level which the Commission was most eager to see – notably greater powers for the European Parliament . Seen from this perspective greater German power and influence was thus a welcome prospect rather than a threat. A 20% increase in the size of Britain or France would have been a much greater cause for alarm in Brussels than an increase in German power! Delors' personal instincts on this issue were thus almost certainly backed up by similar reactions amongst his staff. This was all the more likely to have been the case, given that the Commission shared many of the Federal Republic government's own over-optimistic assumptions about how quickly the costs of reunification could be covered and the benefits of a greater population might

⁸ See for example Henri Froment-Meurice and Peter Ludlow, *Governing Europe: Towards a European Foreign Policy*, CEPS Paper 45, February 1990

begin to accrue.⁹ German reunification was hence seen in Brussels as a likely source of medium term economic dynamism rather than as something which would adversely affect the economic performance of the Federal Republic (and hence Europe as a whole) for over a decade to come.

Collective support despite individual misgivings: the European Council and German reunification

The European Council's collective reaction to November 9 and to the events that followed can also be described as reasonably positive. This may at first sight appear a somewhat contentious statement. After all, the informal dinner held in Paris on November 18, 1989 at which the heads of government of the Twelve has an initial discussion of the events in Berlin is generally regarded as having been a somewhat fraught event with both Thatcher and Ruud Lubbers, the Dutch Prime Minister having made their misgivings clear.¹⁰ As Bozo notes, there was also a somewhat artificial avoidance of the issue of reunification itself at this dinner, since neither Kohl nor most of his interlocutors wanted to debate the issue albeit for rather different reasons.¹¹ Furthermore, the Strasbourg Council three weeks later was also far from smooth, with Kohl being subjected to an interrogation on the issue of German unity which made him feel as if he were on trial, and the European Council's statement on the issue having required a delicate negotiation which took the whole of the night of December 8/9.¹² It was thus only at Dublin in April 1990 that the assembled leaders were able to give German unity their blessing. And Kohl's retrospective relief at this development and the striking contrast he draws between discussions in Strasbourg and those in the Irish capital, do underline the efforts that he and other German leaders had gone to so as to reassure their European partners and the extent of the mental adjustment that Thatcher, Mitterrand, Andreotti and the others had been obliged to make.¹³ But our historical knowledge of how tense discussions had in fact been, should only make it more remarkable that the European Council managed to convey a public image of openness

⁹ *La Communauté Européenne et l'unification allemande*, Bulletin CE, Supplement 4/90, pp.9 & 16

¹⁰ Teltschick, *329 Tage*, p.38

¹¹ Bozo, *Mitterrand*, p.138

¹² *Ibid.* pp.153-6

¹³ Helmut Kohl, *"Ich wollte Deutschlands Einheit"* (Berlin: Propyläen, 1996), pp.359-61

towards and then support for the reunification of Germany. At the Strasbourg for instance the Council Conclusions noted that the Twelve 'seek the strengthening of peace in Europe in which the German people will regain its unity through free self-determination',¹⁴ while in Dublin the Community's leaders expressed their 'rejoicing' at the process of German unification. The December 1989 summit had also mandated the European Commission to investigate the practical implications of Germany unity and prepare a Community response – a step which would finally result in the Commission Communication on German reunification approved by the Twelve at the Dublin Council.¹⁵ In both its words and its deeds, the European Council seemed thus to have taken a somewhat more positive line than the sentiments of some its members might have implied. Given that the Council works by consensus and that its conclusions require unanimous approval, it is therefore worth asking why the hesitations of Thatcher and several of her fellow leaders were not more clearly reflected in the collective European response.

The first and the most obvious factor was clearly the presence in any collective European meeting of Kohl himself. It is surely no coincidence that most of the more tactless and strongly worded statements of opposition to German reunification seem to have emerged from bilateral meetings not involving the Chancellor rather than from multilateral meetings at which he was present. And while Mrs Thatcher in particular was a forceful enough personality not to have shrunk from making her sentiments clear, regardless of Kohl's presence, it is also clear that Kohl and his many allies would never have allowed the emergence of any European statement that opposed or obstructed German reunification. But the importance of Kohl's presence goes beyond this ability to prevent overt opposition being expressed. For West Germany was not merely a member state of the European Community and Kohl hence a member of the European Council; in the late 1980s the German Chancellor was beyond dispute the dominant member of the European Community's collective leadership and someone well accustomed to exercising a decisive influence over the direction taken by the Twelve. This reality reflected Kohl's seniority, his role as the doyen of Christian Democrats who collectively accounted for

¹⁴ Cited in *Financial Times*, 11.12.1989

¹⁵ See David Spence, 'The European Community's negotiations on German unification' in Wolfgang Heisenberg (ed.), *German Unification in European Perspective* (London: Brassey's, 1991), pp.29-33

half of the EC member states, his strong links with several non-Christian Democrat leaders notably Mitterrand and Felipe Gonzalez, his track record in several previous Community negotiations notably those on the EC budget, and, most fundamentally, his country's status as Europe's largest, most geographically central, and richest member state. The Chancellor was not therefore just a member of a club where all are to a certain extent duty bound to respect each others' sensitivities; he was the most powerful leader within this club and someone whose support was much sought and whose animosity was much feared.

Germany's centrality was further augmented by the fact that the Community was in the midst of rapid internal evolution. The late 1980s were a halcyon period for European integration. The *relance* carried out in the middle of the decade and centred on the creation of a fully working internal market by the end of 1992, had spilled-over into a much more wide-ranging advance encompassing monetary integration, discussions of political union, institutional reform, and the redefinition of the European Community (the middle 'E' for economic had already been *de facto* dropped) as an outright European Union. In such circumstances virtually all of the member states had pressing issues upon which they needed Germany's support or on which they feared Germany's opposition. Obstructionism on the issue of German reunification was hence a stance likely to have serious repercussions elsewhere in the European debate. Little wonder then that Kohl's fellow leaders chose not to dig their heels in too much in Paris, Strasbourg or Dublin. Instead it was much more logical to do as the French Presidency did in the Strasbourg negotiations over the exact wording of the Council statement on German unity, and bargain acquiescence in a positive formula, for German support for other crucial European issues – in this case monetary union.

The context of generalised progress towards greater integration also mattered because it legitimised the idea of coping with German unity by means of rapid European advance. The notion of *la fuite en avance* has a long pedigree in the history of European integration, going back at least as far as the 1950 proposal to launch a European Defence Community. But in the late 1980s it was an option readily turned to given the speed of the EC's advance. It was thus possible for most of Kohl's fellow leaders to comfort themselves with the belief that a new, reunified and more powerful Germany, would also

be a Germany safely contained within a new, more powerful European union. Any potentially destabilising effects of Germany's new size would be significantly reduced by this fact: it would, as the well-worn formula put it, be a European Germany rather than a German Europe. And each of their individual ability to bargain for aspects of the new Europe which they held dear would be improved by preserving their relationship with Chancellor Kohl and not seeking to obstruct his progression towards German unity. It was only Mrs Thatcher who was of course as opposed to further European integration as she was to German reunification, for whom this expectation provided no comfort whatsoever – a fact which goes a long way to explaining her eventual total isolation on both issues. For everybody else the prospect of more European integration represented both a possible solution to many of the difficulties which reunification might pose and a tactical incentive to avoid outright confrontation with the single most powerful figure within the European Community.

Enlargement without accession: the Community institutions and the absorption of the GDR

The practical effects of Commission support for and European Council acquiescence in German reunification were felt over the next eleven months during which time the EC had to adjust to an increase in its size and population without the normal, lengthy membership negotiations which have typically accompanied enlargements. This process, although over-shadowed by the much higher profile 2+4 negotiations and ignored altogether by at least one supposedly authoritative account of the diplomacy of reunification, involved detailed talks on the margins of the 2+4 meetings between David Williamson, the Secretary-General of the Commission, his deputy Carlo Trojan, and Hans Tietmeyer, who led the German delegation finalising the international aspects of unification.¹⁶ Both the European Commission and the European Council were thus obliged to demonstrate that their verbal expressions of good will towards the unification process could be translated into actual negotiating flexibility and a willingness to adapt to a unification which ended up taking much less time than most had expected. But in order

¹⁶ The book which completely omits to mention these Commission talks is Zelikow & Rice, *Germany United, Europe Transformed* perhaps suggesting that Condoleezza Rice's disparaging attitude towards the institutions of the European Union predates her involvement in the current US government!

fully to appreciate the role of the Community institutions in the unification process, it is probably best to break it down into a number of separate components.

The first aspect of Community involvement in the reunification process was the negotiation of a trade agreement with the GDR. Such a step brought East Germany into line with Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia which had also taken advantage of their altered political status to devise new commercial arrangements with the European Community. But it also reflected the initial belief, in Brussels as much as elsewhere, that reunification would take much longer than it actually did. As a result there would thus be some utility in revising the commercial regime between the GDR and the EC, thereby encouraging trade flows to anticipate political reunification and full EC membership. This would help make the integration of the former East Germany into the Community that much smoother and less disruptive. In the event of course the acceleration of the reunification time-table all but overtook the negotiation of a commercial treaty, emptying it of much of its intended purpose. The treaty was only signed on May 8, 1990, less than six months prior to date on which German reunification and the consequent enlargement of the European Community became a reality.¹⁷ And it was soon made redundant by the *de facto* customs union between the GDR and the Twelve planned as part of the transitional phase bringing the new German *Länder* into the Community.¹⁸ Its negotiation was nevertheless a first indication of the type of practical step that the EC was willing to take to smooth the reunification process.

Much more significant was the Commission's three-stage plan drawn up to smooth the actual enlargement process. Work towards this had started at the very end of 1989, fulfilling the mandate received at Strasbourg. In January, the so-called 'Bangemann Group' was formed within the European Commission, bringing together a small high calibre group chaired by the German Commission Vice-President Martin Bangemann which would investigate the various adaptations which would be needed both to ready the Community for the absorption of the GDR and, where possible, to ready the GDR for the coming into force of European rules. This committee would meet

¹⁷ *Bulletin CE*, 5/90, p.74

¹⁸ *Bulletin CE*, 6/90,

weekly between February and July 1990.¹⁹ Its first major product was the Commission communication presented to the Dublin Council in late April.²⁰

This document set out a three-stage plan for bringing the former DDR into the EC. The first so-called interim stage was to start when the *Staatsvertrag* between the two German states entered in to force. At this point the GDR would have to take on board much of West German economic legislation and in the process adapt itself to life within the EC as well. The Commission would actively oversee this implementation so as to ensure that Community competition and state-aid rules were being met. Also to start during this period was the introduction of VAT, a complete overhaul of the East German social security and tax systems, and the gradual introduction of a full market economy into the formerly communist state. Once unification occurred, the interim phase would then give way to the transitional stage. From this point Community legislation would apply directly to the *neue Bundesländer*. In recognition of former GDR's special circumstances, however, a number of special transitional arrangements could be negotiated, temporarily exempting eastern Germany from full Community rules. The Commission expected these derogations to apply primarily to environmental rules, competition policy, and the introduction of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) to the GDR, but it was ready also to take special account of the multiple previous trade arrangements entered into by the former DDR primarily with other former Eastern bloc countries. All of these special dispensations, as well as the transitional phase itself, would have to come to an end on January 1, 1993 as the full European internal market entered into force. Stage III from 1993 onwards would thus see the former GDR as a fully-fledged part of the European single market.²¹

This plan of action was approved in Dublin by the European Council, thereby ushering in a further stage of Commission activity in the forms of discussions with the West German government about the compatibility of the *Staatsvertrag* and the *Einigungsvertrag* with European rules. This reflected the Council's desire that the Community be fully involved with the ongoing negotiations. It was for this reason that

¹⁹ Spence, 'The European Community's negotiations', pp.30-1

²⁰ The Community and German unification: communication from the Commission to the Special Session of the European Council in Dublin on April 28, 1990. SEC (90) 751

²¹ The three stages and the likely problems involved are well summarised in *La Communauté Européenne et l'unification allemande*, *Bulletin CE*, Supplement 4/90, pp.10-16

Williamson and Trojan found themselves in a number of meetings from May 5 onwards with Tietmeyer. These resulted in several significant changes being made to the draft treaties. And the Commission's involvement also meant that its own work preparing the necessary authorisation for the transitional measures to be applied in stage II of the three stage plan could proceed on the basis of accurate and detailed knowledge about what was emerging in the 2+4 negotiations. Given the subsequent acceleration of the unification timetable this was of great importance – as it was the Community institutions had to proceed with almost unprecedented speed over the summer and autumn in order to approve all 21 transitional measures before the interim arrangements expired on December 31. In the end all of the necessary legislation had been passed by early November.

Finally in assessing the Commission's role, some mention ought to be made to the aspect of Community help that did not materialise, namely that of substantial monetary aid. This was something that Delors did offer Kohl, pointing out that conditions in *neue Bundesländer* were far further behind European norms in terms of affluence than was the case for most of those regions that already benefited from generous structural assistance. The German Chancellor was determined, however, to avoid a situation in which any of his European partners ended up paying for German unity, either through an increase in the total size of the Community's budget or through a reallocation of existing funds away from their expected beneficiaries.²² This, it ought perhaps to be noted, was one of the last examples of the type of cheque book diplomacy for which Germany had become renowned at a European level.

All told, however the Commission could pride itself on having performed a genuinely constructive, if relatively low-profile, role within the unification process. Much of its work was highly technical and largely impenetrable to those not versed in the intricacies of European law. But without it, the relatively smooth legal absorption into the Community of the five new German *Länder* would not have been possible. The Commission President personal support for unification had clearly also been of some importance in discussions at Strasbourg and Dublin in particular. Delors' presence as one

²² See *Deutsche Einheit. Sonderedition aus den Akten des Bundeskanzleramtes 1989/90*, documents 362, 363, 376 & 388. Also Delors, *Mémoires*, pp.293-4

of the sole non-Germans invited to the Berlin celebrations of October 2/3 was hence fully merited as were the warm tributes he received from Kohl.²³ Likewise, the European Council role, while less obvious was also of some importance. For not only did it give its approval to the Commission's actions at various points thereby permitting the rapid drawing up of the transitional arrangements, but more fundamentally it also very publicly signalled European approval of Germany's unexpectedly rapid progress towards reunification. The warmth of the Dublin statement about German unity was particularly notable. At a time when so much about Europe and about Germany's place within it seemed to be open to negotiation, this symbolic affirmation of the compatibility between Germany's national aspirations for unity and its long-standing European engagement was of great political importance, not least within Germany's internal debate. At both Commission and Council levels, the European dimension of German reunification was thus something of genuine significance.

A spur to progress – or a source of new difficulties? The effects of German reunification on the EC

If there was a European dimension to the unification story, it is also the case that Germany's transformation had an impact on the Community's subsequent development. The final section of this paper must therefore consider the way in which the events of 1989-90 altered the EC's advance. And in particular it must consider the long-debated question about the interconnection between German unity and economic and monetary union (EMU) within Europe.

The first and most obvious effect of German unification was on the morale and confidence of the Commission in general and its President in particular. This was already running fairly high – as noted above the integration process had been advancing with some rapidity since the mid-1980s. The transformations of 1989 and the politics of 1990 were however to take Delors' self-confidence to unprecedented heights. His speech in January 1990 to the European Parliament is a case in point. For while this did include a short passage about the possible risks and dangers to the European project posed by the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe – he rebutted for instance the idea that

²³ See for instance Kohl, *“Ich wollte”*, p.360

European integration had been an outgrowth of the cold war and should therefore cease as the cold war came to an end – the vast majority of the speech was illustrative of the excitement and ambition with which the Commission President regarded the future. And nowhere was this more so than in the field of foreign policy where it is quite clear that he perceived the Community as whole but the Commission in particular playing an ever greater role. The surprise decision at the G-7 summit in July 1989 to entrust the task of chairing the G-24 committee for coordinating relief to Eastern Europe to the European Commission was perceived, it would appear from this speech, as just the start of the Commission's emergence as a key foreign policy player.

Almost inevitably such soaring ambitions were to provoke a member state reaction. This paper is clearly not the place to rehearse in any detail the complex intergovernmental negotiations which were to culminate in the Maastricht treaty of December 1991. It is clear however that one of the many reasons why the member states were to devise the complicated three pillar structure of the European Union so detested by Delors was to control the ever more grandiose aspirations of the Commission to play a role in the foreign policy field. Few member states were willing to envisage the Commission playing the sort of diplomatic and external political part dreamt of by Delors in January 1990. As a result, while the French Commission President was to be spared the fate of his equally over-ambitious predecessor, Walter Hallstein, and was able to serve out the remainder of his term in Brussels, his final years were marked by a strong element of frustration at the way in which his wings had been clipped at Maastricht. And this disappointment combined with a number of later mishaps (notably the Danish referendum result of 1992 and the crisis of the EMS) to ensure that the Commission's mood would dip dramatically from mid-1992 onwards. A bit like the Federal Republic itself some of the Commission's gloom and depression throughout the mid to late 1990s was directly related to even if not entirely produced by the exhilaration and euphoria which had characterised the decade's start.

The linkage between German reunification and Maastricht extends beyond the fate of the Commission's foreign policy ambitions however. This is not to say that there is much validity in the often repeated assertion that there was a Franco-German bargain in which Chancellor Kohl accepted EMU in return for Mitterrand's acquiescence in

Germany unity. This argument fails to grasp either the complexity of intra-Community bargaining which is always more complicated than simple Franco-German deals or the fact that there was already considerable momentum behind EMU before the Wall came down. But it is to acknowledge that the determination with which Mitterrand, Kohl, Delors and several other of the key actors sought to move forward towards European union was greatly increased by the unification process. The onward drive of European integration generally – and not just EMU – was therefore directly increased by what happened on November 9, 1989 and its aftermath. Furthermore one could even argue that German reunification and its consequences contributed to the removal of the single biggest obstacle faced by those hoping to press on towards European union, namely Mrs Thatcher. For amongst the numerous factors that contributed to the British Prime Ministers political demise, her doomed but very public opposition to German reunification was certainly of some importance. It is thus possible to assert that both the timing and the contents of the Maastricht Treaty were significantly influenced by the transformation of Germany which had occurred between 1989 and 1990.

Similarly connections can and should be drawn between German unity and some of the EU's trials and tribulations in the mid to later 1990s. It is thus possible to argue that the EMS crisis of 1992 which was to prove so serious to the British debate about if not to the progression of the majority of other member states towards EMU was directly linked to the distorting effects caused by Germany's short-lived post-unification boom. Similarly, the dynamics of European Union politics since unification have been strongly affected both by the disappearance of a Germany so often prepared to resolve budgetary and other disputes by a liberal use of the cheque book and by the more general underperformance of the German economy – both trends which to some extent at least are products of reunification.

Such interconnections, however, while almost certainly possible to multiply still further, should not really surprise. As profound a transformation as the end of the cold war system into which the EC had been born and the reunification of the Community's largest member state could scarcely have failed to have had a serious impact on the process of European integration. What is surprising, however, is the failure thus far of most analysts – either those exploring the development of the EU or those studying the

wider international politics of Western Europe – to draw attention to the number and depths of interconnectedness. This paper is thus intended as a small contribution towards the undoing of this serious historical oversight.